

Reflections on Lambeth Conference

By Archbishop Geoff Smith, Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia

â??McDonaldâ??s makes hamburgers, Toyota makes cars, Starbucks makes (bad) coffee, Rolex makes watches, and the Church makes disciples of Jesus.â?•

These words are part of fantastic address on mission and evangelism given by Archbishop Stephen Cottrell the Archbishop of York to the Lambeth Conference, which ended last Sunday evening in Canterbury Cathedral.

After a delay of two years caused by the pandemic, around one thousand Anglican bishops and their spouses gathered at the University of Kent just outside the city of Canterbury for a conference with the theme: *Godâ??s Church for Godâ??s World*.

For 11 days delegates worshipped together, studied the first letter of Peter in detail, considered topics such as: mission and evangelism, disciple making, Christian unity, Safe Church, Anglican identity, Reconciliation, Human Dignity, Environment and Sustainable Development, Christian Unity, Interfaith Relationships, Discipleship, and Science and Faith; participated in a wide range of seminars and were encouraged in life and mission together in three key note addresses by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

It was a very busy time! From Adelaide, Bishop Tim and Fiona Harris, Bishop Chris and Susan McLeod, Bishop Denise and Mark Ferguson, and Lynn and myself attended.

The Lambeth conference was a very encouraging time where bishops and their spouses from more than 160 countries spent time together, made and renewed friendships and were pointed clearly to the role of the Church â?? to be Godâ??s Church for Godâ??s world.

Before the conference doomsayers predicted that the differences which exist across the Anglican communion, especially, but not only, around human sexuality, would lead to all kinds of division in the conference.

Actually, that did not happen.

The strong differences in opinion were certainly present, but bishops committed to working and staying together, not ignoring the differences but seeking a unity based not our agreement, but on the fact that we are united to Christ, and therefore with each other.

This is a great encouragement and serves as a positive example for the Church in Australia as we too deal with longstanding tensions.

The image I have of the Lambeth Conference is of a multitude of people from all over the world standing and praising God together in Canterbury cathedral. They came from different countries and cultures, spoke many different languages, had a wide range of opinions on many things, but were united in their commitment to Jesus Christ and his mission, and the sharing in that mission by the Anglican communion.

The biggest take-away I have from the conference comes from Archbishop Cottrellâ??s address. We must have evangelism and making disciples as top priorities in our Diocese.

The church does many good things as part of its ministry, but evangelism and disciple-making is at the absolute core. Itâ??s who we are, and if we are not doing those things then we have missed the point.

The Lambeth Conference took a while to arrive, but the wait was worth it and I am thankful to God for a renewed enthusiasm for our mission and the life of the Anglican communion.

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