

GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communique

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we, the participants in the second Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) – 1358 delegates, including 331 bishops, 482 other clergy and 545 laity from 38 countries representing tens of millions of faithful Anglicans worldwide – send you greetings from East Africa, a place of revival in the last century and of growth in the Anglican Church today.

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19–20)

Introduction

We met with great joy in Nairobi from 21st to 26th October 2013. We gathered each day for prayer and praise, studied Paul's letter to the Ephesians and shared in the Holy Communion at the beginning and end of our conference.

It was very poignant that our meeting took place only a month after the violent terrorist attack in Nairobi at the Westgate Shopping Mall in which so many innocent men, women and children lost their lives. Our hearts go out to those families who have lost loved ones and to all of those who still suffer. We continue to remember them in prayer. In meeting here we have been able to express publicly the hope that Jesus Christ brings to a world in which brokenness and suffering find frequent expression.

In our gathering, we reaffirmed our view that we are a global fellowship of confessing Anglicans, engaged in a movement of the Holy Spirit which is both personal and ecclesial. We appreciated that the Archbishop of Canterbury sent personal greetings via video and gave us the assurance of his prayers, and we likewise pray for him. We believe we have acted as an important and effective instrument of Communion during a period in which other instruments of Communion have failed both to uphold gospel priorities in the Church, and to heal the divisions among us.

The Formation of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans

In 2008, the first GAFCON was convened in order to counter a false gospel which was spreading throughout the Communion. This false gospel

questioned the uniqueness of Christ and his substitutionary death, despite the Bible's clear revelation that he is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). It undermined the authority of God's Word written. It sought to mask sinful behaviour with the language of human rights. It promoted homosexual practice as consistent with holiness, despite the fact that the Bible clearly identifies it as sinful. A crisis point was reached in 2003 when a man in an active same-sex relationship was consecrated bishop in the USA. In the years that followed, there were repeated attempts to resolve the crisis within the Communion, none of which succeeded. To the contrary, the situation worsened with further defiance. As a response to the crisis, we adopted The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration which commits us to biblical faithfulness, and has since provided the framework for renewed Anglican orthodoxy to which we, in all our different traditions – Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and Charismatics – are committed. We also formed the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA).

In 2008, the first GAFCON was convened in order to counter a false gospel which was spreading throughout the Communion. This false gospel questioned the uniqueness of Christ and his substitutionary death, despite the Bible's clear revelation that he is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

Since then, we have become a movement for unity among faithful Anglicans. Where, in taking a stand for biblical faithfulness, Anglicans have been marginalised or excluded from provincial or diocesan structures, the Primates' Council has recognised and authenticated them as faithful

Anglicans. The GFCA has been instrumental in the emergence of the new Province of the Anglican Church in North America, giving formal recognition to its orders and welcoming it as a full partner province, with its Archbishop having a seat on the Primates' Council. The GFCA has also prevented the original Diocese of Recife being isolated from the Anglican Communion. At the same time, local fellowships have been set up across many provinces. These have been a vital support to ministers and congregations alike, as the pressures on faithful gospel witness have increased.

Beginning in the last century, the Revival has touched millions of lives across many countries...

The GFCA and the Future of the Anglican Communion

The fellowship we enjoy as Christians is distinguished from all other associations by the fact that it is at its heart a common 'fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3). For this reason it has a particular character. It involves repentance and 'walking in the light, as he is in the light' (1 John 1:7-9). The character and boundaries of our fellowship are not determined by institutions but by the Word of God. The church is a place where the truth matters, where it is guarded and promoted and where alternatives are exposed for what they are – an exchange of the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:25). Our willingness to submit to the written Word of God and our unwillingness to be in Christian fellowship with those who will not, is clearly expressed in The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration. This means that the divisions in the Anglican Communion will not be healed without a change of heart from those promoting the false gospel, and to that end we pray.

There is much we can learn from the East African Revival about having a change of heart. Beginning in the last century, the Revival has touched millions of lives across many countries as the

Holy Spirit has moved lay men and women, as well as clergy, to share the gospel with others. Two significant features of great relevance to our situation are –

- Real repentance for sin demonstrated both in confession of guilt and a desire to make amends.
- A confidence that the gospel has the power both to save the lost in all the world and to transform the church, rather than seeing the church conformed to the world.

We urge those who have promoted the false gospel to repent of their unfaithfulness and have a renewed confidence in the gospel. We repent of indifference, prayerlessness and inactivity in the face of false teaching. We remind them – as we remind ourselves – that the sins from which we must repent are not simply those which the world also believes are wrong; they are those that God himself abhors and which are made clear in his Word.

The 1998 Lambeth Resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality states that sexual activity is to be exclusive to marriage and that abstinence is right for those who are single. We still hold to that authoritative statement. Sexual temptation affects us all, and we pray therefore for faithfulness to God's Word in marriage and singleness.

We grieve that several national governments, aided by some church leaders, have claimed to redefine marriage and have turned same-sex marriage into a human rights issue. Human rights, we believe, are founded on a true understanding of human nature, which is that we are created in God's image, male and female such that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife (Matthew 19:6; Ephesians 5:31). We want to make clear that any civil partnership of a sexual nature does not receive the blessing of God. We continue to pray for and offer pastoral support to Christians struggling with same-sex temptation who remain celibate in obedience to Christ and affirm them in their faithfulness.

The gospel alone has the power to transform lives. As the gospel is heard, the Holy Spirit challenges and convicts of sin, and points to the love of God

expressed in his Son, Jesus Christ. The sheer grace of God in setting us free from sin through the cross of Christ leads us into the enjoyment of our forgiveness and the desire to lead a holy life. This enables the relationship with God that Jesus makes possible to flourish. Moreover, just as individual lives can be transformed, so can the life of churches. We therefore commit ourselves and call on our brothers and sisters throughout the Communion to join in rediscovering the power of the gospel and seeking boldness from the Holy Spirit to proclaim it with renewed vigour.

Strengthening the GFCA

We are committed to the future of the GFCA and to that end have decided to take steps to strengthen our fellowship.

First, we have resolved to be more than a network. We are an effective expression of faithful Anglicanism and therefore, recognising our responsibilities, we must organise ourselves in a way that demonstrates the seriousness of our objectives. These are threefold.

- Proclaiming and contending for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Examples of work we wish to resource are the preparation of convincing theological rebuttals of any false gospel; supporting a network of theological colleges whose students are better oriented to ministry, whose faculties are well-trained, and whose curricula are built on the faithful reading of Scripture.
- Building the fellowship. We need to find new ways of supporting each other in mission and discipleship.
- Authorising and affirming faithful Anglicans who have been excluded by their diocese or province. The main thrust of work here would be devoted to discerning the need for new provinces, dioceses and churches – and then authenticating their ministries and orders as Anglican.

Second, pursuing these objectives will require GFCA to operate on a more systematic basis and to that end we shall organise around a Primates' Council, a Board of Trustees, an Executive

Committee and regional liaison officers, who will be involved in fostering communication among FCAs.

Third, we recognise that moving the GFCA on to a new footing will involve making substantial new resources available. We must, therefore, invite provinces, dioceses, mission agencies, local congregations and individuals formally to become contributing members of the GFCA. In particular, we ask provinces to reconsider their support for those Anglican structures that are used to undermine biblical faithfulness and contribute instead, or additionally, to the financing of the GFCA's on-going needs.

Our Priorities

Our Lord's command is 'to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:19-20). We believe therefore that our first priority must be to make disciples. This means that our movement must be committed to –

- Evangelising areas of our world where clear gospel witness has become obscured or lost and bringing the gospel to unreached peoples. Much of our energy must be devoted to bringing the gospel to children and young people and developing the leaders of the future. We also recognise the need to pray for, love and witness to Muslims with the gospel of Jesus. We call upon churches to train their members in such outreach.
- Supporting genuine gospel initiatives, recognising that there are times when the maintenance of structures can constrain the proclamation of the gospel. In line with The Jerusalem Statement's expectation that the Primates' Council would intervene to provide 'orthodox oversight to churches under false leadership', the Primates' Council will carefully consider working beyond existing structures as an obedient response to Jesus' commission to take the gospel to all nations.
- Guarding the gospel. We shall continue publicly to expose any false gospel that is not consistent

with apostolic teaching and clearly to articulate the gospel in the church and in the world.

Our second priority must be to deepen discipleship. We must keep stressing that our identity is primarily found in Christ rather than in national, ethnic or tribal attachments. In addition, there are many pressures on Christians today which require a degree of maturity in order to withstand them. These include aggressive secularism, where increasingly Christians are being told that their faith must only find expression in private, and not in public life, and where the contribution of Christianity to the public good is denied; militant Islamism which continues to threaten the existence and ministry of the church in some places; and seductive syncretism which introduces supposedly alternative approaches to God and thereby denies the uniqueness of Christ.

Countering these pressures and promoting the gospel in difficult circumstances requires Christians to accept that their witness involves suffering for Christ (2 Timothy 3:12); to stand with those who are suffering for Christ; to be alert to the ways in which the Scriptures are being falsely undermined by opponents; to engage graciously in the public square; and to refuse to be intimidated when subjected to persecution.

As a third priority, we must witness to the transforming effect of the gospel in working for the transformation of society, so that the values of the eternal Kingdom can be seen here and now. We therefore believe that it is right to engage in the public arena with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16), but without allowing our priorities to be shaped by the world's agenda; that our churches should work for the protection of the environment and the economic empowerment of those who are deprived of resources; and that we should not ignore the cries of the marginalized and oppressed who need immediate aid.

We affirm the ministries of women and their vital contribution to the life of the church: their call to the task of evangelism, discipling, and building strong marriages, families, churches and communities. GAFCON 2013 upholds the Bible's teaching that men and women are equally made

in the image of God, called to be his people in the body of Christ, exercising different gifts. We recognize that we have differing views over the roles of men and women in church leadership.

It grieves us that in many communities women and children are marginalized through poverty, lack of education, HIV/AIDS, the mistreatment of widows and orphans, and polygamy. Furthermore, they suffer domestic violence, sexual abuse, trafficking and abortion. We repudiate all such violence against women and children and call on the church to demonstrate respect for women, care for marginalized women and children around the world, and uphold the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

We are conscious of the growing number of attacks on Christians in Nigeria and Pakistan, Syria and Egypt, Sudan and many other countries. Where our brothers and sisters are experiencing persecution, we must all call on governments and leaders of other religions to respect human rights, protect Christians from violent attack and take effective action to provide for freedom of religious expression for all.

Conclusion

We are conscious of many pressures on faithful gospel witness within the church, but equally conscious of the great need the world has to hear the gospel. The need for the GFC is greater now than when we first met in Jerusalem in 2008. We believe the Holy Spirit is challenging us and the rest of the Anglican Communion to remain faithful to our biblical heritage; to support those who suffer as a result of obedience to Christ; to deepen the spiritual life of our churches; and to respond to anti-Christian pressures with a renewed determination to spread the gospel. The seriousness with which we take our mission and our fellowship will be reflected in the way individual churches make the GAFCON vision their own, and in how we resource the work the GFC seeks to initiate. We invite all faithful Anglicans to join the GFC.

Finally, we make the following commitment to strengthen our fellowship and promote the gospel.

The Nairobi Commitment

We are committed to Jesus Christ as the head of the Church, the authority of his Word and the power of his gospel. The Son perfectly reveals God to us, he is the sole ground of our salvation, and he is our hope for the future. We seek to honour him, walk in faith and obedience to his teaching, and glorify him through our proclamation of his name.

Therefore, in the power of the Holy Spirit –

1. We commit ourselves anew to The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration.
2. We commit ourselves to supporting mission, both locally and globally, including outreach to Muslims. We also commit to encouraging lay training in obedience to the Great Commission to make and mature disciples, with particular attention to recruiting and mobilizing young people for ministry and leadership.
3. We commit ourselves to give greater priority to theological education and to helping each other find the necessary resources. The purposes of theological education need clarifying so that students are better oriented to ministry, faculty are well-trained, and curricula are built on the faithful reading of Scripture.
4. We commit ourselves to defend essential truths of the biblical faith even when this defence threatens existing structures of human authority (Acts 5:29). For this reason, the bishops at GAFCON 2013 resolved 'to affirm and endorse the position of the Primates' Council in providing oversight in cases where provinces and dioceses compromise biblical faith, including the affirmation of a duly discerned call to ministry. This may involve ordination and consecration if the situation requires.
5. We commit ourselves to the support and defence of those who in standing for apostolic

truth are marginalized or excluded from formal communion with other Anglicans in their dioceses. We have therefore recognized the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) as an expression of authentic Anglicanism both for those within and outside the Church of England, and welcomed their intention to appoint a General Secretary of AMiE.

6. We commit ourselves to teach about God's good purposes in marriage and in singleness. Marriage is a life-long exclusive union between a man and a woman. We exhort all people to work and pray for the building and strengthening of healthy marriages and families. For this reason, we oppose the secular tide running in favour of cohabitation and same-sex marriage.
7. We commit ourselves to work for the transformation of society through the gospel. We repudiate all violence, especially against women and children; we shall work for the economic empowerment of those who are deprived; and we shall be a voice for persecuted Christians.
8. We commit ourselves to the continuation of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, putting membership, staffing and financing onto a new basis. We shall continue to work within the Anglican Communion for its renewal and reform.
9. We commit ourselves to meet again at the next GAFCON.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(Ephesians 3:20–21)

26 October 2013
