

LETTER TO THE CHURCHES



THE TEXT

with COMMENTARY

by the Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll

Anglican House

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About the Cover Photo

The cover photo shows many of the 1,950 delegates (including 316 bishops, 669 other clergy and 965 laity) from around the world who gathered at GAFCON 2018 in Jerusalem because of errors in the church so profound as to undermine the very foundation of the Christian message.

This picture was taken on Day 5 of the conference (June 22, 2018) during the Communion Service at the Jerusalem International Convention Center. It is an official GAFCON photo by Jessie Parks of the GAFCON Photo Team. Used with permission. The photos on the back cover (except for Dr. Noll's) are also courtesy of GAFCON.

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by the Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll

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Letter to the Churches

I. THE TEXT

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LETTER TO THE CHURCHES

GAFCON ASSEMBLY 2018

22 June 2018

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Greetings from the land of the birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. The third Global Anglican Future Conference (Gafcon) was held in Jerusalem in June 2018, a decade after the inaugural Gafcon in 2008. Gafcon 2018, one of the largest global Anglican gatherings, brought together 1,950 representatives from 50 countries, including 316 bishops, 669 other clergy and 965 laity. A unanimity of spirit was reflected throughout the Conference as we met with God in the presence of friends from afar. We celebrated joyful worship, engaged in small group prayer and were inspired by presentations, networks and seminars.

We met together around the theme of “Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations”. Each day began with common prayer and Bible exposition from Luke 22-24, followed by plenary sessions on God’s Gospel, God’s Church and God’s World.

PROCLAIMING GOD’S GOSPEL

We renewed our commitment to proclaim the gospel of the triune God in our churches and in all the world. Our Chairman reminded us in his opening address: “God’s gospel is the life-transforming message of salvation from sin and all its consequences through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is both a declaration and a summons: announcing what has been done for us in Christ and calling us to repentance, faith and submission to his Lordship.” It involves the restoration and reaffirmation of God’s original creative purposes. It is addressed to men, women and children and it is our only hope in the light of the final judgment and the reality of hell.

This is God’s gospel, the gospel concerning his Son (Romans 1:1-3). The centre of the gospel message is this one person, Jesus Christ, and all that he has done through his perfect life, atoning death, triumphant resurrection and glorious ascension. In our daily expositions, we followed Jesus’ path from the judgments by Pilate and the Jewish leaders, to

his death for us on the cross, to his breaking the bonds of death on Easter morning and to his commission to the disciples to proclaim “repentance for the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations” (Luke 24:47). The uniqueness of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of the gospel: “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The gospel confronts us in the midst of our confusion and sin but it does not leave us there. It includes a summons to repentance and a call to believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15), which results in a grace-filled life. The ascended Christ gave his Spirit to empower his disciples to take this gospel to the world.

Yet faithful proclamation of this gospel is under attack from without and within, as it has been from apostolic times (Acts 20:28-30).

External attacks include superstitious practices of sacrifices and libations that deny the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. Some religions deny the unique person and work of Christ on the cross, and others are innately syncretistic. Secularism seeks to exclude God from all public discourse and to dismantle the Christian heritage of many nations. This has been most obvious in the redefinition of what it means to be human, especially in the areas of gender, sexuality and marriage. The devaluing of the human person through the advocacy of abortion and euthanasia is also an assault upon human life uniquely created in the image of God. Militant forms of religion and secularism are hostile to the preaching of Christ and persecute his people.

Internally, the “prosperity gospel” and theological revisionism both seek in different ways to recast God’s gospel to accommodate the surrounding culture, resulting in a seductive syncretism that denies the uniqueness of Christ, the seriousness of sin, the need for repentance and the final authority of the Bible.

Tragically, there has been a failure of leadership in our churches to address these threats to the gospel of God. We repent of our failure to take seriously the words of the apostle Paul: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30).

We dedicate ourselves afresh to proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations, working together to guard the gospel entrusted to us by our Lord and his apostles.

REFORMING GOD'S CHURCH

The gospel of God creates the church of God. Through the invitation of the gospel, God calls all people into fellowship with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the word of the gospel goes forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, they respond through the work of the Holy Spirit to repent, believe and be baptised, and are thereby joined to Christ's body which is his church (Acts 2:37-44; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). As members of Christ's body, they are sanctified in him, called to live lives of holiness and to be salt and light in the world.

One Conference speaker reminded us: "In the councils of the church, we should not mimic the ways of the world but gather to pray, to praise (i.e., to be eucharistic), to consult, to decide, and if necessary to discipline. These gatherings should be properly conciliar in nature, decisive in moving the church forward in its mission and common life. There should be the will to exercise loving but firm discipline to bring sinners to repentance and restoration." Likewise at the Communion level, there are times when the leadership must come together to exercise its responsibility to discipline an erring member province.

For some time, our Communion has been under threat from leaders who deny the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture. In the late 20th century, human sexuality became the presenting issue.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference by a huge majority (526 to 70) approved Resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality, which affirmed the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19 that there are only two expressions of faithful sexuality: lifelong marriage between a man and a woman or abstinence. The resolution rightly called for pastoral care for same sex attracted persons. At the same time, it described homosexual practice as "incompatible with Scripture" and rejected both the authorisation of same sex rites by the Church and the ordination of those in same sex unions.

Lambeth Resolution I.10 reflected the rising influence of the Global South in the Communion. The ground for the Resolution had been prepared by the 1997 Kuala Lumpur Statement of the Global South Anglican Network. Our collaboration with the Global South Network has been ongoing, and its leaders took an active part in this Conference.

The subsequent rejection of Lambeth I.10 in word and deed by the Episcopal Church USA and later by some other Anglican provinces led to a "tear [in] the fabric of the Communion at its deepest level", followed by ten years of futile meetings in which the four

Instruments of Communion failed to exercise the necessary discipline. The Primates' Meeting repeatedly called upon these provinces to repent and return to the faith. Yet their efforts were undermined by other Instruments of Communion, culminating in the failure of the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury to carry out the clear consensus of the Primates' Meeting in Dar es Salaam in 2007.

In the Jerusalem Statement and Declaration, the 2008 Global Anglican Future Conference took up the challenge of restoring biblical authority (and the teaching on human sexuality in particular) by affirming the primacy of the Bible as God's Word written and going back to the other sources of Anglican identity - the Creeds and Councils of the ancient church, the 39 Articles, the *1662 Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordinal. The Conference also constituted a Primates Council and authorised it to recognise Anglican churches in areas where orthodox Anglicans had been deprived of their church property and deposed from holy orders.

During the past twenty years, the Instruments of Communion have not only failed to uphold godly discipline but their representatives have refused to recognise our concerns and have chosen instead to demean Gafcon as a one-issue pressure group and accuse it of promoting schism, where in fact the schismatics are those who have departed from the teaching of the Bible and the historic doctrine of the Church. Slogans such as "walking together" and "good disagreement" are dangerously deceptive in seeking to persuade people to accommodate false teaching in the Communion.

We grieve for the situation of our global Communion as it has been hindered from fulfilling its God-appointed task of reaching the world for Christ. We repent of our own failures to stand firm in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13). But we do not lose hope for the future, and note that there is strong support for the reform of our Communion. Prior to Gafcon 2018, delegates overwhelmingly affirmed the following propositions:

- Lambeth Resolution I.10 reflects the unchangeable teaching of the Bible;
- the Gafcon movement should continue to be faithful to the Jerusalem Declaration;
- the Primates Council should continue to recognise confessing Anglican jurisdictions.

Over the past twenty years, we have seen the hand of God leading us toward a reordering of the Anglican Communion. Gafcon has claimed from the beginning: "We are not leaving the Anglican Communion; we are the majority of the Anglican Communion seeking to

remain faithful to our Anglican heritage.” As Archbishop Nicholas Okoh stated in the inaugural Synodical Council: “We are merely doing what the Communion leadership should have done to uphold its own resolution in 1998.”

We give thanks for the godly courage of our Gafcon Primates in contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We applaud their decision to authenticate and recognise the provinces of the Anglican Church in North America and the Anglican Church in Brazil, to recognise the Anglican Mission in England and to consecrate a Missionary Bishop for Europe. This has become necessary because of the departure from the faith by The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church of Brazil and the Scottish Episcopal Church. At Gafcon 2018, we heard many testimonies of faithful Anglicans who have been persecuted by those holding office in their respective provinces, merely because they would not surrender to, nor be compromised by, the false gospel that these leaders profess and promote. We also recognise the Gafcon Primates’ willingness to assist faithful Anglicans in New Zealand where the Anglican Church has recently agreed to allow bishops to authorise the blessing of same sex unions.

As the Gafcon movement matures, it has also seen the need for a more conciliar structure of governance. We endorse the formation of Gafcon Branches where necessary and of a Panel of Advisors, comprising bishops, clergy and lay representatives from each Gafcon Province and Branch, to provide counsel and advice to the Primates Council. Together with the Primates, the Panel of Advisors form a Synodical Council to bring recommendations to the Gafcon Assembly. The Synodical Council met for the first time at this Conference.

In light of the recommendations of the Synodical Council, we respectfully urge the Archbishop of Canterbury

- to invite as full members to Lambeth 2020 bishops of the Province of the Anglican Church in North America and the Province of the Anglican Church in Brazil and
- not to invite bishops of those Provinces which have endorsed by word or deed sexual practices which are in contradiction to the teaching of Scripture and Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, unless they have repented of their actions and reversed their decisions.

In the event that this does not occur, we urge Gafcon members to decline the invitation to attend Lambeth 2020 and all other meetings of the Instruments of Communion.

REACHING OUT TO GOD'S WORLD

Our conference theme has been “Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations.” We have received the gospel through the faithful witness of previous generations. Yet there are still billions of people who are without Christ and without hope. Jesus taught his disciples: “this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matthew 24:14).

We repent for the times and seasons when we have only preached to ourselves and not embraced the difficult task of reaching beyond our own cultural groups in obedience to God's call to be a light to the nations (cf. Acts 13:47). In faith and obedience, we joyfully recommit ourselves to the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

In order to expand our ability to proclaim Christ faithfully to the nations in both word and deed, we launched nine strategic networks.

Theological Education To promote effective theological training throughout the Anglican Communion

Church Planting To expand church planting as a global strategy for evangelisation

Global Mission Partnerships To promote strategic cross-cultural mission partnerships in a globalized world

Youth and Children's Ministry To be a catalyst for mission to young people and children of all nations so that they may become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ

Mothers' Union To expand the potential of this global ministry to promote biblical patterns of marriage and family life

Sustainable Development To establish global partnerships which work with the local church to bring sustainable and transformative development

Bishops Training Institute To serve the formation of faithful and effective episcopal leadership throughout the Communion

Lawyers Task Force To address issues of religious freedom and matters of concern to Anglican lawyers and Chancellors and to further the aims of the Jerusalem Declaration

Intercessors Fellowship To inspire and develop globally connected regional and national intercessory prayer networks

In the world into which we go to proclaim the gospel, we shall encounter much which will need us to walk in paths of righteousness and mercy (Hosea 2:19; Micah 6:8). We commit

to encouraging each other to give strength to the persecuted, a voice to the voiceless, advocacy for the oppressed, protection of the vulnerable, especially women and children, generosity to the poor, and continuing the task of providing excellent education and health care. As appropriate, we encourage the formation of other networks to assist in addressing these issues.

OUR GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE

To proclaim the gospel, we must first defend the gospel against threats from without and within. We testify to the extraordinary blessings on this Conference, which leads us to call upon God even more, that the Anglican Communion may become a mighty instrument in the hand of God for the salvation of the world. We invite all faithful Anglicans to join us in this great enterprise of proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

(Ephesians 3:20-21)

GLOSSARY

Conciliar - Working as a council of the church

Gafcon Branches - A Branch may be established by application to the Gafcon Primates Council in a province whose Primate is not a member of the Gafcon Primates Council.

Gafcon Primates - Primates who have endorsed the Jerusalem Declaration and have been admitted to the Gafcon Primates Council.

Gafcon Provinces - Provinces whose House of Bishops or Provincial Synod have endorsed the Jerusalem Declaration and whose Primate is a member of the Gafcon Primates Council.

Instruments of Communion - There are four Instruments: The Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council.

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion.aspx>

Jerusalem Statement and Declaration - The Statement agreed by the inaugural Gafcon Assembly in 2008.

<https://www.gafcon.org/resources/the-complete-jerusalem-statement>

Kuala Lumpur Statement - approved by the Global South Anglican Network in 1997.

http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/the_kuala_lumpur_statement_on_human_sexuality_2nd_emcounter_in_the_south_10

Lambeth Resolution I.10 - approved by the Lambeth Conference in 1998.

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1998/section-i-called-to-full-humanity/section-i10-human-sexuality>

Panel of Advisors - consists of one bishop, one clergy and one lay representative from each Gafcon Province and Gafcon Branch, who give counsel and advice to the Gafcon Primates.

Primates' Meeting - A meeting of Primates called by the Archbishop of Canterbury

Synodical Council - Consists of the Panel of Advisors and the Gafcon Primates Council meeting together to make recommendations to the Gafcon Assembly

Letter to the Churches

II. COMMENTARY

By The Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This Commentary, like my earlier analysis of the 1998 Lambeth Resolution I.10 and of the 2008 Jerusalem Declaration (Essays 6 and 7 of [my book](#)), aims to expound the meaning and significance of the “Letter to the Churches” of the 2018 Global Anglican Future Conference in Jerusalem. While I was Convener of the Statement Group that produced the final text and I include some background information here and in this [Anglican TV interview](#), I do not write as an official spokesman for Gafcon. The Letter to the Churches speaks for itself.

Part One

Preparations

A day or two prior to the presentation of the Gafcon Letter to the Churches to the Assembly in Jerusalem, people would come to me and ask how it was going. “I am not a woman,” I’d reply, “but I think it feels something like the labor pains before delivery. Not pleasant at all when you are in the midst of it, but, one hopes, with a happy issue at the end.” In a larger sense, I believe that through the Gafcon movement, which entails much grief and labor, God is bringing a new heir of the Anglican tradition to birth.

Forming a Statement Group

The Statement Group was not listed on the pre-Gafcon program and only announced on the penultimate day of the Conference. The reason for this was simply that we saw ourselves as servants of the Conference and did not want to be lobbied by any particular pressure group, inside or outside Gafcon. A core of the Statement Group members were Gafcon veterans going back to the “Theological Resource Group” that had produced the pre-GAFCON book [*The Way, the Truth and the Life*](#) (2008), and the post-GAFCON commentary on the Jerusalem Declaration [*Being Faithful*](#) (2012). This core included myself, Archbishop Laurent Mbanda of Rwanda, Bishop David Onuoha of Nigeria, Dr. John Senyonyi, Vice Chancellor of Uganda Christian University, and Dr. Mark Thompson, Principal of Moore College, Sydney. Several of us – our Chairman Archbishop Glenn Davies, Mark Thompson, Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali and myself – had served on the Statement Group in 2008 or 2013. In addition, new members, the Rev. Tim Anderson from Ireland, Canon Alison Barfoot from Uganda, and Bishop Tito Zavala from Chile, brought a breadth of experience from around the world. Finally, we were assisted greatly by Bishop Michael Stead (Secretary) and the Rev. Nigel Fortescue (Administrative Assistant), both from Sydney.

In early May the team was formed and we began to communicate with each other by email. Once in Jerusalem, we switched to WhatsApp as our constant guide.

The Questionnaire

The Gafcon Statement tradition, as announced first by Archbishop Peter Akinola in 2008, has been to have no pre-written text (cf. the predigested [2017 Lambeth Primates’ Communique](#)) but rather to seek the mind of the Conference. This year we decided to begin this process by means of a pre-Conference questionnaire to all delegates, as was done in 2008. However, what difference a decade makes technologically! In 2008, the questionnaire was presented to Conferees as they arrived by paper ballots which were collated by a team of a dozen volunteers. This year the same task was performed by an online “survey monkey”

which collected 600 responses before the Conference (a hundred or more paper questionnaires were collected at the Conference). The total response as of the first day of the Conference was 724, or 37% of attendees.

The survey contained three Yes/No questions. The *first* asks, after summarizing the teaching of Lambeth Resolution I.10: “*Do you believe that this Resolution reflects the unchangeable teaching of the Bible?*” The *second* asks, after quoting the original definition of Gafcon as a fellowship dedicated to reform, heal and revitalize the Anglican Communion: “*Do you believe Gafcon should continue to be faithful to this calling?*” The *third* asks, after noting the Primates Council’s mandate to authenticate and recognise confessing jurisdictions: “*Do you believe that the Gafcon Primates Council should continue to exercise this mandate?*”

The Questionnaire also included an open box for additional comments. We received, collated and read through 354 of these. The results of the survey are mentioned in the Letter to the Churches in the section on “Reforming God’s Church.”

The Letter notes that these questions were “overwhelmingly affirmed.” In fact, the “overwhelming” was more than 99% Yes. Some may quibble that these were set up for a positive response. In fact, each question relates to an important principle of Gafcon: that Lambeth I.10 contains essential Christian doctrine calling for Communion discipline; that Gafcon is a legitimate “Instrument” of the Anglican Communion; and that the Gafcon Primates are authorized to recognize confessing Provinces in North America and Brazil.

The Tone and Frame of the Statement

In the week prior to the Conference, as Convener I circulated to Statement Group members the 2008 Jerusalem Statement and the 2013 [Nairobi Communiqué](#) and added some observations about the “tone and spirit” of the Statement:

- **It should be evangelical**, that is, framed in terms of the Gospel to be proclaimed to the nations.
- **It should be biblical**, honoring Scripture as God’s Word written, with a suggestion to follow the Passion Week readings set for the Conference in Luke 22-24.
- **It should be concise and clear**, with no more than 3,000 words, and faithful to St. Paul’s standard that “we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:1). **Note:** The final text is 2,526 words, not counting the Glossary.

- **It should be memorable**, as was the Jerusalem Declaration and other parts of the 2008 Statement and the reference in 2013 to Gafcon as “an important and effective instrument of Communion during a period in which other instruments of Communion have failed.”
- **It should be bold and humble**. I said: “We need not only to condemn the false teaching and practice of our opponents, but we also need to confess our own failures of omission and commission.”
- **It should be spiritual**, expressing spiritual truths and responding to the Spirit speaking through the Conference.
- **It should be edifying**, recognizing that 2,000 people are coming with hopes to reform and build up the church, not just to have a holy jamboree.
- **It should be general in focus but with personal and specific examples**. I suggested that like St. Paul’s letters, this statement arises out of a specific crisis but aims to speak more widely to the eternal Gospel and the world Christ came to save.

At our first meeting, we settled on framing the Letter in terms of the daily Conference topics: “God’s Gospel,” “God’s Church,” and “God’s World” (we merged the fourth topic “God’s Strategy” into “God’s World”).

Coming to Jerusalem

I for one came to the Conference with considerable fear and trembling. We had not written a single word ahead of time and had a mere three full days before presenting a first draft to the Primates and the Assembly. To be honest, I felt a kind of writer’s block when I looked ahead to the week. Fortunately, as I was working my way through 2 Corinthians, Paul’s words gave me some comfort: “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

And so, I hope, it turned out to be.

Part Two

Coming to One Mind

“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28)

How does a church council go about coming to one mind? What an awesome task! The role of the Conference Statement, it seems to me, is to speak *to* those assembled and to speak *for* them to the wider church and world in the name of God. The role of the Statement Group is to so listen to the Conference Assembly that it can propose words for the Conference to speak. Again, what an awesome task.

It is even more complicated than that. Gafcon has discrete hierarchies that properly play a role in any message. The Primates, for one, exercise a particular oversight within the movement. And at GAFCON 2018 two other bodies came into play: the *Panel of Advisors* and the *Synodical Council*.

The *Panel of Advisors* emerged this year from concern that the Primates Council by itself was too “thin” as a governing structure and that a Primate might exercise a kind of “personal prelature,” without support of his Province and which might be overturned by his successor. In 2016, the Primates themselves set up a “Task Force on Structure” to consider this matter, and the Task Force in turn recommended that each Province have a “Panel of Assistors,” now called *Panel of Advisors*, comprising one bishop, one other clergy member, and one layperson. In addition, as Gafcon has developed non-Provincial Branches, each of them is likewise represented by three Advisors. The Panel of Advisors is a subsidiary body and, as its name indicates, advisory to the Primates Meeting, but in meeting with the Primates at and between Conferences, it can bring a broad perspective on the life of the wider church.

The Primates and the Panel of Advisors held an inaugural meeting on the first full day of the Conference and proposed three Resolutions. The first Resolution constituted the joint body as a *Synodical Council*, with the Primates holding final approval of any Resolutions. The second and third Resolutions raised two questions of urgent concern to be addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury with regard to Lambeth 2020. The Statement Group was tasked to convey the substance of these Resolutions in the Conference statement for approval by the Assembly.

The First Draft

A second major moment in seeking the mind of the Spirit came with the preparation of the First Draft of the statement. The Draft was presented to the Primates for review on the evening before its promulgation to the Conference. At that time one Primate, Archbishop Foley Beach, suggested that the statement be called a “Letter to the Churches,” and this

suggestion met with immediate assent. Then the next day the Statement Group Chairman, Archbishop Davies, read the first draft, as it was projected on-screen, to the entire Assembly, followed immediately with discussion by twenty-two regional groups.

The first reading was met with strong applause but not unanimous approval. It became clear in the regional groups that some members were dissatisfied with its tone. In addition, there were many specific suggestions for improvement: some factual (e.g., “billions” instead of “millions” of unreached people), some stylistic (e.g., whether “mankind,” “men and women” or “men, women and children” best represented the whole). The challenge for the Statement Group was to maintain the thrust of the first draft, to modify its tone, and to sharpen its details.

The Final Statement

Knowing that we had less than twenty-four hours to come up with the final Statement, most of the Statement Group members missed out on the Conference photo at the Temple steps and set to work, finishing the final draft after midnight. After getting a final Ok from the Chairman of the Primates Council, the Letter to the Churches was read to the Assembly on the final morning by Archbishop Laurent Mbanda. This time there was a virtually universal acclamation, and most who had been concerned on the first reading joined in the celebration.

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us...” No church gathering can claim the same authority as the Jerusalem Council in Acts. Indeed Councils have erred and do err. However, I would submit that the Gafcon 2018 Letter to the Churches deserves a serious hearing as the mind of the Spirit for the Anglican Communion in our time. The Gafcon Assembly having approved it, we commend it to the wider Church for honest consideration.

Part Three

Introducing the Letter

In this part and subsequent parts, I am presenting the text of the Letter to the Churches with my commentary.

The Title

LETTER TO THE
CHURCHES
GAFCON ASSEMBLY 2018

As mentioned in the previous part, one of the Primates – in fact, it was Archbishop Foley Beach, of the Anglican Church in North America – proposed the title “Letter to the Churches,” and almost immediately this proposal seemed right to our Statement Group. The 2008 Conference had issued the “Jerusalem Statement,” which included the “Jerusalem Declaration”; the 2013 Conference had followed with the “Nairobi Communique,” which included the “Nairobi Commitment.” The Global South Anglican Network had sent out six “Trumpets.” Lambeth Conferences prior to 2008 had been known by their Resolutions; since 2008 it seems they will be known for their [“Lambeth Indaba.”](#)

A “Letter to the Churches” suggests both the periodic nature of its message and the particular situation of the Anglican Communion at this time. The Assembly, though large and diverse, is not a random gathering but was specifically invited, Province by Province and region by region, and it acts as the final confirming body of the Gafcon movement.

The letter form of communication is well-known in the New Testament and is reflected in the Epistle readings in the liturgy. The most famous letter from a church council comes from Acts 15, where the first ecumenical council in Jerusalem penned a letter to the various mission churches. The tradition of sending “encyclical” letters from church leaders and councils is well established in church history. Some of the earliest church documents – the Letter of Clement, the Letter to Diognetus, the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch – use this format and have obtained wide authority apart from their original audiences. Similarly, decisions of church councils, whether epistolary in form or not, have been intended to be circulated and read by the wider church.

As I have argued above, Gafcon is not claiming some sort of canonical status for its statements. Only the Epistles of the New Testament possess final authority in matters of faith and life (Jerusalem Declaration, clause 2). At the same time, the Letter to the Churches is not a throwaway document. It was the subject of prayer, of genuine consultation and

substantial revision. It was read twice over and affirmed in a near unanimous acclamation, and hence can be considered the voice of the Assembly and, we trust, guided by the Holy Spirit. It is continuous with the two previous Gafcon statements in substance if not in name, and more distantly with the Resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences up to 1998. (Unlike Lambeth Resolutions the paragraphs are not numbered. The Statement Group considered whether to number the paragraphs but decided it was best to read it as a whole.)

The Epigraph

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

According to the 2008 Jerusalem Statement, Gafcon is “not just a moment in time, but a movement in the Spirit.” The Gafcon Assembly is an ecclesial body, a confessional body (every delegate subscribed to the Jerusalem Declaration), and a missional body. The banner verse from Acts 1:8 recalls Jesus’ promise to the future church on the Day of Pentecost. It also represents the ongoing “Great Commission” to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth, which is the Conference theme: “Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations.”

The Conference Setting

Greetings from the land of the birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. The third Global Anglican Future Conference (Gafcon) was held in Jerusalem in June 2018, a decade after the inaugural Gafcon in 2008. Gafcon 2018, one of the largest global Anglican gatherings, brought together 1,950 representatives from 50 countries, including 316 bishops, 669 other clergy and 965 laity. A unanimity of spirit was reflected throughout the Conference as we met with God in the presence of friends from afar. We celebrated joyful worship, engaged in small group prayer and were inspired by presentations, networks and seminars.

It is easy, I suppose, to pass quickly over the preliminaries of the Letter; however, as I learned living in Africa, greetings and introductions are quite important to establish a relationship and to be heard properly. This seemed true in the ancient world as well, as we can see from the opening sections of St. Paul’s letters to his churches. The Jerusalem Statement in 2008 and Nairobi Communique of 2013 also began by noting the place, the participants, and the various activities of the Conference. It reminds future readers that there was a living body of believers who produced the Letter on a specific occasion in history.

Several things in this opening are noteworthy. First of all, the 2018 Conference was held again, after ten years' time, in Jerusalem. Gafcon does not claim an apostolic see, or even an historic one like Canterbury. Instead, it has found Jerusalem, the mother city of the faith, an apt place to gather periodically. While we enjoyed the conveniences of the modern hotels and International Conference Center, we were "on pilgrimage" to sites reminding us of Jesus' presence, death, resurrection, and ascension such that our thoughts and minds might thither ascend to the "Jerusalem that is above" where He is seated at the right hand of the Father (Galatians 4:26).

We also could not but be aware that the Holy Land today is a place of political and religious strife as in the first century, symbolized in the "dividing wall" between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Ironically, some delegates found Israel a safer place than their home territory, as exemplified by the violence which Archbishop Ben Kwashi experienced on his return from Gafcon to Jos, Nigeria.

Secondly, the movement, it seems, has settled on a brand name. Originally, GAFCON referred to the first Global Anglican Future Conference. Other names were tried over the past ten years – the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans – and these names do convey its character. But through it all "Gafcon," however awkward, has stuck. So the Conference is *upper-case* GAFCON and the movement that spans the Conferences and ongoing structures and relationships that give it life, is *title-case* Gafcon. This nomenclature may change some day, but for the present everyone seems content to keep it as is.

Thirdly, as in 2008 and 2013, the Letter to the Churches includes a tally of the numbers attending, the various orders of ministry represented, and the global scope of the churches present. (Unfortunately, the delegation from South Sudan and Bishop Mouneer Anis from Egypt were denied exit visas to attend.) While numbers alone do not guarantee legitimacy, the fact that nearly two thousand Anglican Christians took time and expense to come to Jerusalem speaks strongly for the direction of global Anglicanism today. There was a brief verbal kerfuffle over whether the Conference was the largest global assembly of Anglicans ever, or for the past fifty years. Since much depends on how one defines terms, the Statement Group decided simply to speak of Gafcon as "one of the largest global Anglican gatherings."

Fourthly, the unanimity of spirit and joyful nature of worship at the Conference can best be understood by viewing the [photographic collection](#) and the [streaming videos](#) of the Conference.

In the ten years since the first Gafcon (and, before that, Lambeth 1998), global Anglicans have been involved with each other at all levels, not just in formal meetings but in visits back and forth, and in joint projects. The Communion Office complained that Gafcon was setting up parallel structures to its machinery, but this is not something new. It has been going on for twenty years, as in God's providence the crisis of the Communion has birthed new relationships ([Miranda Hassett](#) documented this phenomenon before 2008, but it has now expanded greatly).

Behind the scenes of teaching, worship and fellowship, the Conference was bathed in prayer. A prayer team was formed earlier in this year and was present at the major events leading up to and throughout the Conference (this ministry will continue as the [Intercessors Fellowship](#), one of the nine Networks set up by Gafcon). In the morning plenaries, delegates were assigned seating so that they might pray in small groups with brothers and sisters from different regions.

While the logistics of bringing two thousand people to Israel involved the tireless work of the Secretariat and the pre-GAFCON team, so many things worked together for good (and a few did not) that one can fairly claim that GAFCON 2018 was an answer to prayer.

Part Four

Proclaiming God's Gospel

We met together around the theme of “Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations”. Each day began with common prayer and Bible exposition from Luke 22-24, followed by plenary sessions on God’s Gospel, God’s Church and God’s World.

As agreed at our first meeting, the Statement Group followed the topics of the Conference plenaries. The first section on “Proclaiming God’s Gospel” falls into two main segments: the first *defines the Gospel* and the second *defends it* from false teachings and substitutes.

Defining the Gospel

PROCLAIMING GOD’S GOSPEL

We renewed our commitment to proclaim the gospel of the triune God in our churches and in all the world. Our Chairman reminded us in his opening address: “God’s gospel is the life-transforming message of salvation from sin and all its consequences through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is both a declaration and a summons: announcing what has been done for us in Christ and calling us to repentance, faith and submission to his Lordship.” It involves the restoration and reaffirmation of God’s original creative purposes. It is addressed to men, women and children and it is our only hope in the light of the final judgment and the reality of hell.

This is God’s gospel, the gospel concerning his Son (Romans 1:1–3). The centre of the gospel message is this one person, Jesus Christ, and all that he has done through his perfect life, atoning death, triumphant resurrection and glorious ascension. In our daily expositions, we followed Jesus’ path from the judgments by Pilate and the Jewish leaders, to his death for us on the cross, to his breaking the bonds of death on Easter morning and to his commission to the disciples to proclaim “repentance for the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations” (Luke 24:47). The uniqueness of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of the gospel: “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The gospel confronts us in the midst of our confusion and sin but it does not leave us there. It includes a summons to repentance and a call to believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15), which results in a grace-filled life. The ascended Christ gave his Spirit to empower his disciples to take this gospel to the world.

This section begins with a quotation from the keynote exposition by Gafcon Chairman, Archbishop Nicholas Okoh, defining briefly what is meant by “God’s Gospel.” The expression “God’s Gospel,” while unusual in the New Testament, sets the theme of the Epistle to the Romans (1:1). Paul goes on to identify the Gospel with the Person and Work of Jesus Christ the Son of God (1:2-4), who commissioned Paul and the Apostles to “bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (1:5-6).

Proclaiming God’s Gospel is a “performative” act, that is, it evokes in those with ears to hear faith and obedience through the Holy Spirit. Gafcon is thus Evangelical in its teaching and evangelistic in seeking hearers to be born again in water and the Spirit (John 3:5). So also Archbishop Okoh states: “It is both a declaration and a summons: announcing what has been done for us in Christ and calling us to repentance, faith and submission to his Lordship.”

God’s Gospel comes to us not just in human rhetoric “but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). For those who attended GAFCON 2018, the proclamation of the Gospel cannot be separated from the experience of daily reading and meditating on Jesus’ trial, death, resurrection and ascension in Luke’s Gospel, by trips to the holy sites where he walked and taught, and from choruses of praise, with 2,000 believers exclaiming: “We shall proclaim Christ faithfully to the Nations.”

As Paul demonstrates at length in Romans 1-3, God’s Gospel can only be understood in the context of the universal reality of human sin and rebellion against God, the gracious offer of forgiveness through God’s grace and Christ’s atoning death on the cross, and the awesome reality of final judgment. Hence the Gospel “is our only hope in the light of the final judgment and the reality of hell.”

Defending the Gospel

Yet faithful proclamation of this gospel is under attack from without and within, as it has been from apostolic times (Acts 20:28-30).

External attacks include superstitious practices of sacrifices and libations that deny the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. Some religions deny the unique person and work of Christ on the cross, and others are innately syncretistic. Secularism seeks to exclude God from all public discourse and to dismantle the Christian heritage of many nations. This has been most obvious in the redefinition of what it means to be human, especially in the areas of gender, sexuality and marriage. The devaluing of the human person through the advocacy of abortion and euthanasia is also an assault upon human life uniquely created in the image of God. Militant forms of

religion and secularism are hostile to the preaching of Christ and persecute his people.

Internally, the “prosperity gospel” and theological revisionism both seek in different ways to recast God’s gospel to accommodate the surrounding culture, resulting in a seductive syncretism that denies the uniqueness of Christ, the seriousness of sin, the need for repentance and the final authority of the Bible.

Tragically, there has been a failure of leadership in our churches to address these threats to the gospel of God. We repent of our failure to take seriously the words of the apostle Paul: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30).

We dedicate ourselves afresh to proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations, working together to guard the gospel entrusted to us by our Lord and his apostles.

Proclaiming God’s Gospel is also an apologetic act, explaining and defending it against false teachings. The second part of this section draws from Paul’s farewell speech to the elders of the Ephesian church:

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:28-30)

The Letter to the Churches is, among other things, a letter to *ourselves*. Most of the attendees at the Conference are “elders” in the church, whether bishops (and their wives), or clergy or lay leaders. Anglican clergy will hear echoes of their own ordination oath here:

For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The Church and Congregation whom you must serve, is his Spouse, and his Body. And if it shall happen that the same Church, or any Member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue.

Paul had fought the good fight for the Gospel in his ministry, but he makes clear that this fight will go on throughout the church’s history and that attacks will come from outside and from inside. The Letter lists a number of contemporary attacks from outside: residual superstition in traditional cultures; denial of the uniqueness of Christ, most obviously by

Islam but equally by postmodern “pluralism”; the distortion of human nature in false sexuality; and the destruction of God’s image in abortion and euthanasia.

These attacks, the Letter points out, are not mere debating points but include violent extremism. This reality was [illustrated](#) less than a week after the Conference when militant Islamic tribesmen burned churches and killed Christians in Jos, Nigeria, the home of Archbishop Ben Kwashi, Gafcon’s General Secretary-elect. And of course, they are tokens of the wider persecution of the church in recent decades. The response of the Christians in Jos was not only endurance of suffering but a renewed commitment to witness to Christ.

The Letter then cites internal attacks from the “prosperity gospel” and theological revisionism. I particularly liked this linking of liberal elites with “name it and claim it” preachers, since at heart both groups take offense at the Gospel and try to reshape it to fit worldly concerns. One speaker at GAFCON mentioned that some Pentecostals have rewritten the wedding vows to eliminate the phrase “for richer ~~for poorer~~”; in the West revisionists have replaced marriage of “~~this Man and this Woman~~” with “Person A and Person B.”

In another striking moment, Church of England evangelist Rico Tice [explained](#) his recent resignation from the Archbishop’s Commission on Evangelism, headed by a revisionist bishop:

I think it is a great wickedness to tell people who are on the road to destruction that they are not. To tell them that they are safe when it comes to God’s wrath when they are not... If we have church leaders that are putting people on that road to destruction it is a salvation issue. That is why we have to distance ourselves.

In 2008 Gafcon explained the compelling cause for its assembling in terms of a “false gospel” that was being taught in the Anglican Communion and condoned by the “Instruments.” Sexuality may be the presenting issue in our day, but it is the precious Gospel of salvation for which we stand. As St. Paul puts it: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

This gospel is not merely a matter of personal salvation. It is corporate as well, given as a Commission by Christ to His apostolic church. This section of the Letter to the Churches concludes with a commitment by all the churches represented in Jerusalem: “We dedicate

ourselves afresh to proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations, working together to guard the gospel entrusted to us by our Lord and his apostles.”

Part Five

Reforming God's Church

The second main section of the Letter is titled “Reforming God’s Church.” It should come as no surprise that “Reforming God’s Church” should be the longest section of the Letter to the Churches from a Conference held as a result of a “tear in the fabric” of the church catholic and of the Anglican Communion. For this reason, I shall devote two parts to this topic under the headings “Reforming God’s Church” and “Reordering the Anglican Communion.”

Global Anglicans are *Great Commission Christians*, proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations in the power of the Spirit (Jerusalem Declaration, clauses 1 and 9); they are *catholic Christians*, committed to the historic creeds, councils and order of the Church (Jerusalem Declaration, clauses 3 and 7); and they are *Reformation Christians*, upholding and building on the confessional heritage of the 16th-17th century Church of England (Canon A5, and Jerusalem Declaration, clauses 2, 4, 5, and 6). The recent conflict in the churches of the Communion has brought all these aspects of our Anglican identity into play.

The first draft of the Letter to the Churches, presented on the penultimate day of the Conference, began by recalling the two decades of turmoil between Lambeth 1998 and the present. The thought was that many new attendees needed an explanation, an apologia for how we came to Jerusalem in 2008 and again in 2018. Front-loading this corporate history, however, made the Letter seem defensive and sharp-edged and took one’s eyes off the goal of “Proclaiming Christ to the Nations.” So in response to comments from the regional meetings after the first reading, the Statement Group condensed and rearranged the material about Gafcon’s history and identity. It did not, however, step back from its call to reform the church and reorder the Communion.

The Centrality of the Church

REFORMING GOD’S CHURCH

The gospel of God creates the church of God. Through the invitation of the gospel, God calls all people into fellowship with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the word of the gospel goes forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, they respond through the work of the Holy Spirit to repent, believe and be baptised, and are thereby joined to Christ’s body which is his church (Acts 2:37-44; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). As members of Christ’s body, they are sanctified in him, called to live lives of holiness and to be salt and light in the world.

This section begins by asserting the organic connection between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His Body the Church. All creedal Anglicans – Evangelicals, charismatics and Anglo-Catholics – agree that the “one holy catholic and apostolic Church” is an essential of the faith. But the Gospel comes first, mediated in Word and Sacrament. The Church does not create the Gospel; like the Virgin Mary, she receives and bears the Glad Tidings of Jesus to the world.

The Church is the forerunner of the Kingdom of God, and the keys to the Kingdom are *repentance and faith sealed in baptism*. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached Christ crucified and risen in such a way that the hearers asked the apostles: “Brothers, what shall we do?”

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” (Acts 2:38-39)

This is the paradigm of the Church – proclaiming, repenting, incorporating, reaching out and adding – which Gafcon intends to model for the global Anglican future.

Church Discipline

In his [plenary address](#) on “God’s Church,” Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali spoke of one other necessity of a wholesome church: godly discipline.

One Conference speaker reminded us: “In the councils of the church, we should not mimic the ways of the world but gather to pray, to praise (i.e., to be eucharistic), to consult, to decide, and if necessary to discipline. These gatherings should be properly conciliar in nature, decisive in moving the church forward in its mission and common life. There should be the will to exercise loving but firm discipline to bring sinners to repentance and restoration.” Likewise at the Communion level, there are times when the leadership must come together to exercise its responsibility to discipline an erring member province.

Anglicans believe in a church ordered in terms of doctrine, discipline and worship. A classic definition in this regard comes from the *Book of Homilies* (1563):

The true church is an universal congregation or fellowship of God’s faithful and elect people, built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone. And it hath always three notes or marks: Pure and sound doctrine; The sacraments ministered according to Christ’s holy institution; And the right use of ecclesiastical discipline. (*Homily for Whitsunday*)

Ultimately, one cannot have true doctrine without effective discipline. St. John puts it this way: “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6). Failure to exhort and correct false teaching and teachers is a sign that a church has lost its saltiness and cannot be a light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14).

Gafcon’s concern for church order is not focused on the local church or national churches, important though these are, but on the communion of churches and on how those who call themselves Anglicans *meet in council together*. The *conciliar* role of the Communion, so the Letter asserts, must include corporate discipline on occasions “when the leadership must come together to exercise its responsibility to discipline an erring member province.”

From Lambeth 1998 to GAFCON 2008

At this point the Letter recalls the history of the past twenty years, which is a litany of false teaching and failure to exercise the necessary communal discipline.

For some time, our Communion has been under threat from leaders who deny the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture. In the late 20th century, human sexuality became the presenting issue.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference by a huge majority (526 to 70) approved Resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality, which affirmed the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19 that there are only two expressions of faithful sexuality: lifelong marriage between a man and a woman or abstinence. The resolution rightly called for pastoral care for same sex attracted persons. At the same time, it described homosexual practice as “incompatible with Scripture” and rejected both the authorisation of same sex rites by the Church and the ordination of those in same sex unions.

The 2018 Letter is repeating the warning from 2008 that the Anglican Communion is being threatened by:

...a different ‘gospel’ (cf. Galatians 1:6-8) which is contrary to the apostolic gospel. This false gospel undermines the authority of God’s Word written and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the author of salvation from sin, death and judgement. Many of its proponents claim that all religions offer equal access to God and that Jesus is only *a* way, not *the* way, *the* truth and *the* life.

For those who doubt the extent of this false teaching, please look at [this indictment](#) of actions and quotations from the highest leadership of the Episcopal Church. It is not accidental that John Spong, whose “[Twelve Theses](#)” of a “New Reformation” deny all the

articles of the Creeds, that Charles Bennison, who [claims](#) “the Church wrote the Bible, and the Church can rewrite the Bible,” and that Katherine Jefferts Schori, who [preaches](#) that when St. Paul exorcised the slave girl in Acts 16, he “put himself in prison” by “depriving her of her gift of spiritual awareness” – yet these remain bishops in good standing in that church; and these references could be multiplied. The proposals brought to the 2018 Episcopal General Convention to rewrite its Prayer Book with “*expansive*” language for God (see my critique [here](#)) aim to deny the *exclusive* Name of the “one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

So the challenge to Anglican orthodoxy is not just about sex. Having said that, human sexuality is the particular battlefield on which we have been called to stand firm. The essential issue in the sexuality debate has to do with God’s good creation of man in His image, male and female (Genesis 1:27) and His intention that “a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). The Lord Jesus Christ explicitly upholds this “institution” of two sexes, one flesh when He says: “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6), and He goes on to make provision for those who live the single, abstinent life (Matthew 19:12). These are the two *exclusive* alternatives held out by the 1998 Lambeth Resolution. There is no third way.

Twenty years on, the “LGBTQ” movement is denying the “binary” (male-female) character of human nature in God’s image and replacing it with “gender fluidity.” In so doing, it is not only attempting to undermine marriage but personal identity altogether. And, following the secular culture, the same churches that normalized homosexuality twenty years ago have now normalized “transgendered” persons and relationships as fit examples for the flock of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 5:3).

Lambeth Resolution I.10 reflected the rising influence of the Global South in the Communion. The ground for the Resolution had been prepared by the 1997 Kuala Lumpur Statement of the Global South Anglican Network. Our collaboration with the Global South Network has been ongoing, and its leaders took an active part in this Conference.

The commitment of the Global South churches to Lambeth Resolution I.10 has been consistent and universal, even as more and more Western or Western-influenced churches

have followed the path of the Episcopal Church. The Global South Anglican Network [stated](#) in 2016:

We are grieved by those provinces and dioceses whose actions violate clear teaching of Scripture in Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution 1.10... By departing from the historic faith and order of God's people, they also undermine their moral witness to their own societies, and cause huge confusion among the Anglican faithful in our Churches in this globalising world.

The subsequent rejection of Lambeth I.10 in word and deed by the Episcopal Church USA and later by some other Anglican provinces led to a “tear [in] the fabric of the Communion at its deepest level”, followed by ten years of futile meetings in which the four Instruments of Communion failed to exercise the necessary discipline. The Primates’ Meeting repeatedly called upon these provinces to repent and return to the faith. Yet their efforts were undermined by other Instruments of Communion, culminating in the failure of the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury to carry out the clear consensus of the Primates’ Meeting in Dar es Salaam in 2007.

I have documented (see Essay 4 of [my book](#) and also [here](#)) the rejection of Lambeth I.10 and the failure of the Instruments to discipline the Episcopal Church in the years that followed the 1998 Lambeth Conference, culminating in the consecration of an openly homosexual bishop in 2003. The so-called “Windsor process,” which occupied much time and expense, warned that the actions of the Episcopal Church might “tear the fabric of the Communion at its deepest level” but then did nothing about it. The responsibility for the failure of the Instruments of Communion to discipline those who had violated biblical doctrine and morals is unequally placed: the Primates, especially those from the Global South, called repeatedly for repentance and obedience throughout this period and most clearly in 2007, but their call was undercut and ultimately negated by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Communion Office.

As Lambeth 2008 approached with no resolution of the crisis, Archbishop Peter Akinola commissioned a Statement for the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), titled “[The Road to Lambeth](#),” which warned:

The current situation is a twofold crisis for the Anglican Communion: a crisis of doctrine and a crisis of leadership, in which the failure of the “Instruments” of the Communion to exercise discipline, has called into question the viability of the Anglican Communion as a united Christian body under a common foundation of faith, as is

supposed by the Lambeth Quadrilateral. Due to this breakdown of discipline, we are not sure that we can in good conscience continue to spend our time, our money and our prayers on behalf of a body that proclaims two Gospels, the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Sexuality.

We must therefore receive assurances from the Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury that this crisis will be resolved before a Lambeth Conference is convened. There is no point, in our view, in meeting and meeting and not resolving the fundamental crisis of Anglican identity. We will definitely not attend any Lambeth Conference to which the violators of the Lambeth Resolution are also invited as participants or observers.

Archbishop Rowan Williams ignored “The Road to Lambeth” and invited all the bishops of the Episcopal Church except Bishop Gene Robinson (*note*: the offense was not just Robinson’s example but the teaching of those who elected and consecrated him, as Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5:19 and 18:5-6).

In consequence, the Global Anglican Future Conference met in Jerusalem in June 2008. A reformation had begun.

Part Six

Reordering the Communion

Jerusalem 2008

In the Jerusalem Statement and Declaration, the 2008 Global Anglican Future Conference took up the challenge of restoring biblical authority (and the teaching on human sexuality in particular) by affirming the primacy of the Bible as God's Word written and going back to the other sources of Anglican identity – the Creeds and Councils of the ancient church, the 39 Articles, the *1662 Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordinal. The Conference also constituted a Primates Council and authorised it to recognise Anglican churches in areas where orthodox Anglicans had been deprived of their church property and deposed from holy orders.

Global Anglicans, as I have argued, are Great Commission Christians, catholic Christians, and Reformation Christians. None of the climactic events or the classic creeds and confessions of church history have occurred without contention and conflict. The first Council of Jerusalem addressed the challenge of Jewish Christians who questioned St. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. The Great Ecumenical Councils of the 4th and 5th centuries involved challenges to catholic teaching on the nature of God and Christ. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century involved disputation with Rome over the nature of biblical authority and the Gospel proclamation of salvation by grace through faith alone.

The English Reformers, in upholding the central teaching of the Protestant Reformation, claimed that this doctrine was continuous with the "rule of faith" of the ancient church, which itself was continuous with the Apostles. Hence to this day Canon A5 "Of the doctrine of the church of England" asserts:

The doctrine of the Church is grounded in the Holy Scriptures and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular, such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal.

The Jerusalem Statement is a reaffirmation of this classic Anglican position, with a supplementary Declaration addressing particular issues of our day. As I have argued [elsewhere](#), the question Gafcon was asking the wider Communion is "Who Moved?"

The departures from historic Anglican faith and practice outlined in Part Five have had critical consequences at the local level. In many places in the West one can no longer find a local Anglican congregation where the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered (Article XIX). The rampant heresy in the Episcopal Church USA and

other Western jurisdictions has led clergy, congregations, and whole dioceses to “differentiate” themselves for conscience’ sake into networks and finally into independent jurisdictions recognized by Global South provinces. This separation has led in turn to lawsuits which have forced congregations to walk away from their long-cherished property.

At GAFCON 2018, we heard stories of the persecution of believers, some by militant Islamists, some by militant revisionists. It was noted that while those Anglicans on the front line of Islam have testified “even unto death,” those in the West are facing different but no less real threats from political and religious elites who accuse them of “hate speech.” One pastor in the USA and his wife [described](#) the eviction of his congregation from its building, later to find a crane removing the cross from the roof because the bishop had leased the building as a Muslim study center.

In 2008, the Primates, bishops and other representatives in Jerusalem concluded that the departure from this classic Anglican standard and the unwillingness of the existing Instruments to exercise discipline necessitated extraordinary action, and hence they took the step of forming a Gafcon Primates Council, with the mandate to admit member churches (Provinces and now “Branches”) not formally recognized by the Instruments.

Heresy and Schism

During the past twenty years, the Instruments of Communion have not only failed to uphold godly discipline but their representatives have refused to recognise our concerns and have chosen instead to demean Gafcon as a one-issue pressure group and accuse it of promoting schism, where in fact the schismatics are those who have departed from the teaching of the Bible and the historic doctrine of the Church. Slogans such as “walking together” and “good disagreement” are dangerously deceptive in seeking to persuade people to accommodate false teaching in the Communion.

The first GAFCON was convened after the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to carry out the resolutions of the Primates and invited Gene Robinson’s Episcopal enablers to Lambeth in 2008. Since that time, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Anglican Communion Office have steadfastly refused to recognize the Gafcon movement’s theological concerns or its Primates Council, despite the fact that Gafcon represents about half of the world’s Anglicans.

In the run-up to GAFCON 2018, Archbishop Justin Welby referred to Gafcon as a “[ginger group](#),” which is a British term for a small one-issue pressure group. More significantly, the

Anglican Communion Office General Secretary, Bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, [wrote](#) all the Primates just prior to the Jerusalem Conference, stating that Gafcon “appears to be setting up what clearly looks like a rival structure that is clearly not in conformity with our understanding of what it means to be Anglican.”

The claim that anyone who is not recognized by Canterbury is not Anglican was voiced in the (unsigned) Primates’ Meeting Communiqué of 2017 and again in a recently released document from the “Archbishop of Canterbury’s Task Group,” which states: “We wish to make clear that those who break communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury have placed themselves outside the Anglican Communion.”

The implication of these statements is that Gafcon is fomenting schism. The charge of dividing Christ’s Church is weighty indeed, one made against the Church of England by Rome at the time of the Reformation. The “judicious” Richard Hooker replied this way:

To [those] by whom we are accused for schism and heresy, we have often made our reasonable and in the sight of God, I trust, allowable answers. For in the way which they call heresy, “we worship the God of our fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets” (Acts 24:14). That which they call schism, we know to be our reasonable service unto God and obedience to his voice which crieth shrill in our ears, “Go out of Babylon, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). (“Sermon on Jude” §15)

For Hooker – and his Roman Catholic opponents – heresy is intrinsically schismatic. Like Hooker, we in Gafcon deny that we are schismatic, but rather that we are called to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel, come what may.

Unlike Hooker and the Reformers, the Lambeth Establishment today wants to banish the word “heresy.” “Good disagreement” and “walking together” are buzz-words meant to paper over a classic distinction between essential truths of the faith and secondary matters (“adiaphora”).

Gafcon has, on the one hand, welcomed a diversity of Anglican traditions (see Jerusalem Declaration, clause 12), but it has equally refused to compromise on essentials and has argued that these essentials include obedience to the moral commandments (Article VII). While we do not consider marriage a sacrament, we do see it as an unchangeable institution established by the Creator and reflecting the relationship of Christ to His Church. To welcome the practices of LGBTQ and same-sex marriage as mere lifestyle choices or even “justice” issues is to mock God’s Word and transgress His Way of life.

We grieve for the situation of our global Communion as it has been hindered from fulfilling its God-appointed task of reaching the world for Christ. We repent of our own failures to stand firm in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13). But we do not lose hope for the future, and note that there is strong support for the reform of our Communion. Prior to Gafcon 2018, delegates overwhelmingly affirmed the following propositions:

- Lambeth Resolution I.10 reflects the unchangeable teaching of the Bible;
- the Gafcon movement should continue to be faithful to the Jerusalem Declaration;
- the Primates Council should continue to recognise confessing Anglican jurisdictions.

A high price has been paid in the conflict within Anglicanism, resulting in a waste of money spent on lawsuits and needless meetings, in a loss of members who have been disillusioned and left the church, and in the hindering of mission to the lost, the kind of mission that Anglicans in previous generations took around the world. We in Gafcon own our share in this loss, as we have been complacent, distracted by rivalries, and lacking in godly zeal.

Through all this, however, the Global Anglican Future Conference relies on this promise for our churches that “I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

The foundation of the Anglican future has now been laid in actions taken over these twenty years and affirmed by our membership toward a reformed, revived and reordered Communion. As noted in Part Two, the Statement Group polled the membership of the Conference beforehand with three questions that epitomize the direction of the Gafcon movement. The response was virtually unanimous: move forward with reforming God’s Church.

Reforming, Restoring, Reordering

Over the past twenty years, we have seen the hand of God leading us toward a reordering of the Anglican Communion. Gafcon has claimed from the beginning: “We are not leaving the Anglican Communion; we are the majority of the Anglican Communion seeking to remain faithful to our Anglican heritage.” As Archbishop Nicholas Okoh stated in the inaugural Synodical Council: “We are merely doing what the Communion leadership should have done to uphold its own resolution in 1998.”

The above paragraph, it seems to me, best speaks for Gafcon's vision for the future of the Anglican Communion.

- **It sees God's providential hand at work in the crisis of the past twenty years.** From its beginning Gafcon has seen itself as "a movement of the Spirit, not a moment in time." Of course, this claim can be challenged and has been, but as each successive Conference demonstrates, the Gafcon movement is not going away.
- **It denies that it is leaving the Anglican Communion.** It sees itself as an instrument in calling the Communion to its true identity in Christ and the Gospel. The Nairobi Communique states: "We believe we have acted as an important and effective instrument of Communion during a period in which other instruments of Communion have failed both to uphold gospel priorities in the Church, and to heal the divisions among us."
- **It claims to represent the majority of the Communion.** Statisticians may quibble over this claim, but the reality is that Gafcon, along with the Global South Anglican Network, speaks from the vital center of world Christianity.
- **It is restoring the doctrine, discipline, and order to the Communion** which the "Instruments of Communion" failed to do. One cannot move forward until one has returned to the point of divergence in 1998. Having said that, Gafcon is not living in the past but moving into the future.

Gafcon believes that it has a historic vocation to reform, restore and reorder the Anglican Communion, as was said at the first council in Jerusalem:

And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old."
(Acts 15:15-18)

We give thanks for the godly courage of our Gafcon Primates in contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We applaud their decision to authenticate and recognise the provinces of the Anglican Church in North America and the Anglican Church in Brazil, to recognise the Anglican Mission in England and to consecrate a Missionary Bishop for Europe. This has become necessary because of the departure from the faith by The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church of Brazil and the Scottish Episcopal Church. At Gafcon 2018, we heard many testimonies of faithful Anglicans who have been persecuted by those holding office in their respective provinces, merely because they would not surrender to, nor be compromised by, the false gospel that these leaders profess and promote. We also recognise the Gafcon Primates' willingness to assist faithful Anglicans in New Zealand where the Anglican Church has recently agreed to allow bishops to authorise the blessing of same sex unions.

As the Gafcon movement matures, it has also seen the need for a more conciliar structure of governance. We endorse the formation of Gafcon Branches where necessary and of a Panel of Advisors, comprising bishops, clergy and lay representatives from each Gafcon Province and Branch, to provide counsel and advice to the Primates Council. Together with the Primates, the Panel of Advisors form a Synodical Council to bring recommendations to the Gafcon Assembly. The Synodical Council met for the first time at this Conference.

Recalling the Communion to its true identity requires leaders who put on the whole armor of God, with offensive and defensive weapons, to proclaim and defend the Gospel (Ephesians 6:14-20). Gafcon has been blessed with a sequence of courageous Primates from Peter Akinola to Greg Venables to Eliud Wabukala to Nicholas Okoh. With the appointment of Archbishop Foley Beach as Chairman, the Gafcon Primates Council has made clear that its leadership can be represented by a man who is, in the eyes of the Lambeth Establishment, not even an Anglican! Similarly, Archbishop Miguel Uchoa, the new Primate of the Anglican Church in Brazil, also deemed to be a “non-Anglican,” has been seated on the Primates Council, along with various Branches in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, and Europe.

Could it be that “God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are” (1 Corinthians 1:28)? Could it be that raising up this new generation of leaders is actually a sign of the maturing of the Gafcon movement? In a sense this new leadership has already moved beyond the battles of the last twenty years and is preparing the Communion to move on.

Some structures of Gafcon are reminiscent of the “Instruments” – a periodic Assembly, a Primates Council, and a Synodical Council with representatives of different orders of ministry – but these formal resemblances can be misleading. I have argued (Essay 8 of my book and [here](#)) that the Lambeth Instruments have become a monolithic executive bureaucracy, with power concentrated in the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion Office. By contrast, Gafcon is aiming to be a mixed polity, with Primatial leadership, representative consultation, and general assent of its Assemblies. As noted in the Letter, this polity is “maturing,” not finished. In GAFCON 2013, a bishops’ convocation was held; and, given the historic role of responsibility of bishops as teachers and defenders of the faith, this body may meet again in the future.

Questions for Canterbury

In light of the recommendations of the Synodical Council, we respectfully urge the Archbishop of Canterbury

- to invite as full members to Lambeth 2020 bishops of the Province of the Anglican Church in North America and the Province of the Anglican Church in Brazil and
- not to invite bishops of those Provinces which have endorsed by word or deed sexual practices which are in contradiction to the teaching of Scripture and Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, unless they have repented of their actions and reversed their decisions.

In the event that this does not occur, we urge Gafcon members to decline the invitation to attend Lambeth 2020 and all other meetings of the Instruments of Communion.

One thing is lacking in Gafcon's emerging order: the role of a "mother church" and a primatial see. We grieve for the divided state of the Communion because we love and honor our heritage from the Church of England (see Jerusalem Declaration, clauses 4,6, and 7). In the 2008 Jerusalem Statement, Gafcon acknowledged the nature of Canterbury as an historic see, and throughout the twenty years since Lambeth 1998, Global South leaders have appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury to exercise his historic role as "first among equals" on their behalf.

The appeal in the Letter to the Churches is genuine. Gafcon is urging the Archbishop to take the necessary steps to return the Communion to the right path. If any of the Archbishops from 1998 to the present had adopted a disciplinary process like that proposed by Archbishops Gomez and Sinclair in 2002 ("[To Mend the Net](#)"), the current crisis might have been averted.

There is of course a doctrinal principle undergirding this appeal, which is that the bishops at Lambeth 1998 enunciated an essential biblical truth about human sexuality. It seems likely that the previous and current Archbishops of Canterbury [simply do not believe this](#) or feel constrained by politics in England not to say so. For this reason, it seems unlikely that Justin Welby will respond to this appeal affirmatively, or at all. But perhaps he might reread his [Enthronement sermon](#) and step out of the Establishment boat.

The entire Assembly in Jerusalem, 2000-strong, is appealing to Canterbury to rethink its stance since 1998. The entire Assembly is also urging its bishops not to attend the Lambeth

Conference in 2020 and other official Communion bodies if he does not. [I have argued](#) that there is an inherent inconsistency for Primates and bishops to sit in council with Foley Beach and others who have been defrocked by the Episcopal Church and then to go to Canterbury and sit in council with those like Michael Curry who have defrocked them.

Will all the bishops at GAFCON 2018 absent themselves from Lambeth 2020? Perhaps not. Before they do decide, they should at least ponder seriously the appeal approved with great conviction and joy in Jerusalem this year.

Part Seven

Reaching Out to God's World

As indicated in the Letter's opening epigraph from Acts 1:8, GAFCON 2018 met not only as a token of the present witness of the wide global fellowship of the Anglican Communion but also under the ongoing mandate to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

God So Loved the World

REACHING OUT TO GOD'S WORLD

Our conference theme has been "Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations." We have received the gospel through the faithful witness of previous generations. Yet there are still billions of people who are without Christ and without hope. Jesus taught his disciples: "this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations" (Matthew 24:14). We repent for the times and seasons when we have only preached to ourselves and not embraced the difficult task of reaching beyond our own cultural groups in obedience to God's call to be a light to the nations (cf. Acts 13:47). In faith and obedience, we joyfully recommit ourselves to the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

The Statement Group decided to bring together under one heading – "Reaching Out to God's World" – the themes of two days of the Conference – "God's World" and "God's Strategy"; for indeed they belong together. We cannot reach out to the nations unless we are convinced that God created the world and its peoples, that He so loved the world that in Christ He reconciled the world to himself (John 3:16; Colossians 1:20), and that He is judging the rebellious kingdom of this world and transforming it into the kingdom of Christ, the city of God, and the new creation (Revelation 11:14; 21:1ff.).

The Lay of the Lands Today

The world which we Christians face is continuous with previous generations, and it is an eternal Gospel which we proclaim (Revelation 14:6). At the same time, Christians are faced with vast changes in the modern and postmodern period that may seem overwhelming. Jason Mandryk of Operation World laid out for the Conference "the scope of God's work in the world today, along with the challenges that lie before His Church."

Religions abound.

- Religions, including "non-religion," are located in large geographic blocks, which means, for instance, that large groups are unevangelized and even resistant to evangelization.
- The world is becoming more religious, not less, with even "non-religious" people seeking some kind of spirituality, which is an opportunity for evangelization such as Paul faced in the Roman world.

- Fundamentalism in all religions is rising in response to perceived threats from secularism and government oppression, which poses a challenge for reconciliation in the light of the reality of persecution.

Christianity is the largest religion, but Islam is growing faster.

- The 2.3 billion Christians, found in 38,000 denominations and groups, represent a rich diversity but also a sign of strife and animosity within the Body of Christ that weaken our overall witness.
- The greatest growth in numbers is in the Global South, and the vast majority of these are Evangelical, although some fast-growing “health-and-wealth” Pentecostal groups distort the Gospel.
- While the Christian population in parts of Africa and South America is growing, it is aging and declining in the West. Muslim population growth is worldwide, including in nominally Christian areas like Europe.

The Church faces historic technological, socio-economic, and ethical changes.

- Communications and social media are now accessed by 1/3 of the world’s population and rising, which is both an opportunity and a threat.
- Economic progress has reduced poverty worldwide, but 700 million remain in extreme poverty, and inequality is increasing between haves and have-nots.
- Movements of peoples to cities and slums, along with the tide of refugees and immigrants, bring dangers of social instability as well as opportunities for evangelization.
- Scientific research has led to improved health and older populations while raising ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and genetic engineering.

Missions have changed from “the West to the rest” to “from everywhere to everywhere.”

- Most missionaries now come from the Global South and are young, female, and poor. Heads of mission agencies are no longer predominantly Western.
- Mission priorities are various. Global North missions have focused on unreached peoples (the “10-40° window”), whereas Global South missionaries look to other regions, even in the North.

God’s Strategy and Gafcon’s Tactics

While the lay of the lands in the 21st century may be discontinuous from the past in some ways, *God’s strategy* for reaching this world, according to [David Short](#), remains “a strategy of salvation through the proclamation of Jesus Christ and a rightly ordered Church where people are transformed by grace and live new lives.”

The tactics for fulfilling God’s strategy call for boldness and openness to the Spirit. The Conference held major presentations on “African Traditional Religions,” “The Prosperity Gospel,” and “The Gospel of Secularism,” as well as 24 seminars by leaders from the Gafcon movement on topics of “theology,” “engagement,” and “discipleship.” Major mission societies were present as exhibitors and partners. In a real sense, GAFCON 2018 was indeed a mission conference.

In order to expand our ability to proclaim Christ faithfully to the nations in both word and deed, we launched nine strategic networks.

Theological Education To promote effective theological training throughout the Anglican Communion

Church Planting To expand church planting as a global strategy for evangelisation

Global Mission Partnerships To promote strategic cross-cultural mission partnerships in a globalised world

Youth and Children’s Ministry To be a catalyst for mission to young people and children of all nations so that they may become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ

Mothers’ Union To expand the potential of this global ministry to promote biblical patterns of marriage and family life

Sustainable Development To establish global partnerships which work with the local church to bring sustainable and transformative development

Bishops Training Institute To serve the formation of faithful and effective episcopal leadership throughout the Communion

Lawyers Task Force To address issues of religious freedom and matters of concern to Anglican lawyers and Chancellors and to further the aims of the Jerusalem Declaration

Intercessors Fellowship To inspire and develop globally connected regional and national intercessory prayer networks

In the world into which we go to proclaim the gospel, we shall encounter much which will need us to walk in paths of righteousness and mercy (Hosea 2:19; Micah 6:8). We commit to encouraging each other to give strength to the persecuted, a voice to the voiceless, advocacy for the oppressed, protection of the vulnerable, especially women and children, generosity to the poor, and continuing the task of providing excellent education and health care. As appropriate, we encourage the formation of other networks to assist in addressing these issues.

The Statement Group, in its first draft, tried to put together a “covenant” of mission priorities, but in the regional response groups, it became clear that such a covenant risked being either overwhelmed with wish-list of desiderata or deficient in leaving out important

issues facing the church. So in the final draft, we decided that it would be better to highlight the [nine new networks](#) which were formed at the Conference, followed by a general summary of social, political and ethical concerns, in the spirit of the Prophets: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

This is not the first time Gafcon has called for action in many of the areas which these networks address. In the past, aspiration has often exceeded execution. It will be a test of Gafcon’s maturity to see that these networks lead to solid fruit for the Kingdom. Therefore we encourage interested members to contact the network leaders or the Membership Development Secretary (charlesraven@gafcon.org) to offer ideas and participation.

Part Eight

Our Global Anglican Future

OUR GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE

To proclaim the gospel, we must first defend the gospel against threats from without and within. We testify to the extraordinary blessings on this conference, which leads us to call upon God even more, that the Anglican Communion may become a mighty instrument in the hand of God for the salvation of the world. We invite all faithful Anglicans to join us in this great enterprise of proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations.

The conclusion to the Letter to the Churches begins on an apologetic note – defending the gospel. The paragraph continues on a note of thanksgiving, of hope and expectation that God is in our day raising up the Anglican Communion with a renewed vocation to take Christ to the nations. Sixty years ago, in his book titled *Anglicanism*, Bishop Stephen Neill wrote that as a result of the missionary movements (and in spite of much official opposition), “the Anglican Churches had to be reckoned as one of the great missionary forces in the world.” He went on to warn: “But it is well that those who today take this for granted should not forget the great effort on the part of a minority, and the great afflictions, through which this happy state of affairs has been attained.” In a similar vein and in light of recent history, Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali now [writes](#):

The Anglican Communion has emerged out of faithfulness to God’s Word. It is built on the sacrifices and gifts of countless people. We believe it has a future under God but also that it needs to be reformed, renewed and equipped for its calling in today’s world.

Doxology

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

It was precisely the sense of debt to the past and hope for the future that led us to the concluding doxology from Ephesians, for it is only through God’s grace and power that the Church can fulfill its mission of proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations.

After the Statement Group had chosen the final Scripture, one member pointed out that this was the same doxology used in the Nairobi Communique. To which, we concluded *Amen and Amen*.

A Note on the Glossary

I have not included comment on the Glossary at the end of the Letter. The Statement Group decided to attach a glossary of terms so as not to clutter the text itself with definitions and explanations.

LETTER TO THE CHURCHES

THE TEXT WITH COMMENTARY



GAFCON 2018

The third Global Anglican Future Conference was held 17-22 June 2018 in Jerusalem. Nearly 2,000 delegates gathered here on the steps of the Temple where Jesus had walked.

The Author

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll is Professor Emeritus of Trinity School for Ministry (USA) and former Vice Chancellor of Uganda Christian University. He served as Convener of the Statement Group at GAFCON 2018.

He is the author of [*The Global Anglican Communion: Contending for Anglicanism 1993-2018*](#) and he blogs at www.contendinganglican.org.



The Statement Group

(Clockwise from 3 o'clock) Canon Alison Barfoot, the Rev. Tim Anderson, Archbishop Glenn Davies (Chairman), Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop Tito Zavala, Dr. Mark Thompson, Bishop David Onuoha, Bishop Michael Stead, Archbishop Laurent Mbanda, Canon Dr. John Senyonyi (Dr. Noll was not available for this photo.)