

President of the House of Deputies, my sister my friend Bonnie, I along with my international colleagues are deeply honoured by your invitation to be here present at the 76th General Convention and by this privileged opportunity for us all to address the House of Deputies.

I pause momentarily and ask you all to note that President Bonnie has here represented Brazil, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and Aotearoa New Zealand – what she has done of course is actually invite the *true global south* into your midst!

Sisters and brothers all of the House of Deputies, I bring you very warm greetings from the Primates, indeed from the Church of the Province of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. Ours is a Province, which has always prided itself on its global partners in mission relationships, on its Diocesan exchange relationships, on its ability and willingness to variously give generously and to receive graciously from among those 38 Provinces and 6 or 7 regional churches, which together comprise our beloved global Anglican Communion. Our enduring mutual affection for this The Episcopal Church is readily evidenced in the historical record.

We are as a Provincial Church both proudly autonomous and yet not to the extent that we cannot hear the cries of the poor beyond our own national gates. We are as a Provincial Church confidently relational and yet not to the extent that we render our unique identity ambivalent. We have in past times been bold in asserting what we see as necessary *'innovations'* for our context and times. We have brought these respectfully to the councils of the global Anglican Communion and we have on occasion known the sharp sting of rebuff and rebuke. Many of you may not realize that my Province is the only one to ever have been officially censured by the Anglican Consultative Council. It was recent and was to do with our 1992 decision to revise our Constitution along what our critics claimed *were 'dangerously unprecedented racially prescriptive lines'*

The proposal *lacks theological credibility* said some. The proposal *unjustly privileges one [racial] group over another*, said others. We proceeded anyway, and we continue to live with faith and endless hope into the promises and the sometimes still untidy consequences of our rightful, timely and necessary decision.

We were at the time thankful for the opinions of others, we were appalled and saddened by others but at the end of the day we sought to proceed to do what we truly believed God was calling, urging, pleading with us to do, which was in our case to do with redeeming our Churches historic legacy of grave injustice toward minority indigenous peoples including indigenous or Maori Anglicans.

I see clear parallels here. Episcopal Church sisters and brothers, you too must follow your contextual spiritual conscience because in the first instance you have to live justly with yourselves in order that you can in turn and in time, live justly and in good faith with others in the Communion.

Permit me if you will at this point to offer a few observatory remarks.

Firstly a reflective comment on your polity. It is truly a formidable governance instrument, not in any oppressive sense but rather in its unequivocal demands for precision, in your attention to detail, in your faithfulness to procedure and in your deep concern for enabling appropriate consensus to emerge among and between your Houses.

Yours is a somewhat globally unique system and certainly it is one which holds in check, in fact preclude any tendency toward authoritarianism or autocratic presumption.

It may be worth my repeating here something I said the other day in my contribution to the Chicago Consultation luncheon event at which I spoke. I was sharing in all humility one of my deepest regrets (*one that I know is shared by other Commissioners*) that as members of the Lambeth Commission we were never fully apprised of the full facts of your polity and in particular of the limits to the power of the office of Presiding Bishop.

As a result of that crucial gap in knowledge and understanding it is my belief that the very unfair, in fact the odious myth of '*The Episcopal Church acting (in the matter of the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson) with typical unchecked US imperialism*', was more readily enabled and abetted to grow wings and fly unchecked for way too long across the reaches of the Anglican Communion.

It was only in hindsight as a number of us as Commissioners managed to catch our breath, to compare notes and to consult with our trusted Episcopal Church sisters and brothers that *I realized, that we realized, to our utterly deserved chagrin that we had perhaps failed albeit inadvertently to prevent something of the unprecedented vilification of the Episcopal Church and especially of its leadership that inevitably resulted. (Here I want to pay special tribute to the careful and valuable teachings which Reverend Canon Brian Grieves and Reverend Ian Douglas so generously and patiently provided me during this period).*

I share this with you not by way of exploiting the privilege of this public platform as a confessional site but rather by way of affirming with boundless respect and gratitude the truly mutually redemptive moment it is that you now enable us all to live into.

Your generosity of spirit in spite of all you have suffered so unjustly and unnecessarily over the past few years is just so perfectly admirable. That you continue with such magnanimity to gather international friends, to share with us so openly, so willingly all that you do so formidably, so precisely, so efficiently and so compassionately is a gift offering of such magnitude that it seems so utterly insufficient for me to simply say thank you, thank you, thank you.

If I could be so bold I want also to assure you that among ourselves as your international friends we are now all quietly urging you not to dwell unduly with any sense of uncertainty about your place within the global Anglican Communion. Sure the fearmongers abound – they always have and they always will but surely our gaze must always be fixed beyond the horizon of fear and just as surely that gaze must always apprehend first and foremost the images of those who are the least among us.

Well we all bore such poignant and powerful witness to just where the gaze of this Church is the other evening, especially in the second half of the Global Economic Forum. We see that your gaze is clearly and justifiably so upon the plight of the first peoples of this land. Sarah Eagleheart's very gracious ministry presence enjoined with what I have to notice are still surely way too few Native American delegates in this House, makes for very compelling, very urgently needed missional responses. Michael Schutt's appeals for an end to environmental degradation are clearly unable to be ignored any longer. Dr Sizi's extraordinary malarial preventive ministry work was simply overwhelming.

You must all claim with such pride all of these tangible, creditable and powerful missional commitments because they are but a tiny part of your incredible overall contribution to the building up of the global Anglican body of Christ. My sisters and brothers of The Episcopal Church, *in the cause of local, national and global mission you are treasured and needed for the common good of the Anglican Communion.*

Theological education is yet another example. At any one time there would be across the Episcopal Churches seminaries any number of students drawn from across the Anglican Communion studying at all levels of theological educational endeavour. As one such beneficiary myself I remain profoundly grateful for the gifts of knowledge and understanding, for the gifts of care and hospitality, of nurture and comfort I received from this Church during the time of my own doctoral studies at the Graduate Theological Union. My sisters and brothers of The Episcopal Church, *in the cause of theological education you are treasured and needed for the common good of the Anglican Communion.*

At the most recent meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council held in Jamaica, the impact and influence of the Communion's Networks was for the first time very specially acknowledged and affirmed as being crucial to the very lifeblood of mission and ministry across the Anglican Communion. Because of my close association with at least five of these networks which have only been able to have impact and be influential as a direct result of the resourcing and generous trust of The Episcopal Church then once again, I say from a place of absolute sincerity to you my sisters and brothers of The Episcopal Church *that in the cause of the precious ministries of the Communion's networks, you are indeed treasured and so needed for the common good of the Anglican Communion.*

Relationality is of course of necessity, a *reciprocal* matter – at least with an for those relationships where quality and longevity are seen as optimum components!

And so I come to what I trust will be received as a word of loving advice from your indigenous sister.

I come from a cultural context characterized still by the absolute urgency of cultural, linguistic, artistic, traditional survival. We indigenous peoples are in many ways understandably very protective of our culturally unique traditions, we are very conscious of the ways in which aspects of our traditions have become such beacons of light and hope in a world

increasingly bereft of strong kinship networks, of strong familial identity, of meaningful spiritual regard for all of God's creation. We have seen how attractive indigenous spirituality; in fact indigenous tradition in its many forms has suddenly assumed a level of contemporary interests and attractiveness. We have in all of this become desperately afraid of cultural appropriation and so as this intensely beautiful and endlessly complex concept of *'ubuntu'* is uttered and claimed, explained and proclaimed I cannot help but wonder if all the necessary precautions against even unwitting appropriation have been taken?

Now as I said I offer this comment not by way of a criticism but rather by way of a word of loving advice from this your indigenous sister. I don't know what precautions you may well have taken but if I may suggest, one of the markers which we indigenous peoples have found most helpful in these matters is to ask of those seeking to enter more fully into the very different socio, politico, spiritual, cultural worlds of *'the constructed other'*, are you intent on becoming one with or one of *'the other'*?

The most respectful of these options is of course the former. In this way we are each freed to become fully whom God created us to be and to flourish into that God given identity. The actions of one seeking to become *'one with'* are those of selfless, sacrificial and loving solidarity whereas the actions of one seeking to become *'one of'*, are likely to be characterized by unashamed self-interest! The former option is thus more likely to be true *ubuntu*, but then I would not be so bold to determine such a thing! I simply raise a respectful cautionary flag.

My friends the time is now to go forward together into our shared faithfilled future. Let me once again say to you Bonnie, indeed to you here gathered as the House of Deputies, thank you for your abundant generosity, your enabling missional presence in God's world through your significant contributions to the Christian life and witness of the global Anglican Communion.

Your invitation to your true global sought friends to be with you is so deeply appreciated, especially in this precious time of being and shaping and becoming ever more fully the body of Christ that God so tirelessly, so patiently wills us ever more to become!

Thank you so much for allowing me this time to speak with you.

Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa

On the occasion of the House of Deputies gathering at General Convention in Anaheim - July 2009).