

Lambeth Conference I

The Archbishop of Canterbury did not specifically ask me to send his greetings to you, but I know that if I had an opportunity to talk to him that he would.

So far I am generally impressed with the friendliness of the people I am meeting here. I am already meeting with my Bible study group of bishops. There are 8 of us from the following dioceses: St. Mark the Evangelist (northern part of South Africa), Matlosani, Spaldaha Bay, Namibia, Lusaka, East Newfoundland, and a diocese in England. Four are African Dioceses and four are scattered around. The group “clicked” immediately and discussions have been wonderfully insightful and a level of trust already exists sufficient for some depth of sharing. When answering questions based on our context I am amazed at the profound cultural differences that exist, and yet the things we each wrestle with as bishops is the same. I am grateful for the group and the insights they provide.

We have just finished Day II of our three day retreat. Rowan Williams is giving a series of addresses on the ministry of the bishop and challenging us to reflect on aspects of God’s Mission and the Discipleship of the Bishop. This is done in Canterbury Cathedral, which is closed to tourists while we are using it. This afternoon the Archbishop addressed the issues of Communion. He stated that we, as bishops, are called to live in community, not only with the clergy and people of our dioceses, but also with other bishops, and their clergy and people. He challenged us to adopt a Rule of Life that two or three of us would covenant to practice together and to which we would hold one another accountable. He insisted that Communion requires a disciplined life of prayer and used *The Rule* of St. Benedict as an example of the discipline needed to be community. There is much to consider and reflect on.

It seems that no matter where we gather as a Church we discover connections. Yesterday I introduced myself to a bishop sitting near me in the Cathedral, his name is Mark Van Koevering and he is the Bishop of Niassa, Mozambique. Imagine my surprise when he told me that he was born and raised in Grand Rapids. His story of becoming the Bishop of Niassa was fascinating (and complex). We exchanged information so that Anne and I would be able to offer him hospitality when he visits family in the area.

The Conference is much better than I was expecting, and the opportunity to talk with bishops from all over the world is truly a blessing. Having dinner with the bishops from the Diocese of the Arctic and casual conversation with a Maori bishop from New Zealand, and having an opportunity to tell others about who we are and what the Church is doing to proclaim and live the Gospel in Western Michigan is so exciting for me. I give thanks to God and to all of you for this opportunity.

The opening Eucharist is on Sunday, and Monday begins discussions in larger groups, which is where we will all have an opportunity to hear and be heard. I am looking forward to that time.

Please pray for those of us who are gathered here and for those who have chosen not to gather here.

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