

Anglican Leadership Processes

I understand from the brief that my task now is to speak from a specifically Anglican perspective, although clearly we will in fact hold much that is common. But I'll do my best to focus specifically for the benefit of the conference process

1. Anglican

The Church of England is an ecumenical project. It is designed to be as broad as possible for two reasons:

1. It does not believe that one group can have the monopoly on God's truth so it seeks to be inclusive in order to be as truthful and faithful as possible.
2. It believes that difference is not a divine design fault – God created difference so teach us that truth is not in any case a statement but a relationship. The truth is that God is love – and that's relationship.

Unfortunately, this means that the Church of England is designed to be impossible to manage – and when we then expand that to talk of global Anglicanism, then that is truly impossible - although all things are possible with God, even families. So, a family we seek to be. But we do not pretend to be of one mind. Indeed we revel in our differences – that's the genius of being a family – and the cause of our muddle.

And the task of a bishop is to hold all that together in unity. Or is it?

The character of our Anglican communion poses the challenging question writ large in the gospels – is the church more essentially the church when it is brought together or when it is dispersed? Is the bishop to be uniting father or troublesome prophet?

Well, there is room for both. Because the system of authority in the Anglican Church can best be summed up in the well-rehearsed phrase: "Dispersed Authority". Each Diocese, each bishop, each parish, has an authority which is dispersed to it by the catholic unity. It is the most obvious example of subsidiarity I know. And it means that you can be eccentric (and eccentric bishops there have been – no longer of course) and at the same time, very much in the frame. Odd but true.

Because of this dispersed authority, the Anglican bishops have spelt out what it is that does hold us together as part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We call the device the Anglican Quadrilateral – four legs to the stool. The legs: The primacy of Scripture, the dominical Sacraments, the catholic Creeds, and the inheritance of episcopate. And all this underpinned by prayer and reason.

2. Reign of God / Church concern

Not always easy. If we don't know where our power is, not aware of our power, it can be very dangerous – easy hurt self and disable others.

3. Democratic

Power lies with each diocese. Bishop in council. Everybody has right to be consulted: slow and often the power to disable rather than initiate. Deanery structure. Democratic and can deliver.

Parish PCC has large say - except in matters of doctrine and liturgy it is with the bishops as guardians.

Answerable is a burden – housing policy – feedback. Bishop must be able to talk languages of the broad church. Have a feel for congregationalism, catholicism, charismatic, strait and fussy.

Partnership – extremely difficult.

Ecumenism.

4. Hide-bound

History! Fear of change built in. Travelling light? The future. Strategy? Parish, patronage. Yet strong stability. Can challenge the Thatcher government and now the Blair one.

5. Resource limited

Everyone thinks the C of E can pay. Ecumenical etc.

Finance driven? Decade of evangelism to pay our way - Tiny budget for a bishop!

6. Theological and prayer base

Prayer / sacraments / theology / obedience, respect, love and lot of that.

Engagement with creation

Five marks of mission as mission Statement base.

Collaboration: deanery structures etc.

Trinitarian work with deaneries.

Radical base.

For all this the C of E has breadth so somewhere it can take off in this generation.

- Can often deliver acc to strategy (CUF)
- Cannot have one mind.

Faith basis.