

Languages from every corner of the world reverberated around Canterbury Cathedral today as bishops from across the Anglican Communion joined their voices together in prayer.



Bishops representing around 165 countries, joined in the Lord's Prayer in their own language during a moving Opening service for the 15th Lambeth Conference.

Music, prayers and readings were also heard in Maori, Bengali, Zulu, Cantonese and Shona as well as French, Spanish and English in a service [livestreamed to a global audience](#).

The Bishop of Lesotho, The Right Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe, delivering the sermon, spoke of how the Anglican Communion is "called to practise hospitality and to serve" in a world experiencing "serious pain and strife."



She said: "So how do we as the church – the Anglican church, demonstrate hospitality in a world that is going through and experiencing some serious pain and strife?"



“We do this by following the model that has been set for us by our saviour, and this model is not self-centred nor inward-looking. It calls us not to be navel-gazing but it calls us to first seek God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all the things that we wish for, that we yearn for, that we call for that we hope for will be given to us, but first we seek the Kingdom.

“As the Anglican communion we can and we have it in us to heal and serve the world, we do this by sharing what we have freely without the fear that we will run empty.

“Because our God is a God who provides and assures us that “those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed; they will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow faint”.

“Our jar will not be emptied, neither our jug fail. We serve a God who provides.”



During the service, a new primatial cross was presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Archbishop of Alexandria and Bishop of Egypt, the Most Revd Samy Shehata, in the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, one of the ecumenical guests at the service.

The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria was inaugurated as the 41st Province of the Anglican Communion during 2020. Covid protections prevented international travel to Egypt at the time, precluding the traditional presentation of the primatial cross to Archbishop Samy by the Archbishop of Canterbury.



The Archbishop of Canterbury, prayed at the start of the service that the Lambeth Conference would bring the bishops into deeper understanding of one another and deeper love for the world.

He said: "Let us pray earnestly for God's blessing upon those who are gathered here, that through our discussion and our walking together we may grow into deeper understanding of one another and deeper love for the world Jesus Christ came to save."

Speaking before the distribution of the Eucharist at the service, he said: "As we come to Communion, we are all aware that some who are here will not feel able to receive Communion, there are some by the rules of their own Church among our beloved and valued ecumenical guests.

"And there are others among us because of our own divisions. In this moment, let us as we take communion remain in silence when we are sitting in our place and pray for the healing of God's Church, not only the Anglican Communion but of the Church catholic and universal, that we may find by God's power the moment when we can come together throughout the world as one."

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### **Full text of the sermon by Dr Kgabe**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in your sight Lord my rock and my Redeemer.

As we gather in this 15th Lambeth Conference, we carry in our hearts and pressed on our minds, matters and situations that challenge and/or trouble our respective homes, countries, regions, dioceses and provinces. We also gather to celebrate the diversity and the gifts that have been generously given to us for the mission and ministry in God's church for God's world. As author of 1 Peter put it "like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

The readings set for today's eucharistic service have reoccurring keywords that can be summed up into two themes, namely servant leadership and hospitality. To be a servant-leader is to show hospitality.

Let me remind you of your consecration day the charge was read and the following words were said by the chief consecrator.

They said: the Church is the Body of Christ, the people of God and the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. In baptism, the whole Church is summoned to witness to God's redeeming love who reveals Godself to God's people through the normal, the physical, the temporal, and the mundane things of this life and thus to work for the coming of God's Kingdom.

To serve this royal priesthood, God has given particular ministries. Bishops are ordained to be Shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith, to proclaim God's word and leading God's people in mission. Obedient to the call of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Bishops are called to gather God's people and celebrate with them the sacraments of the new covenant. Thus, formed into a single communion of faith and love, the Church in each place and time is united with the Church in every place and time.

In this part of the Charge (Ordination of Bishops), there's a reminder and also an invitation to serve God's people and practise hospitality wherever we have been planted, sent and placed and we are to do this in season and out of season. And there's no limitation on how much you can be hospitable or how much you can serve God's people, it is on going and continuous.

As the church, we are called to practise hospitality and we are called to serve.

Hospitality, in the Oxford dictionary, is defined as "the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers." This was not enough for an African girl.

I look into my context what it means to be hospitable. In the African context, hospitality is defined as "the extension of generosity, giving freely without strings attached. It can also be seen as unconditional readiness to share." It is also the willingness to give, help, assist, love, and carry one another's burdens without necessarily putting profit or rewards as the driving force. This is what we call ubuntu "a person is a person through other persons" Umntu ngumtu nga bantu.

This hospitality is demonstrated in our old testament reading by the widow who welcomed and fed a stranger with her remaining diminutive food supplies. This act of hers could have resulted in death by starvation, as the text states "she told Elijah that she is gathering sticks so that she may go home and prepare a meal for herself and her son, that they may eat and die" (1 Kings 17: 12).

In our second reading the author of 1 Peter urges us to be hospitable, as he writes "be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God; serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." And in John's gospel, Jesus is quoted as saying; "So if I your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Hospitality can be a powerful and also a vulnerable thing to do. Powerful because you allow people into your space and share what you have with them. In most cases, the host is in control. Vulnerable, because in most cases, as a host, you allow strangers or stranger and friends into your space, into your domain. To welcome a guest into your home also involves being open to that person's presence by showing interest in what that person has to offer.

As a host you don't relax until the last guest has left without breaking your china.

Our readings today remind us that serving and service or servant-leadership and hospitality go together; the widow hosted Elijah and served him food. And through Elijah God promised her that “the jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that God sends rain on earth.”

Jesus Christ demonstrates this also in our gospel reading, we read that during the meal with friends and disciples he moved away from the table. And took a basin with water, demonstrates a new way of serving “by washing their feet, and directs that they should do that for each other. This is both an act of hospitality and service and love is central to this act.

So how do we as the church “the Anglican church, demonstrate hospitality in a world that is going through and experiencing some serious pain and strife? We do this by following the model that has been set for us by our saviour, and this model is not self-centred nor inward-looking. It calls us not to be navel gazing but it calls us to first seek God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all the things that we wish for, that we yearn for, that we call for that we hope for will be given to us, but first we seek the Kingdom.

As the Anglican communion we can and we have it in us to heal and serve the world, we do this by sharing what we have freely without the fear that we will run empty. Because our God is a God who provides and assures us that “those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow faint.” Our jar will not be emptied, neither our jug fail. We serve a God who provides.

How do we as the church demonstrate hospitality to each other? For many, the church has been a place of pain and hurt. We can and have it in us to serve God’s children, to love all God’s children, not only those who look like us, speak the same language as us or are of the same socio-economic or political class as us “all God’s children.

This Lambeth conference, this church of ours has the power and is capable of healing the world and healing the church, and as we do this 1 Peter reminds us “to maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.”

As I conclude, my prayer is that during our time together and beyond

May God’s name be hallowed and not ours!

May God’s will be done and not ours!

May God’s kingdom come and not ours!

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