

# Towards an International Anglican Network and Commission on Faith in an Urban World

## **1. LAMBETH CONFERENCE - RESOLUTION II.**

### **Urbanization**

This conference:

- a) calls upon the member Churches of the Anglican Communion to address the processes of urbanization across the world, both in our cities and all other communities;
- b) asks our Member Churches to give urgent attention to "Living and Proclaiming the Good News" in our cities so that all that destroys our full humanity is being challenged, the socially excluded are being welcomed and the poor are hearing the Good News (Matthew 11.3); and in order to assist this priority in mission; and
- c) resolves
  - i) to ask the Anglican Consultative Council to give support to the formation of an Anglican Urban Network to share information and experience on urbanization and urban mission;
  - ii) to support the establishment of a "Faith in an Urban World" Commission, after due consultation with ecumenical bodies.

## **2. THE MISSIONAL CONTEXT**

It was at the 1988 Lambeth Conference that our bishops agreed that there are five marks of mission:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

To respond to human need by loving service

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, and

To safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.

The first mark reminds us that we are mandated to "preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4 v18) The second mark lays upon us a duty of care for those new in the faith, that they may understand how the treasures of that faith relate directly to their place in the world. The last three marks draw our attention to the structural complexities and pastoral challenges of mission. Taken together they offer a model of mission as the engagement of a living faith with a challenging and complex world.

So it is that the bishops' formulation of mission clarifies how important it is to have an informed understanding of the context in which mission is to take place. Since the world is now dominated by the urban, then clearly no missional strategy can hope to be adequate which has not researched and is not appreciative of this new dominating context, in relation to each of the five marks of mission.

### **3. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

In the last decade of the twentieth century our world reaches the symbolic point when over half the global population will live in towns and cities. The world is now an urban place. Urban issues fed into all parts of the Lambeth agenda . Although the cities represented would be at various stages of the development or decline the culture of the city is increasingly global and has far reaching consequences even for the most rural societies. The resources and concerns of the church should acknowledge this. The culture of the city is a theological problem which challenges both our missiology and ecclesiology. The global culture of the city is as vital to understand as the indigenous cultures in which we seek to incarnate our faith.

The Rio Earth Summit and the UN's Habitat II conference have both posed important questions about the future of urban settlements. After Rio Local Agenda 21 encouraged local communities to ask serious questions about their future development. Sustainability was defined as being about more than mere ecological survival but about the quality of life for everyone. The governance of a sustainable urban community needed to take seriously issues of wholeness and inclusion, participation and responsibility, social access, concern for resources and the health of the community. The Habitat report *An Urbanizing World* □ reflects on the positive and negative aspects of urban life - what makes a good urban settlement? How might good governance combine the concerns of the sustainability agenda? Christians need to discover their callings amidst the complexities and rapid change of an urbanizing world.

### **4. WHY AN ANGLICAN COMMISSION?**

Anglican Communion is uniquely placed in being able to draw on the experiences of Christians in cities at different stages of urban growth and decline. Some parts of the Communion have been engaged for many years with a wide range of initiatives which have raised questions about mission and ministry priorities in urban areas. Engagement with government at all levels has taken place on vital issues of social justice, marginal neighbourhoods and community sustainability. New patterns of church life and ministry have emerged in communities with few material resources where there has been little history of confident local leadership. The Church of England has the recent experience of its own urban commission and the resulting impact of its report (*Faith in the City*) and recommendations.

The regional responses to the theme proposals for the Lambeth Conference indicated that the urban context was of increasing concern. Issues raised included technological change, the relationship between political corruption and urban decay, environmental issues and their links with poverty, the creation of communities of the marginalised and the experience of rural migrants and refugees. Pastorally the need for new ministries and a reallocation of resources, was identified, to address rapidly changing situations including the informal settlements, street children and the alienated urban poor. A number of provinces underlined the need for a holistic evangelism that understands the impact of

globalization and poverty as well as the ecumenical implications of working alongside a proliferation of new Christian groups in the cities.

The CPSA response is a good example of how these responses reflect the urgency from an African perspective:

The economy is still a core area of contest. We live in societies of extreme economic disparity. This has resulted in poverty and unemployment on a vast scale which is further exacerbated by rapid urbanization and the mushrooming of informal settlements on the outskirts of our major cities. These informal settlements will be a feature of our urban life for a very long time, and the church must be wherever people are. We need to design special ministries for them, and to find means of funding them (p5).

We need to ask ourselves what is good news . . . to those who eke out an existence in informal squatter settlements on the edges of our towns and cities . . . (p18).

For many parts of the Anglican Communion the city is a new experience. For example, African and South American cities are expanding at such a rate that the authorities struggle to construct a physical infrastructure or control its spread. The church find its assets and plant are still tied up in the rural mission when there is a serious need to develop a pastoral infrastructure with appropriate resources for lay and ordained leadership in new urban areas.

Experience, fears, frustrations and stories of faithfulness all need to be shared alongside rigorous social and theological analysis. Anglicanism has strong traditions in both social thinking and mission strategies, these need to be built on in response to the global urban context. There is also much to learn from other traditions. Anglicanism has often been well placed in society with influential links with ruling groups, its has rarely had a strong presence among the urban poor or developed indigenous leadership from within churches in slums, squatter settlements or outer estates.

Ecumenical consultation will need to take place. We wish to undertake our work as ecumenically as possible but at present we can only manage to keep our partner Churches informed of our work and hope that areas for collaboration will be identified during the process.

The WCC has a project called Peace to the City, part of the Programme to Overcome Violence, which is currently looking at issues of urban violence and micro-disarmament in six cities. Urban and Rural Mission no longer has the profile within the council which it once enjoyed. A recent consultation on urbanization took place at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, as part of the summer programme. Urbanization does not, however, figure significant on the agenda for the Harare assembly.

Who else? It may be appropriate to consult international and regional denominational bodies though no significant urban work has been mentioned on initial enquiries. International inter-denominational urban networks do exist, such as the International Urban Ministry Network and Ray Bakke's International Urban Associates both are informal relational networks with few Anglican members. Both, however, have significant contacts with new and independent churches that figure significantly in the emerging urban scene.

## **5. PROPOSED AIMS OF THE COMMISSION**

To raise the profile of the urban context in all its forms as the critical context of mission and ministry for the Anglican Communion.

To outline the processes of urbanization, globalization and urbanism and their impact on communities, families and individuals.

To compare the experience of Christians in cities at different stages of the urban cycle and in different cultures, identifying the resources needed in terms of pastoral infrastructure, social action and training, with a particular concern with the needs and gifts of the urban poor.

To examine the models and impact of urban ministry and mission with the Anglican communion.

To examine how Christians can be involved in the thinking and reflecting theologically about the cities of the future and the impact of an increasingly global urban culture.

To encourage appropriate co-operation and resource sharing between agencies, provinces and dioceses, both anglican and ecumenical

by

studying in twenty-four cities and six provinces/regions in different parts of the Anglican Communion, the social processes experienced and the churches' response to urban society in the context of rapid change; (members of the commission will attend consultations held in the six regions);

identifying sociological and theological resources (particularly people resources) to assist with the analysis of urban change and growth; and the development of appropriate responses;

producing regular publications, briefings and a final report on Christian presence and witness in an urbanizing world;

developing a network of Anglicans engaged in mission, ministry and training in urban areas.

Specific areas of enquiry might include:

1. Social trends and other changes in cities and urban areas -
  - urbanization, globalization, regionalization
  - technological and industrial change
  - impact of debt and structural adjustment programmes
  - alienation, violence, environmental decay
  - impact of the urban on other contexts

2. Urban themes - what are cities for and how can they work?

- work, markets and wealth creation
- the governance of cities, social justice, corruption
- sustainability / Local Agenda 21
- power and participation
- housing, health, education
- impact of planning and regeneration
- mobility, permanency
- social exclusion / poverty
- racism, pluralism
- violence
- recreation and conviviality
- the identity of cities
  - e.g. African, Islamic, South American, Indian, Chinese
  - cities and national identity
  - cultural centres
  - world centres
  - glocalization

3. Particular concerns and needs of Christians in urban areas

- marginalised communities
- rural migrants
- Christians living as minorities
- the church and urban elites
- suburban, middle-class and gated communities

4. Children, young people and families in urban areas.

## 5. Church responses -

- pastoral
- mission/evangelism
- liturgy and worship
- welfare /social action
- solidarity between congregations
- dialogue with decision makers
- involvement with popular movements
- ecumenical and interfaith work
- role of Bishops

## 6. New models of church and ministry

- challenges to dominant/traditional models
- new models of evangelism and mission
- church among the poor
- celebrating the life and witness of urban Christians

## 7. Theological resources for urban presence and witness

- Anglican social and mission traditions
- theological tasks
- defining urban theology / mission
- is the urban process of God? / evangelization of social processes
- civic religion
- urban ecclesiology – on the 'faultlines' and in the 'back alleys'
- response to urban thinking – Castells, Sassen, Sennet, Habitat, Soja, Harvey etc.
- identity of cities
- reading the Bible with urban eyes
- training
- publications

## 8. Networking urban Anglicans

- an urban network
- mission agencies, diocesan links, south-south exchange

## 9. Christians and the future of urban life

- UN, Habitat II, Local Agenda 21
- international action
- theological work

## **6. MODELS & LOCATION**

The most obvious model of a similar piece of work is the Anglican Family Project which was based with an Australian Anglican Agency, worked through regional consultations and published contextual studies in dossier form. The proposed network could form a framework in which such work was possible.

The final proposal should have three elements to address the challenges behind Lambeth resolution II.7.:

a project identifying the resources and activity that underpins urban mission within the Anglican Communion; and facilitating regional consultations and exchanges of urban church leaders;

a network of 1) nominated link persons in each province; 2) key urban practitioners, theologians and strategists; 3) ecumenical urban partners;

a commission that will report to the 2008 Lambeth Conference on the state of urban mission in the Anglican Communion and the challenges of the interconnected phenomena of urbanization and globalization to the whole Church and international bodies.

Staffing - Project leader (1.0), researcher (0.5), administrator (0.5). The two part-time posts might be combined.

Additional staff may be needed at the commission stage.

Secondment by a province or agency may enhance the basic staffing.

Thought needs to be given as to the location of the 'hub' of the commission and network. This may in part depend on agencies and institutions expressing an interest in the project and being able to offer accommodation and resources through gift-in-kind. It does seem essential that the location gives reasonable access to Anglican Communion provinces, structures and networks. The availability of translation facilities would also be a factor in any decision. An office might be located within or alongside any of the following:

Mission agency or umbrella group

Mission training/research centre

Academic – Seminary, University, research centre

ACC

Lambeth Palace

The Centre for Anglican Communion Studies in the Selly Oak Colleges has been explored as one possibility.

## **7. OUTCOMES**

The following outcomes are envisaged during the first three years to lay a foundation for an urban commission:

Directory of Resources – listing theological and sociological resources for understanding the church's mission in its urban context.

Network /database – listing nominated contacts and key urban practitioners in all provinces.

Publications – Regular newsletter, Basic introduction to urban mission, Volume of stories of good practice, Contextual/regional studies, Urban mission workbook etc.

Web-page –using material from above

Regional consultations and reports

## **8. TIMETABLE**

It is envisaged that the project will run for 8-10 years, reporting to the 2008 Lambeth Conference. The report will include a recommendation concerning how resources for urban mission might be developed within the Anglican Communion.

1999            Creation of international reference group, submission of proposal to Primates' Meeting /ACC etc, establishment of funding.

2000-2003    Appointment of staff

Research / networking

Creation of resource centre

Development of regional consultations/forums

2003            Input to Anglican Congress

2004            Appointment of commission (1/3 ecumenical)

2004-2007 Commission will meet regionally drawing on work through consultations and annually as a full commission on four occasions.

2007-2008 A final report will be prepared for the Lambeth Conference.

2008-2010 Follow-up to Lambeth Conference.

## **9. ESTABLISHING A NETWORK**

During and after the Lambeth Conference the Urban Bishops' Panel began to develop a mailing list of those who wish to be kept informed of how the work is coming together. A mailing during November carried a Lambeth Report on the Section II report, the debates and the resolution.

An official network would need to be formally 'owned' by the ACC and the Primates Meeting. Part of that process would ask each province to name their key players on urban issues who would be invited to form the core of the network, with a wider network being developed from the emerging mailing list.

The provision of material in several languages will be a key factor in enabling the network to be as inclusive as possible.

Information exchange would be the primary task, with the development of a biannual newsletter, possibly on the City Cries model. An international gathering to launch the main work of the commission (early 2003) would provide the opportunity for the network and commissioners to develop an integrated agenda. Regional meetings might take place before then, but these might more fruitfully take place around the commission's regional consultation.

## **10. FINANCES**

It would be helpful to identify a financial adviser/fund-raiser as early as possible, with responsibility to cost the proposals and identify possible sources of funding. Mission agencies should be approached regarding their support for the commission and network. Other funders are currently being identified through the Secretary-General of ACC.

*The Revd. Dr. Andrew Davey, Secretary, Urban Bishops' Panel*

*The Rt. Revd. Laurie Green, Bishop of Bradwell*

*25th February 1999*

□ Oxford University Press 1996

UBP (99)9