

# An encouraging meeting in Lambeth

**Archbishop Geoff Smith reflects on last weekâ??s gathering of Primates of the Anglican Communion in London.**

Last week I attended the first face to face meeting of Primates of the Anglican Communion since January 2020, and my first face to face meeting since becoming the Primate of Australia in April 2020.

The meeting had been planned for Rome but Italyâ??s covid restrictions would have meant Primates from Africa were unable to attend, so instead we met at Lambeth palace, the London home and office of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The weather in London was freezing (we had a flurry of snow on the last day), but Lambeth Palace was warm and very welcoming.

The palace is a very historic place and we worshipped in the crypt chapel which has been in use since the 12$^{th}$century, and the main chapel with Thomas Cranmerâ??s study is off to one side.

Most of the Primates were able to attend but we were missing bishops from the Pacific and South-East Asia who couldnâ??t come either because of travel restrictions or Covid outbreaks in their countries.

I found the meeting encouraging in many ways.

First, it was great to worship, study the Bible, and talk with bishops from across the world. We are very different and minister in different contexts but are linked by our Christian faith and membership of the Anglican communion.

The first day of the meeting was a retreat led by Bishop Anthony Ball with the focus on our identity in Christ. Bishop Anthony helpfully reminded us that we are not defined by what we do in our roles as bishops but who we are as people in Christ. We also participated in five Bible studies on 1 Peter, and I had the privilege of leading the study on 1 Peter 5.

I also found the meeting a sobering reminder of the very real difficulties faced by our sisters and brothers around the communion.

Anglican churches are struggling in situations of armed conflict, political unrest, poverty, natural disaster, Covid-19 and religious persecution. There is no doubt that we have our challenges in Australia, but they pale when the realities of so many Anglicans around the world are considered.

Despite the difficulties we heard accounts of faithful members of the church not giving up, continuing to serve and witness for Christ, and helping those in need.

There is disagreement among the Primates, especially concerning responses to human sexuality, but those disagreements did not stop us meeting together, praying and studying the Bible together, and reflecting on the important work we have to do cooperating with God in Godâ??s mission for the world.

There is much healing to be done, much help to be offered, many people who need to hear of the love of God in Jesus Christ and that was our focus as we met together at Lambeth.

In some ways the Primates Meeting was part of the preparation for the Lambeth Conference to be held in July. If the primates meeting was any indication, the Lambeth Conference should be very worthwhile.

I was conscious of many people praying for safe travel for me and the Primates Meeting itself. Please keep the Lambeth Conference and the organisers in your prayers as the ongoing Covid pandemic provides some real challenges.

***The Archbishop of Adelaide, The Most Reverend Geoffrey Smith, is the Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia.  His initial six-year term commenced on 7 April 2020***

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