

Monday, July 28, 2008

TO: Clergy and church office staff

RE: Half-way point message about the Lambeth Conference.

Dear people of West Texas,

It is Sunday morning, July 27, about 11:00 a.m. (5:00 a.m. your time), and Catherine and I have just returned from services at St. Dunstan's in Canterbury, where I was privileged to participate as a reader in this BBC radio broadcast and hear the Archbishop of Canterbury preach. (Link to BBC broadcast. Be aware that the first two minutes are BBC news [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/programmes/sunday\\_worship/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/programmes/sunday_worship/). ) I also prayed for all of you and our congregations as you move into this day of worship. I was especially mindful of the situation in parts of the diocese following Hurricane Dolly, and have been following reports from Bob Thompson (our disaster response task force coordinator) and others on a daily basis.

Today is a Sabbath, of course, and on Monday we resume our business. The Windsor Continuation Group will hold another hearing for the bishops Monday afternoon, and there are at least two other opportunities to engage our committee and the Windsor Report/Process in general. Together with the conversation and presentations regarding a proposed Covenant, these two will be a main focus in the coming week. There are strong feelings – positive and negative -- about the Windsor Process as well as a proposed covenant.

Bishop Reed and I will have more to say following the conference, but I will say at this point that the bishops seem ready this week, even anxious, to engage in-depth the issues before the Communion. Many comments are already surfacing about saying something of significance to the Communion upon conclusion, so we will see how the week moves along. Please remember as you follow the progress of this conference that with such a large number of participants, guests, press, and others, there are tremendous amounts of both solid information and misinformation.

There is a growing frankness among the bishops following this first week, and I think that represents a trust level that is growing. This does not mean a growing sense of uniformity of opinion, but it does provide truth-telling opportunities. Our daily Bible studies through the Gospel of John are increasingly moving this conference forward and seem to be more like the Indaba process than the Indaba groups themselves.

At the same time, the Indaba groups (about 40 bishops each) have been given the freedom to deal with the issues that the individual groups decide upon, with the request from the Archbishop to find time for some of the less strident, but critically important, issues before the Communion. We in the West have the ability to focus on cultural issues more than some provinces - indeed several provinces - who are focused on the basics of life such as food and safety from day to day. In addition, I continue to be appalled at the persecution some still face for being a Christian. There are some very moving stories that inspire faith and hope in very strong ways. One can see the stark contrast of life and ministry settings.

I hope that you are taking advantage of the audio recordings that we are sending. They may be found on the diocesan website, as most of you know. Catherine will be recording one later today from the perspective of a Bible study leader and participant in the Spouses' program.

May God's blessings enfold you today and in the days to come. Thank you for your prayers, and be assured of ours.

*Bishop Lillibridge*