

Inaugural consultation for theological college Principals – stimulating and productive

The first ever international consultation for Anglican Communion theological college Principals and Deans, gathering together representatives from 27 countries, has been held in Canterbury. We celebrate and affirm the vital significance of theological education for the life and health of the Church and the whole people of God. We believe that good theological education has transforming power, and can promote a global understanding of Anglican identity. Our consultation has contributed to the unity of the Anglican Communion, as well as enabling various models of ecumenical engagement to be explored. We identified through our meeting a shared commitment to fostering active and discerning Christian discipleship which embraces holistic mission and enables the building up of the Kingdom of God.

In our Bible Studies we explored a number of passages from Matthew's Gospel, which focused on the ministry of Jesus as a teacher and highlighted Matthew's call to all Christians to become disciples who bring out of their treasure store what is both new and old (Matthew 13.52). The consultation was held under the auspices of TEAC (Theological Education in the Anglican Communion), the Anglican Communion working party on theological education.

We particularly appreciated the rich diversity of our meeting and the considerable number of Anglican Provinces which were represented among us. The disparity of resources available for theological education between our different Provinces was a challenge that we were conscious of throughout our time together. We also heard of a number of colleges and seminaries which lack resources to the point that they are simply struggling to survive. The absence of some colleagues due to visa difficulties reminded us of the challenges theological educators face in a number of parts of the world. We also regretted the small number of women at the meeting. This was due to the under-representation of women in such roles around the Communion.

The consultation was held in the International Study Centre, Canterbury, England 12-18 May 2011. We were grateful for the opportunity to worship in Canterbury Cathedral and for the welcoming hospitality of those who live or work there.

We were immensely privileged to be addressed by Archbishop Rowan Williams. He described theology to us as a 'position report', a description of where we start and where we are now, namely standing 'in Christ' by virtue of our baptism and the Spirit, enabled along with Christ to cry 'Abba, Father.' Theology draws out implications of being in that particular place. The Archbishop asked us to explore how partnerships within the communion can be better used to do theology together. He challenged us not to lose sight of the 'big picture' among all the varied specialisms of theology, reminding us that 'the reason we follow the star' is to 'discover how to be human now.' The Archbishop ably conveyed to us his own sense of the joy of theological education and reminded us that if a theological institution did not engender a sense of excitement about being in Christ, then such an institution was ultimately failing. (The complete text of the Archbishop's address will shortly be made available.)

We express our thanks to Bishop Chad Gandiya, Bishop of Harare, Zimbabwe, a member of the TEAC Steering Group, who chaired most of our meeting, and to Bishop Stephen Pickard, also a TEAC Steering Group member, who led a number of key sessions, in particular one on the nature of being a theological college Principal. Other contributions were made by TEAC Steering Group members Revd Dr Patrick Tanhuanco, Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley and Canon Dr Edward Condry, and the TEAC Secretary, Mrs Clare Amos. There were a number of invited speakers: Canon Kenneth Kearon (Secretary-General of the Anglican Communion), Canon Dr Christopher Irvine, Canon Dr Jeremy

Worthen, Dr Alison Le Cornu, Mr Stephen Lyon and Mr Jan Butter. Representatives of several agencies or institutions (SPCK, USPG, Feed the Minds, Christ Church Canterbury University) shared in a session on partnership.

As the consultation has drawn to a close we have gathered together our thoughts and hopes in a number of practical proposals which we would like to see taken forward. These include the following:

1. Complete and publicise the database of theological colleges.
2. Establish a Network/network/Association of Anglican Theological Colleges and seminaries.
3. Support the development of regional networks.
4. Establish a mechanism – through a social networking site or similar – for the exchange of students and staff across the Communion.
5. Seek to establish a fund to facilitate such exchanges.
6. Facilitate conversations and dialogue between theological college Principals, bishops and Primates.
7. Seriously explore various possibilities to assist with accreditation of theological courses.
8. Explore with GlobTheoLib whether there can be an ‘interest group’ for Anglican Studies on their website.
9. Survey and collect syllabus from institutions about teaching Anglican Studies (ideally making these available online)
10. Seek to provide (online where possible) resources on Anglicanism in the languages of the Communion.
11. Hold a further gathering for Principals/Deans in 3 years time.
12. Include theological colleges within the Anglican cycle of prayer.

We wish to express our thanks to the Steering Group of TEAC, the TEAC Secretary, Mrs Clare Amos, the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, the Trustees of the St Augustine’s Foundation and the Trustees of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Anglican Communion Fund, for enabling this consultation.

On our return to our Provinces we pledge ourselves to sharing with our Archbishops and Bishops, and with appropriate Provincial structures, the significance and outcomes of this consultation. The words of the following prayer, written for TEAC a number of years ago, affirm our commitment to the work of theological education:

Christ our Teacher,
you alone are the way, the truth and the life:
so lead the Theological Education group in its work,
building trust and understanding,
that, in sharing our stories, vision and resources,
all your people may grow in faith
and your whole Church built up in love,
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and to the glory of the Father.
Amen.

Victor Atta-Baffoe, Ghana
Oge Beauvoir, Haiti
William Danaher, Canada
Sabiti Tibafa Daniel, Congo
Maurice Elliott, Ireland
Mark Harding, Australia
David Hewlett, England
Allen Hill, Peru
Alinafe Kalemba, Malawi
Anthony Kame, Solomon Islands
Ian Lam, Hong Kong

John Madinda, Tanzania
Peter Moi, Papua New Guinea
Joshua Musiyambiri, Zimbabwe
Seth Ndayirukiye, Burundi
Andrew Norman, England
Barney Pityana, South Africa
Ian E. Rock, Barbados
Jerome Sahabandhu, Sri Lanka
Peter Sedgwick, Wales
James B. Sallee, Liberia
San Myat Shwe, Myanmar
George Sumner, Canada
Patrick Tanhuanco, Philippines
Jenny Te Paa, Aotearoa/New Zealand
Aladekugbe Williams, Nigeria
Jeremiah Guen Seok Yang, Korea
Douglas Travis, United States of America
John Masato Yoshida, Japan

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