

Standing Committee – Report 2008

APPENDIX B

**SIXTH PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES' CONFERENCE
OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION**

Hong Kong 23 August – 30 August 2007

REPORT TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Status of the Conference

The Provincial Secretaries' Conference is an informal meeting, organised by Provincial Secretaries to assist their professional development and to strengthen bonds within the Anglican Communion. It does not constitute an official organ of the Communion and is not a decision-making body.

Aims of the Conference

1. To increase Provincial Secretaries' understanding of the nature of the Anglican Communion and of the contribution they can make to its life.
2. To help the development of Provincial Secretaries in their role and to increase their knowledge of the different ways in which that role is expressed in different Provinces.
3. To exchange information and experience on issues that face Provincial Secretaries.
4. To learn about the life and concerns of the host Province.

Thanks

It was a privilege to attend the Provincial Secretaries Conference representing the Church of Ireland on behalf of the Chief Officer Mr Denis Reardon, who was unable to attend. I would like to thank the Standing Committee and the Chief Officer for this opportunity to experience another aspect of the Church of Ireland in the context of the world-wide network of the Anglican Communion. The meeting provided an insight into the life of the Communion through the eyes of key administrators and an opportunity to establish bonds of friendship with colleagues around the globe.

Host Province

The meeting was hosted by the Province of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (The Church of the Province of Hong Kong). The Archbishop of Hong Kong, the Most Revd Paul Kwong hosted a welcome dinner for the Provincial Secretaries at which we met a number of clergy, members of the laity and staff from the Provincial office. I would like to express thanks to the host Province for the generosity of their welcome and for the extensive and careful preparation work undertaken to enable us to engage with the Province during the week that we spent there.

On Sunday, we were privileged to share worship with parishes in the dioceses, and were entertained by members of the parish. I attended Emmanuel Church, Pokfulam, where the Priest-in-Charge is the

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Revd Matthew Vernon. Emmanuel is a daughter church of St John's Anglican Cathedral, and has recently moved into a renovated church. A number of families with Northern Ireland links introduced themselves and their children as we enjoyed coffee after the service and they send their greetings to their home Church. The parish has a website at: www.emmanuel.org.hk.

Hong Kong is a place of great contrasts; none greater than the gap between rich and poor. The Revd Dorothy Lau is Director of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council and she made an extensive presentation on the challenges facing society in Hong Kong as well as leading the group on a tour of the Welfare Council's Integrated Centre in the developing area of Tung Chung. The model of social service was based on state-social partnership. Revd Lau explained that this derived from the extensive involvement of the Churches in social service provision in Hong Kong in the period from the 19th century to the 1970s, when state provision began to be developed. The state looked naturally to religious organisations to maintain educational establishments and other provision and this has been developed. Today, in the period following reunification with China, the state engages with social partners from other religious traditions as well as the Christian Churches – which are, in fact, a minority. The extent of the services was very impressive and I have brought home some literature, if anyone should like to have more detail.

A number of the staff and clergy in the Province referred to a recent visit by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr John Neill and the Revd Alan McCormack to Hong Kong and expressed encouragement for this link between the two Churches.

Reports from each Province

The Reports from the Provinces offered an immediate sense of what's new and what's important – all the more focused because you had to capture your key points in five minutes. It was a privilege to share news of the Church of Ireland's plans for ministry formation and the creation of a new Theological Institute, as well as information about our Hard Gospel Project and to report the instances of growth and renewal in our dioceses. There was also a warm response to the work of CMS Ireland and acknowledgement of the significance of the MPower Conference held in Armagh in 2005 the ongoing work in developing the partnership relationships between the Church of Ireland and Churches in other Provinces.

The Provincial Secretaries from Rwanda and Burundi both expressed their particular sense of shared ministry with the Church of Ireland in terms of work that focuses on healing and reconciliation in society.

The Role of Provincial Secretaries

Introductory talks were given by Mwita Akiri (Tanzania) and Michael Pollesel (Canada) followed by discussion in which participants shared ideas about the role and work of Provincial Secretaries. The role of the Provincial Secretary differs across the Communion. Typically, the activities include supporting Primates and Provinces in their decision making, financial management and support and development of ministries and staff. Among the items discussed were

- the role of Provincial Secretaries in provincial decision-making

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- relationships with Primates
- responsibility for management of assets
- empowering ministry and partnership through the ministry of the Provincial Secretaries
- prioritising responsibilities
- handling change

The Church in Conflict Situations

A very large number of Churches are offering ministry in or have recently experienced conflict situations. Two presentations were made by Humphrey Peters (Pakistan) and Hanna Mansour (Jerusalem and the Middle East). Apart from the issues of conflict, other aspects identified included being a minority faith, the importance of negotiation, reconciliation and healing for the Church and for wider society.

Anglican Communion Issues

Structures: The meeting was privileged to have a number of sessions on the structure and work of the Anglican Communion and of issues facing the Communion led by the Secretary General, the Revd Canon Kenneth Kearon. Apart from the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), the Primates Meeting and the Lambeth Conferences, the life of the Communion is also developed through a series of Commissions and Networks. The work of the Commissions is funded out of central Anglican Communion funds, (raised primarily through contributions), but participation in networks is funded by the participating Churches, who fund the engagement of their own delegates. Provincial Secretaries were asked to draw the attention of their Churches to the extent of the activities and to encourage participation where possible. Other items covered included the work of the Anglican Communion Office, communications, Theological Education for the Anglican Communion, the Anglican initiative on child protection issues, the Anglican UN Observer's Office and the Anglican Women's empowerment movement.

Funding: Director of Finance (ACC) Mr Andrew Franklin addressed a funding difficulty. He indicated that there is an urgent need to review the funding of the Anglican Communion organisation, both in terms of raising the amount that is required and also in calculating more fairly the proportion that is contributed by each Province. He has circulated a proposed review of the calculation of contributions based on the same model as that used by the World Council of Churches. This would result in the Church of Ireland contribution being assessed at an 8% per annum annual increase for the foreseeable future, in order to bring our contribution to the level that is proposed under this assessment. (An overall increase of some 60%). This will be circulated as a separate item for discussion at Standing Committee in November.

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Processes: Another interesting session covered the Listening Process, the Covenant Process (and how Provinces are handling the draft Covenant) and the 2008 Lambeth Conference – plans and preparations.

Global issues

Canon Margaret Larom (The Episcopal Church in the USA) led a session on **The Evangelism and Mission Conference (TEAM)** held in Johannesburg in March 2007. Her presentation focused on the gathering momentum to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This was a particular theme of the Evangelism and Mission Conference that met in December 2006 and also of the work of the Anglican Communion Observer at the UN and the Women's Network. The Church of Ireland representative on the International Anglican Women's Network is the Revd Canon Doris Clements.

Mr William Fittall (England) led a session on the diversity of challenges facing Provinces of the Communion in managing **the interface with the secular authorities**, and the dilemmas posed for Churches in different parts of the World by the changing political, legal and social context in which they are operating. The Provincial Secretaries reflected on their role at the interface between Church and secular authorities and considered the variety of ways in which the Provinces of the Communion are seeking to manifest the love and mercy of Jesus Christ throughout their societies.

Workshops

There were a number of interesting workshops held:

Spirituality and the administration task of the Provincial Secretary

led by Samitiana Razafindralambo (Indian Ocean)

This workshop was very reflective in its content, focusing on the spiritual, scriptural and theological context of the work of the Provincial Secretary and the need for personal spiritual nurturing to fulfil the role. It was also a time of sharing about the support received from families, the tensions that exist and the challenges inherent in the role.

Implications of changing patterns of ministry (including selection and training)

led by William Fittall (England)

The approach of international Christian NGOs to local indigenous Churches

led by Humphrey Peters (Pakistan)

The role of the Church in the fight against corruption

led by Aaron Mwesigye (Uganda) - Paper available

Church Growth where Churches are in minority situations

led by Humphrey Peters (Pakistan)

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This workshop flowed from two presentations made by the Provincial Secretaries from Cuba and from Pakistan. Colleagues were interested to hear of the *Guidelines for Interfaith Events and Dialogue* issued by the Church of Ireland's Committee for Christian Unity and the Bishops in 2007 and copies of these were requested by a number of Provincial Secretaries.

Communique : The meeting issued a communiqué at the end of its proceedings. It was proposed to hold the next meeting in three years time.

Provinces represented: Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia; Australia; Bangladesh; Brazil; Burundi; Canada; Central Africa; Central American Region; England; Episcopal Church (USA); Hong Kong; Indian Ocean; Ireland; Japan; Jerusalem and the Middle East; Kenya; Melanesia; Mexico; Myanmar; Pakistan; Philippines; Rwanda; Scotland; South India; Tanzania; Uganda; Wales; West Africa; West Indies. The Anglican Churches in Cuba and Sri Lanka were also represented. Congo, Korea and Sudan had to send last minute apologies.