

Lambeth Conference 2022:
God's Church for God's World – Listening, walking and witnessing together

To the clergy and people of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas:

The participation of bishops in the Lambeth Conference is an essential part of living into our ordination vows and our life as Episcopalians who are interdependent members of the Anglican Communion. Each of the bishops of the diocese gives thanks for our time at Lambeth. It is very difficult to express the power of meeting with bishops from the global communion and the time spent in prayer together, in reading scripture, in sharing our mission, and in pondering the challenges we face in the world.

We have spoken together in small groups, at table groups, listened to witnesses. We spoke and listened on the following topics: evangelism, discipleship, reconciliation, dignity, creation care, ecumenicism, suffering, humility, and hope.

To be an Anglican is to have a global and local focus, and to participate in local and global mission. These are values that the Episcopal Diocese of Texas has explicitly affirmed since 2008. We continue to build relationships and discern how to increase our parochial and diocesan connections beyond our borders.

We do not turn our backs on the challenge of these relationships. Instead, in this diocese we lean in, towards each other, understanding that our unity comes from the perfect love of the Holy Spirit – bound by Jesus's incarnation and his saving acts, and upon our shared image created by God. This unity is rooted in our faith in God whom we trust, and it is a unity strived for, despite our brokenness and sinfulness. There is no question that holding the tensions of the Communion and working to live together across the diversity of cultures and contexts is difficult.

One of the very important understandings about the Anglican Communion is that we are interdependent and that the conversation here is solely a matter of the collective minds of bishops present. This is true for the work suggested by the "Lambeth Calls" here, and the actions suggested when bishops return to their diocesan life; thus, it is completely up to us to enliven locally, our global mission. This was affirmed in the discourse on Anglican identity and polity by the bishops quite universally.

The reality is that the importance of our gathering, the many topics, and the nature of our gathering are overshadowed in the press and social media by the focus on "same-sex marriage" or "marriage equality." This division, highlighted by some bishops, some press, and social media, points to the differences that exist in the Anglican communion on the topic of human sexuality and gender.

In the diocese we, too, found that this topic dominated us, and frustrated our Christian unity, for the sake of mission expressed through evangelism and service. In this way, at Lambeth Conference, this disunity became a most singular focus, and the sessions on reconciliation and dignity became key to our attention to wider collaborative and shared mission. That is: The deep expression of conflicting positions on marriage created the impetus for us to listen more deeply and to recommit to one another without denying our differences.

Our gathering did not "set the stage" for this disagreement, but rather it is only at this gathering for Lambeth that we can be open and honest about our disagreement. Yet, God unites us and those contexts with different approaches to Anglican moral theology. We, in the diocese, dealt with this in 2012 after a

two-year process. In the Diocese of Texas, we made it clear that we would support our LGBTQ+ members and families and we would continue traditional marriage at the same time we expanded marriage for all people. Sadly, this same topic is what was used to claim the necessity of mistreating people, stealing property, and leaving The Episcopal Church.

What has taken place at Lambeth is an affirmation of our Unity in Mission work and a damning rejection of the secular notion that we cannot walk together, as well as a rejection of the heretical notion that God's love is not strong enough to hold us together. As was presented in our session on ecumenism - division is a sin and we must be transparent and honest about it.

Much of what is in the call is uncontentious - including the issues of divisions surrounding marriage.

We affirmed that God's creation of humanity is a gift and is blessed by God. This means that the body of an individual holds a dignity that cannot be taken away.¹ Furthermore, we see in each other the image of God's "infinite love and glory."² Every human being is an image of God's love as provided for by the mission of Christ.

The Call states in section 1.2:

It is in Christ's mission that we know the grace of God and God's faithful love for every human being (Jn 3:16; Col. 1:15–20; Rom. 5:18–19; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; 1 Pt. 2:9).^{xi} Humanity is offered new birth into a living hope through Christ's resurrection (1 Pt.1:3; 2 Pt. 1:14). As God's image-bearers, human beings are called to love God and to love each other (1 Jn. 4:11).^{xii}

In this way, the bishops of this diocese affirmed the Archbishop's of Canterbury's statement that "the Call is about Human Dignity and is also about Sexuality. The reason the two are combined is that its central theological foundation is that all human beings are of equal worth, loved by God and are those for whom Jesus died on the Cross and rose to life. As St Paul says again and again in Romans, "there is no distinction."³

As for the bishops of the Diocese of Texas, we believe that inclusion means recognizing that all baptized members of the Anglican Communion, including the Episcopal Church and our diocese, are welcomed and honored and share in Christ's mission.

We affirmed the whole Call on Human Dignity, but the following statement in section 3 is part of the call and important to mention here:

"Prejudice on the basis of gender or sexuality threatens human dignity. Given Anglican polity, and especially the autonomy of Provinces, there is disagreement and a plurality of views on the relationship between human dignity and human sexuality. Yet, we experience the safeguarding of dignity in deepening dialogue. It is the mind of the Anglican Communion as a whole that "all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the

¹ International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD), In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology (The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order (IASCUFO), Created in the Image of God: The Divine Gift and Call to Humanity: An Anglican Theological Anthropology: Unity, Faith & Order Paper No. 3 (London: ACC, 2021), 9, 12, 14–25, 42
https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/460188/UFO_IASCUFO_Papers-3-and-4-God-So-Loved-the-World_v2_en.pdf

² "The Buffalo Statement", 2015), 5–12. Lambeth 1998, I.10c; IASCUFO, Created in the Image of God, 75–77.

³ Archbishop's Address on Dignity at Lambeth

Body of Christ” and to be welcomed, cared for, and treated with respect (I.10, 1998). Many Provinces continue to affirm that same gender marriage is not permissible. Lambeth Resolution I.10 (1998) states that the “legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions” cannot be advised. Other Provinces have blessed and welcomed same sex union/marriage after careful theological reflection and a process of reception. As Bishops we remain committed to listening and walking together to the maximum possible degree, despite our deep disagreement on these issues.”

For some, the call we affirmed reminds us that those in the Diocese of Texas who hold a historic understanding of the teaching on marriage, hold a view shared by the vast majority of the Churches in the Anglican Communion. The call also affirms that some churches have discerned that same gender marriage is revealed to have an important place within our tradition. Those who affirm marriage for all people find that they, too, have a growing number of allies and partners in the Anglican Communion.

Like the Archbishop, we wish to be clear. Both positions are held by individuals who love Jesus Christ, who do deep bible study, and who believe that holding their position is necessary for their context.

We also recognize that in the wider global context there is a danger to LGBTQ+ people, those who associate or are allies, and for those whose churches are in relationship with those who support marriage for all. So, we recognize that gender, sexual violence, abuse of the vulnerable or violence against minorities, women, or individuals of the LGBTQ+ community must be counteracted.

We are called to be honest and truthful about where we are as an Anglican Communion. This truth is similar to the Unity and Mission work that we in the diocese accomplished in 2012. The Call states the reality of life in the Communion today. There is no mention of sanctions, or exclusion in I.10 1998. There is much mention of pastoral care. We have a plurality of views. As Lambeth I.10 also states: “all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ” and are to be welcomed, cared for, and treated with respect.”⁴

Yet, dignity is not narrowly an issue of gender and sexuality. We also affirmed, that.

“It is the mind of the Anglican Communion that acts and attitudes against the dignity of God’s children are sin. The legacies of colonialism, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and other abuses of power continue to impact our communities.(xix) Some have been enriched and some impoverished. International economic systems, built upon unjust structures of exploitation, have created dehumanizing conditions. The deep inequalities in access to land, health and education, exploitation of the young, unjust labour practices, mistreatment of ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees, the inhumanity of human trafficking, religious persecution, pressures on those guided by their freedom of conscience, oppression of LGBTQ persons, gender-based violence, war and sexual violence in conflict, in part, reveal such sin. Hospitality to all and faithfulness to each are key marks of a godly community (1 Pt. 4:8–10).”

This means that we affirm that there are political, economic, and environmental ways in which human dignity is challenged and people are abused by others. This is important because it reminds us that issues we face in the US are also issues faced by our siblings across the communion, and that we have much in common as we seek to give voice to the oppressed and in situations and cases where human dignity is taken away.

⁴ I.10, 1998 and Lambeth 2022 Call on Dignity.

We also recognize that the majority of the bishops representing the majority of the communion intend to walk together. A majority of bishops at Lambeth did not sign on to statements seeking further division from provinces who have done their theological work on marriage and expanded it for all people. The majority of the communion bishops understand our context and wish to continue to walk with us.

I hope that you will see that the Episcopal Diocese of Texas is very much in relationship with the wider Anglican Communion, that we are truthfully and honestly walking together despite difference; and moreover, that we support and affirm the dignity of all people regardless of who they are and where they find themselves in the debate.

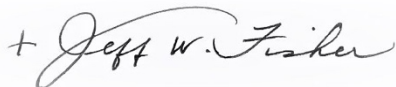
What we see here is what we know in Texas. If we will but study the Bible, worship and pray together, and undertake the work of the diocese – as well as that of mission through evangelism and service – we will be unified. Why? Because of the clarity that it is God in Christ Jesus who undertakes this unity through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is Christ who gathers us in with his arms upon the hardwood of the cross, and that we recognize each other as Christ's beloved because we are made by God through Christ.

This fall, each of us will have so much to tell you and so much to share, utilizing various avenues of communication.

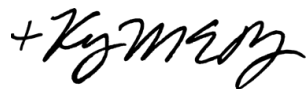
Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ C. Andrew Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle,
IX Bishop of Texas

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Jeff W. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Jeff Fisher,
Bishop Suffragan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Kathryn Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Kathryn Ryan,
Bishop Suffragan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ J. Scott Mayer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. J. Scott Mayer,
Assisting Bishop

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a stylized 'H' and 'M' with a cross symbol to the left.

The Rt. Rev. Hector Monterroso,
Bishop Assistant