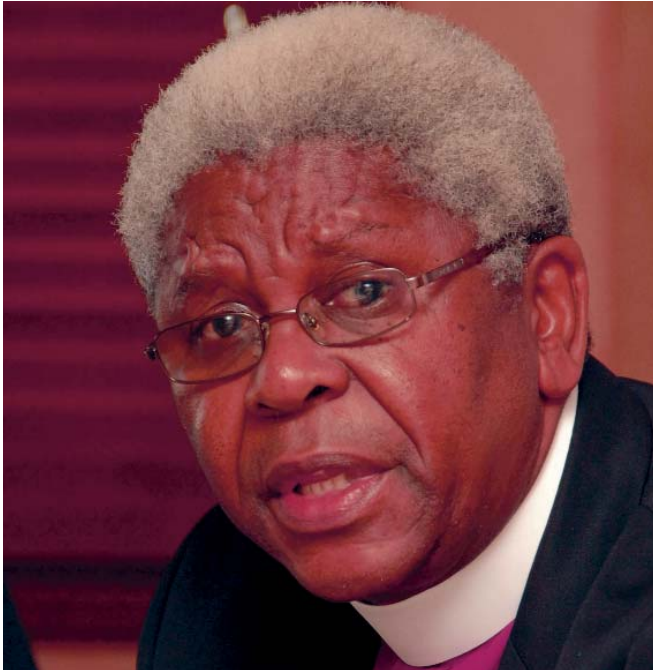


Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane

TEAM Conference

Opening Address

8 March 2007



This conference provides us with an opportunity to rally around issues of poverty and to position ourselves as a significant partner in the global development agenda.

Introduction

Your Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I greet you all in the name of the one God who is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

It is my greatest pleasure and distinctive honour to welcome you to the southern most tip of Africa and to this conference whose major focus is "Towards Effective Anglican Mission".

I would like to thank you all for taking time from your busy schedules to come and deliberate on matters related to God's mission in the world.

A special thank-you to donors without whose generous giving this conference would not have taken place.

They will all be acknowledged in the records of these proceedings.

A word of thanks to the planning committee who have worked tirelessly in the preparation of this conference; to the staff of HOPE AFRICA – under the able leadership of Canon Delene Mark – for their attention to detail in

logistics; and to all the speakers and panellists, who will not only animate us but will also provoke us to action.

When I look across this room, I am extremely delighted to recognise that it is not a gathering of the high and mighty, who, in their pomp and glory, tend to pontificate to little tangible effect about solutions for the very complex issues we face in our world.

We have here gathered under one roof young people, women and men, priests, bishops and even archbishops.

Not only that, there are also in this room

- people living with AIDS,
- people from poverty stricken areas,
- people experiencing discrimination and other forms of exclusion.

We have here development practitioners who are committed to the eradication of poverty.

This augurs well for possible strategic interventions that will make a real difference to millions of people living in dire poverty.

This is a momentous period in the life of our church.

Here we have people of God gathered together in the context of prayer and theology, sharing diverse experiences and views on specific social issues, renewing the church's commitment and capabilities to respond to God's call to service in the 21st century.

This conference provides us with an opportunity to rally around issues of poverty and to position ourselves as a significant partner in the global development agenda.

It offers us an opportunity to harness the energy, commitment and potential of faith communities to make a constructive contribution towards the realisation of sustainable livelihoods for everyone.

This is an opportunity for the church to raise its profile in development and to articulate the capacity and the strength that we have as faith communities in delivering services to those who are in need.

Bound together by bonds of affection that unite us and united against poverty, let us seize this opportunity by blowing fresh winds of change into the lungs of the Anglican Communion.

So dear friends we are gathered here in Boksburg in the year of our Lord 2007 because

- in the first instance, **God has called us.**
- Secondly, we are here because the hour demands it.
- And thirdly, we are all here because **God's world is crying out to him.**

God has called us

Our first reason for being here in Boksburg is because God has called us.

Always and everywhere, God calls his people to mission.

All the baptised are called to participate in the mission to which God summons his church.

And the definition of mission?

Our catechism says “the mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God, and with each other, in Christ.”

Further, this mission is pursued “as we pray, as we worship, as we proclaim the gospel, and as we promote justice, peace and love.”

So,

- mission is prayer,
- mission is worship,
- mission is the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died and was raised to free us from the power of sin and death
- mission is the good news that he offers life in abundance
- mission is the bringing the fullness of shalom peace, of love, and of justice
- mission is the building of God’s kingdom, so his will may be done on earth as in heaven.

Mission is about comprehensive salvation. This was the conclusion of the distinguished South African missiologist, David Bosch, who died in a car crash in 1993, and whom I knew well.

In his highly influential book, *Transforming Mission*, he said that contemporary mission must be comprehensive.

It must take us beyond the false ‘either/or’ of vertical versus horizontal – the mistaken idea that we have to choose between preaching the salvation that brings eternal life, or working for abundant life here and now.

No, none of us has that option. All of us must do both.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us – human beings, made in the image of God, having both spiritual and physical needs, which our Lord desires to meet, and to meet through his Church.

In chapter 4 of Luke’s gospel we read how Jesus began his ministry, after his time of temptation. In the synagogue in Nazareth he read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

It is as if Jesus sets out his Gospel manifesto. At the heart of his ministry is this: ‘good news for the poor, for the afflicted, for the oppressed ...’ This is what he also speaks of in John’s Gospel, chapter 10, when he says he has come to bring life, in abundance.

We have tended to over-spiritualise these words. We should reclaim them, understanding them as applying to every dimension of human existence, spiritual and physical – an existence that Jesus dignified through his incarnation.

For God’s eternal Word did not come as a philosophical concept, nor as a political programme. Nor was the Word made text. But the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Your Grace, I fear that my evangelical streak is leading me to trespass on the territory of your address later this morning!

So let me turn from Scripture to the life of the Church.

It has been said that ‘the Church is called into being by mission for the sake of salvation’.

Emil Brunner put it more graphically, ‘The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.’

The centrality of mission, not only for Anglican life within our Provinces, but for our life as a global Communion, has been an explicit part of our self-understanding since the 1963 Toronto Congress, the meeting of lay women and men, and clergy, as well as Bishops and Archbishops.

They enunciated the principle of ‘Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence’.

This, the subsequent Lambeth Conference decreed, ‘summons our Churches to a deeper commitment to Christ’s mission, through a wide partnership of prayer, by sharing sacrificially and effectively their manpower and money, and by a readiness to learn from each other.’

This deep, prayerful and sacrificial commitment to sharing together in Christ’s mission is a fundamental foundation of our common life within the Anglican Communion.

In April 2001, in Kanuga, U.S.A., a meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion charged me with leading the response of the Communion to the HIV/Aids pandemic.

At that time, there were already over 20 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa infected with the virus – two-thirds of those globally living with HIV/Aids, even though we make up only one in seven of the world’s population.

In August 2001 delegates from 54 nations, in Africa and beyond, met, here in Boksburg, for the first ever All Africa Anglican Conference on HIV/Aids – Boksburg 1.

Over the course of three days, we considered the growing pandemic and its implications; and we drafted and adopted a consensus statement, with particular commitments to strategic planning. We committed ourselves, among other things, to work towards a generation without AIDS. We developed a toolkit for our ministry among those infected and affected by HIV/Aids.

We also made a commitment to reporting back on what we had achieved; and to sharing the experiences of those

working at grass roots level – so we could identify and build on best practices, and share these with the world.

The time has now come for that reporting back – Boksburg 2. But God's call is to do far more than merely report.

David Bosch called his book 'Transforming Mission' because, he said, mission is to be understood as an activity that transforms reality – and at the same time mission itself must be constantly transformed – according to God's call to his people to address the needs of the world.

So we come together for God to transform us, and to make us agents of transformation, as we dedicate ourselves to work for the restoration of all people to unity with God, and with each other, in Christ.

And there is no doubt that the changing circumstances of our world require a fresh understanding and a fresh approach.

This is God's call to us now – to learn anew from him what sort of mission he is setting before us, as we address the spiritual and physical needs of his children in his world.

So we meet because the hour demands it.

The Hour Demands it

The hour demands it, first of all, because of the needs of our times.

Today we know we can no longer look at HIV/Aids in isolation. We cannot do so, because we cannot overcome this scourge, unless we deal with it comprehensively, and within the wider context in which it thrives and spreads.

Today, as we meet, God's children are crying out to him:

- there are 40 million people worldwide living with HIV/Aids
- around 25 million of these live in Sub-Saharan Africa
- another 25 million have died of HIV/Aids since 1981
- another 3 million will die this year
- and 2 million of those will be Africans
- and this year, more than 4 million, and more than 3 million in Africa, will be infected.

Today, as we meet, other cries go up.

- Tuberculosis, which so often takes advantage of those with AIDS, will claim 2 million lives, the great majority in Africa
- Malaria will lead to more than a million deaths, 90% in Africa, and most of these among young children. There will be over 300 million acute cases of malaria globally this year.

Today, in Sub-Saharan Africa, we hear the cry of over 48 million orphans, and the number is rising fast. A quarter are the result of HIV/Aids.

Today we hear the cry of women who are disproportionately affected and infected by HIV/Aids; and who, with their children, bear the brunt of poverty. We hear the cry of children, mostly girls, excluded from even primary education.

Today we hear the cry of the millions who go to bed hungry, of those who suffer from conflict; from famine; from drought; from floods; from cyclones.

We hear, and we must respond, because we serve a God who hears the cries of the oppressed.

This is how the Lord identifies himself to Hagar in Genesis 21.

Hagar was the servant – the slave – of Abraham's wife Sarah. At Sarah's suggestion, she bore Abraham a son, Isaac. But Sarah became jealous and demanded that Abraham send them away.

Out in the wilderness, they run out of water, and Hagar cries to the Lord, believing that she and her child will die.

Scripture says '*God heard the voice of the boy*'; and the angel of the Lord then says to Hagar '*Do not be afraid, because God has heard...*'

God hears and God acts – and he acts through the mission of his church.

Yes God does hear; and so God calls us; and God sends us where we are needed.

All these statistics may seem overwhelming – but, as the Lord tells Joshua before he leads his people into the Promised Land, we should not be daunted.

Because the hour demands that we come together, for other reasons too: for reasons that are encouraging.

So, the second reason why the hour demands that we meet, is because of the opportunities of our time.

It is not just the churches that have grown to understand that God's mission to God's world must be comprehensive. It is not just us who have learnt we have to look wider than at HIV/Aids.

The same is true of society around us.

In 2002, the year after Boksburg 1, the Global Fund was established, to tackle HIV/Aids, TB and Malaria in an integrated way. Since then, it has allocated over \$7 billion to programmes in 136 countries.

Health issues will be the subject of our agenda on Monday.

We have also seen the concept of the Millennium Development Goals take specific shape – a comprehensive programme for tackling every aspect of global poverty.

Among the goals are issues of gender and education, which are our themes for Saturday; and the overcoming of hunger, which we shall address on Sunday.

The third Afro-Anglican conference in Toronto in July 2005 recommended that all the structures of the Anglican Communion adopt and implement the MDGs, and build partnerships with governmental agencies and Non-Governmental and Faith Based Organisations.

With this in mind, the MDGs will be the focus of our deliberations tomorrow, and the forging of partnerships is our theme next Tuesday.

2005 was in many ways the 'year for Africa.' We also saw the publication of the Commission for Africa Report; and the placing of Africa at the top of the G8 Gleneagles Summit. This year too, Africa and global poverty, will head the agenda of the G8 Summit in Germany in June.

So we can partner in mission with a world that is also ready to take a comprehensive approach.

It is a world that has also recently come to see that faith based organisations are fundamental to the effective tackling of poverty.

This development is the third reason why the hour demands we meet and consider afresh our call to mission.

Development institutions have begun to wake up to the strength of the faith communities.

James Wolfensohn, the former President of the World Bank, said the following in 2005, at his last press briefing before retiring:

I also think it is crucially important that we develop a better understanding with the faiths. People thought that was a wild idea. We have had a number of meetings on faith and development with religious leaders.

My intent is not to make the Bank a religious organisation, but I think we have to recognise that faith-based organisations in some parts of the world – in Africa, for example – deliver half the education and half the health services. If you don't talk to them and you don't know what they're doing, it's impossible to have a cohesive approach.

The Commission for Africa report reached a similar conclusion.

So too have many governments and NGOs who in the past were unwilling to work with Churches or explicitly Christian or other faith-based groups.

We must not be shy of rising to this challenge. When we cooperate with aid and development agencies, we give them the opportunity to reach more people, more quickly, more efficiently.

Faith communities can now play a full role, within the broad church of civil society, as one of the 3 pillars that are vital to creating the comprehensive structure necessary to make a difference: the other two being governments and international institutions; and the private sector – spanning the entire business and economic community.

The hour certainly demands that we meet at 'such a time as this' – that famous phrase from the Book of Esther.

There we read how this young woman by chance finds herself in the harem of the ruler of Persia, just as a plot is hatched to eliminate her people, the Jews. Her uncle Mordechai sends her the message to grasp the opportunity that is before her: 'Who can say? Perhaps it was for just such a time as this that you came to this position?'

I am sure that we are now at 'such a time as this' – when there are unprecedented opportunities for us, and we must grasp them.

We are a world-wide Communion, spanning the planet, spanning rich and poor, donors and recipients. This comprehensiveness uniquely strengthens our ability to engage more effectively in holistic mission with global partners, and make a greater difference than ever before in bringing the Lord's abundant life to his children.

And of course, this is a time in the life of our Communion when it will be good for us also to step back and take stock of the fullness of our calling.

There is no doubt that we face deep and difficult issues in the internal life of the Communion, and I do not want to pretend they do not matter.

We are, rightly, concerned with what it means to live faithfully and obediently to our Lord, in pursuit of greater holiness and Christlikeness.

But this must not be at the expense of God's mission in God's world.

We know that too often the world around thinks we care only about questions of sexuality.

This week's meeting shows that this is not the case.

And beyond this demonstration that we care for all God's children, I am also sure that, as we live out more fully the whole breadth of what it is to be God's people in God's world, we shall better understand how to tackle the differences and divisions among us.

I am sure that through following Jesus' example in serving the needs, the urgent needs, of others, we will be helped better to know how to follow his example in other areas of our lives.

Yes, we meet because the hour demands it.

This is the moment for the church to be more visible as the credible voice of the poor, the disempowered, the destitute and the disadvantaged.

This is the moment to re-affirm our mission as the church to unite against poverty and bring hope to the people of God.

God's World Cries Out

The third reason for our gathering is that God's world cries out to him.

I have already given some of the terrifying statistics of poverty, disease, and suffering.

And I have already spoken of the God who hears the cries of the oppressed.

Tackling oppression requires more than tackling the particular consequences of the way today's world works.

We need to tackle the causes.

This means looking beyond the roots of inequality and injustice within global political and economic systems.

It means looking to the deeper causes that lie within the human heart – the causes of selfishness and greed that have their roots in our fear that we will never have sufficient.

Yet God does provide for our needs. But he does not provide for our greed.

God provides a world in which there actually is an abundance for us all, if only we shared it equitably.

But the whole global economic system operates through ruthless competition, based on the fallacy that actually there is shortage. And so the rich and powerful are easily able to exploit the poor and weak.

Furthermore, short term gain increasingly ignores the long term costs, for ourselves, and for future generations.

This is becoming ever more evident in relation to climate change.

The Bishop of Worcester, in a British House of Lords debate in October 2005, said:
We are treating the planet on which we live as a credit card with no credit limit and no repayment date.

This cannot go on.

Already we are seeing more extreme weather patterns, with more frequent and more severe droughts in much of southern and eastern Africa, and at the same time floods and cyclones.

We know that, unchecked, global warming will very quickly wipe out all the gains achieved by development assistance over more than fifty years.

We need a change of heart, a change of mind.

We need to recapture the human priorities of our world, and to make clear what it means to be responsible stewards of God's creation.

This is the church's prophetic task – and the theme of our final day together.

It is for God's people to remind the world that human beings are more precious than we can ever imagine.

We are made in the image of God, which cannot be measured in monetary terms.

The world has to rediscover how quality of life matters far more than quantities of dollars.

To be civilised is not about personal or national wealth. To be civilised is to live in a world where:

'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.'

Who could disagree with this?

The words I have just quoted are over 50 years old – they come from the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 25.

Yet half a century on, they remain a mocking dream for that half of the world's population who live on two dollars a day or less.

It is for us to stand up, and stand together; it is for us to declare loud and clear that we stand by these standards of justice, integrity, dignity, humanity.

And we hold everyone else to stand by them too.

We stand for equitable sharing of God's abundance; and for responsible stewardship of the resources which he entrusts to us.

We stand for a sustainable livelihood for all – sustainable in environmental terms, as well as economic.

This means that poorer nations must be allowed to continue developing, and richer nations must encourage this to happen, taking responsibility for their own disproportionate environmental costs.

And we stand for a global society that ensures there is adequate care for the very young, the very old, the frail, and others unable to care for themselves.

Globalisation means that we are all neighbours now – whether it comes to economic systems, or climate change.

Our lives are intricately caught up with one another.

We need a new morality for our global village – one that equally values every child of God upon this planet.

And we need a new and effective Earth Ethic.

It is for people of faith to make this message heard loud and clear.

Conclusion

Dear friends, this promises to be a momentous week.

We meet because God's world is crying out to him – and we know our God hears, and our God acts.

We meet because the hour demands it – and we know that we serve the living God who says 'Today' is the time for salvation.

We meet because God has called us – and we know that those whom he calls, he directs and equips to carry out his purposes.

So, dear friends, let us meet with joy, knowing our Lord has a purpose for us. Let us listen to his directing. Let us receive his equipping, and let us be ready to go from here more fully to share in his mission to his world.

May he bless us all richly as we meet; and may he make us a blessing to others.