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Edited by Paul Avis & Benjamin M. Guyer

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

Theology, History, Polity and Purpose

'I commend this book of essays and hope that others will read them carefully as a preparation for further reflection on the Lambeth Conference and its part in the complex web of relationship in the Anglican Communion'

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

B L O O M S B U R Y

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Foreword: The Archbishop of Canterbury

I am very grateful to Paul Avis and Ben Guyer for bringing together this important collection of essays. It is of course timely as we approach the next Lambeth Conference.

I was struck by this sentence in the editors' preface to the book: 'We hope and pray that these chapters will communicate – and, more importantly, re-inspire – some of the faith, dedication and utterly infectious joy that the Lambeth Conference has generated over the last 150 years.'

I pray that the Lambeth Conference in 2020 will indeed be an opportunity for expressing faith, dedication and utterly infectious joy. It is of course only with the crucial aid of reflecting back on what has happened that we can begin to move forward and make sense of what is happening in the present.

I therefore commend this book of essays and hope that others will read them carefully as a preparation for further reflection on the Lambeth Conference and its part in the complex web of relationship in the Anglican Communion.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Justin Welby', with a stylized cross symbol to its left.

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby

Editorial Preface

This volume of scholarly studies is being published 150 years after the first Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1867. The Conference that will convene in 2020 will be the fifteenth in the series. The last major study of the Lambeth Conference, Alan M. G. Stephenson's *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, was published forty years ago.¹ Much has happened in Anglicanism since then; a fresh, thorough and comprehensive account is overdue. Surveying a range of historical, theological and constitutional topics, these essays collectively lay the foundations for future scholarship on the Lambeth Conference as a major institution of the Anglican Communion.

The first Lambeth Conference was a new departure for the world's Anglicans. That conference was not intended as the first Lambeth Conference – no sequel was envisaged at the time. However, bishops and laity found the 1867 meeting both electrifying and inspiring, and within a few years of its conclusion, there were calls for another such conference. From 1878 until 2008, the Lambeth Conference took place every ten years. There were only three exceptions during this 130-year period. The fourth Lambeth Conference was held in 1897 rather than 1898 so that all Anglican bishops might gather together in commemoration of the 1,300th anniversary of St. Augustine's missionary venture into England.² The two world wars inevitably brought about considerable disruption: the 1918 Conference was pushed back to 1920, and the 1940 Conference was delayed until 1948. But with the practice of decennial gatherings already set, in the post-war period the Conferences met without fail each decade for the next sixty years.

Given this pattern, the next Conference should have taken place in 2018. But the Anglican Communion is not what it once was. Bonds of affection have, in some places, been replaced with fetters of discord; matters of long-standing consensus have become topics of acrimonious debate. Nonetheless, as the

¹ Alan M. G. Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London: SPCK, 1978). See also id., *The First Lambeth Conference, 1867* (London: SPCK, 1967).

² Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 94.

chapters in this book show, with 150 years of history and attendant influence, the Lambeth Conference is a defining feature of modern Anglicanism. Because of its institutional nature, the Lambeth Conference is best spoken of in the singular, as an enduring reality. Anglicans refer not to ‘the Lambeth Conferences’ (plural), but to ‘the Lambeth Conference’ (singular), specifying only the year in which it took place (e.g. ‘the Lambeth Conference 1920’ or ‘the 1920 Lambeth Conference’). As with every institution, the membership changes from one meeting to another, but as with a Parliament or Congress, the meetings of the Lambeth Conference are not one-off events. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Lambeth Conference is often described as one of the Anglican Communion’s four Instruments of Communion. The other three are the office and ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the incumbent for the time being of the oldest Primatial See of the English Church; the Primates’ Meeting, which consists of the senior archbishop or metropolitan of each member church of the Communion and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), the only body that is both governed by a constitution and made up of representatives who are not *ex officio*, but elected or appointed by each member church. It is no exaggeration to claim that the Lambeth Conference has done more than any other Anglican ‘Instrument’ to create and facilitate the modern Anglican Communion. In the light of current debate and dissension, it is especially important that Anglicans and their ecumenical partners have a clear understanding of the role played by the Lambeth Conference in this regard. False memories die the slowest of deaths; partisan historical narratives are often the handmaidens of long-lasting ecclesial division. Discord must not be allowed to occlude the deep historical and theological roots that all Anglicans share.

The Lambeth Conference has played a decisive role in shaping and even creating the other three Instruments of Communion. The ACC came into existence in 1968, when the Lambeth Conference of that same year passed Resolution 69. The wording of that resolution is important; the ACC was not created by fiat, but by mediating a request to the provinces of the Anglican Communion: ‘The Conference accepts and endorses the appended proposals concerning the Anglican Consultative Council and its Constitution and submits them to the member Churches of the Anglican Communion for approval.’ The

resolution specified that approval would come 'by a two-thirds majority' sent to the Lambeth Consultative Body (LCB), and further specified the contents of the ACC's constitution and its schedule of membership. Resolution 69 indicated no possibility that non-approval by a province necessarily excluded that province from continued membership; rather, the minority would be bound by the decision of the majority. Spurred by the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Communion's provinces approved the creation of the ACC, which held its first meeting in Limuru, Kenya, in 1971.

The ACC is not the only body that the Lambeth Conference has helped bring to birth. The LCB was created by the 1897 Lambeth Conference and formed so that 'resort may be had, if desired, by the national Churches, provinces, and extra-provincial dioceses of the Anglican Communion either for information or for advice, and that the Archbishop of Canterbury be requested to take such steps as he may think most desirable for the creation of this consultative body'.³ The 1930 Lambeth Conference further specified that the LCB should 'be prepared to advise on questions of faith, order, policy or administration', and, more importantly, begin the work of normalizing its membership, requiring that it 'should consist of not less than 18 members'.⁴ The LCB continues to exist as an ad hoc group, advising the Archbishop of Canterbury on matters pertaining to the Lambeth Conference, but the ACC has taken over duties pertaining to policy and administration, and to a lesser extent, faith and order. The creation of both the LCB and the ACC are abiding testaments to the importance of the Lambeth Conference, and to its capacity for authoritative suasion in leading the wider Anglican Communion.

Although the Lambeth Conference did not create the other two Instruments of Communion, it shaped them decisively. The Lambeth Conference very much recreated the Archbishopric of Canterbury as an episcopal see of international import. By the late nineteenth century, a synergistic relationship had developed between the Lambeth Conference and the Archbishop of Canterbury. When Archbishop Charles Thomas Longley endorsed the 1865 Canadian proposal for convening an international synod of Anglican bishops, he took on the responsibility of issuing personal

³ LC 1897, Res. 5.

⁴ LC 1930, Res. 50.

invitations to each Anglican bishop. All later Archbishops of Canterbury have followed Longley in this regard. This gives Canterbury a position of unparalleled influence in shaping global Anglicanism. Importantly, Archbishop Longley set a precedent in a second way by not inviting the South African Bishop John Colenso, whose theology had been condemned as heterodox by every provincial Anglican body then in existence. Invitations to the Lambeth Conference are not a foregone conclusion. The prestige accorded through the Lambeth Conference to the Archbishop of Canterbury enabled Archbishop Donald Coggan to create the Primates' Meeting, the fourth Instrument of Communion, in 1978.

The nomenclature 'Instruments of Communion' points to an imperative and priority for the Anglican Communion in recent times – to hold together. The Anglican Communion will not last if it settles for merely pragmatic political ties and props in order to avoid falling apart. If it is to have a meaningful quality of communion, the Anglican Communion must cultivate an ecclesial character and quality expressible in a globally interchangeable ordained ministry, the exercise of episcopal collegiality, a common sacramental life and structures for consultation and discernment, arriving at a common mind on all essential matters. This includes, but is not limited to, recognizing in one another biblical fidelity and creedal orthodoxy. Our communion as Anglicans must instantiate the biblical notion of *koinonia*, sharing and participating together in a reality greater than ourselves. That reality is the realm of the grace of God, mediated to us through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ and energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Anglican Communion is a communion of churches. It is not constituted as a global church with a common set of liturgies or a unified canon law. The Anglican Communion does have shared, international structures of governance and guidance – the Instruments of Communion – but liturgies, disciplinary procedures and official policies on many matters are administered at the provincial or local level. Because of shared historical roots in the Church of England, there are strong family resemblances between the liturgies, laws and structures of governance of member churches. The ideal balance between local autonomy and international communion is best encapsulated by the phrase 'Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence'

(MRI), which dates from the 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto, Canada. The Lambeth Conference is nothing if not a collective episcopal commitment to this very principle.

We hope and pray that these chapters will communicate – and, more importantly, re-inspire – some of the faith, dedication and utterly infectious joy that the Lambeth Conference has generated over the last 150 years. More specifically, as we told contributors, the purpose of our book is fourfold:

1. to affirm the strategic importance of the Lambeth Conference as an enduring institution of the Anglican Communion, marking its first 150 years of existence, while also attempting to raise its public profile both within the Communion and ecumenically;
2. to provide a range of scholarly in-depth resources – historical, ecclesiological, ecumenical and constitutional – to serve as background preparatory material for the next Lambeth Conference and those that will follow, by informing and resourcing the participants – the bishops of the Anglican Communion and the many ecumenical observers – and all others who will follow the course of the Conference closely and be affected by its outcomes;
3. to provide scholarly resources and tools for any and all persons who are or will be engaged in academic research into the history, theology, polity and influence of Anglicanism, such as journalists, scholars, teachers of Anglican studies, clergy and church commentators;
4. to promote and assist the revival of Anglican theology, ecclesiology, polity and historical self-understanding more broadly, setting contemporary Anglican theology and practice upon the firm foundation of the Anglican inheritance of faith, in subordination to Holy Scripture and the ecumenical creeds, as ‘our inspiration and guidance under God’.

Accordingly, this book falls into two parts. The first consists of studies that deal with the history, theology, constitution and purpose of the Lambeth Conference. The second, shorter, part consists of more individual, personal and pastoral perspectives concerning the Lambeth Conference and Anglicanism more generally. History studies the past, but tradition strives to preserve something of it. Tradition is a value judgement; it is not the fullness of the past, but a consciously cultivated continuity that links select elements from prior ages with our own time. The Lambeth Conference has bequeathed a legacy

in which there is much to celebrate and give thanks for. Its tradition is worth cultivating.

We are most grateful to all of the contributors, who have given of their time and talents and shared their scholarship and insights. We also thank the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby, for agreeing to contribute a foreword to this book.

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Contributors

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Part One

Theological, Historical and Constitutional Studies

The Lambeth Conference Among the Instruments of Communion

Stephen Pickard

‘For peace and charity’: Anglican episcopal collegiality

In Archbishop Charles Longley’s opening address to the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 he said: ‘It has never been contemplated that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the churches in full communion with the Church of England, and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding.’ Similarly, in connection with the 1878 Conference, Archbishop Tait ruled out any attempt to define doctrine.¹ What Longley and Tait were seeking to guard against was any suggestion that the Conference might assume the role of a *magisterium* that would issue decrees of a doctrinal nature, which Anglicans throughout the world would be required to accept.²

The invitation extended in 1867 to those bishops in visible communion with the United Church of England and Ireland was for the purpose of communion, conference and consultation. Longley’s hope was that this ‘would greatly tend to maintain practically the Unity of the Faith, while they would bind us in straighter [= straiter] bonds of peace and brotherly charity.’³ For ‘peace and charity’ the bishops of the emerging communion of churches in fellowship

¹ R. T. Davidson, *The Origin and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878* (London: SPCK, 1888), p. 18.

² *Towards a Symphony of Instruments: An Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion*, A Working Paper of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO); Unity Faith and Order Paper No. 1, for the Anglican Consultative Council, Auckland, 2013 (ACC15), para. 2.3.1. Hereinafter, *Symphony of Instruments*, IASCUFO. <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/209979/Towards-a-Symphony-of-Instruments-Web-Version.pdf>

³ A. M. G. Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference 1867* (London: SPCK, 1967), pp. 187–8.

with the ancient See of Canterbury, presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, would seek common counsel on matters of faith, order and life in the context of prayer and worship.

The idea that such a gathering might constitute an ‘instrument of unity’ would no doubt have seemed odd for an Anglican Communion in its infancy.⁴ The express desire was to share a deeper episcopal collegiality occasioned by a number of tensions and controversies in the churches.⁵ It took well over a century after the first Lambeth Conference for the invention of the concept ‘instruments of unity’. And in the past thirty years a further two ‘instruments of unity’ have been added to complement the Lambeth Conference. The status of the See of Canterbury as an instrument of unity is a subject of discussion though the weight of opinion seems to regard it as one of the instruments.⁶

Since the first Lambeth Conference there has been a remarkable expansion of the fellowship of churches in communion with the See of Canterbury. In response to the increasing complexity of the Anglican Communion, additional structures and mechanisms have been created to facilitate conversation, counsel and communion. The relationships between these different but related instruments have been at times tense and on other occasions remarkably life-giving to the Communion and its mission. After 150 years of Lambeth Conferences a number of questions arise. How might we understand the Lambeth Conference among the Instruments of Communion? How might the ‘peace and charity’ of the Anglican Communion be advanced by Anglican Bishops meeting together at the Lambeth Conference? How might this gathering serve the Gospel of God and the whole church?

The invention of the instruments of unity

The appeal to ‘instruments of unity’ is a relatively recent invention in response to a complex political ecclesiastical reality. It is true that Archbishop Longley envisaged the Lambeth Conference as a means to unity and communion; a

⁴ It seems that the term ‘Anglican Communion’ was first used in 1847. See C. J. Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), chapter 3.

⁵ *Symphony of Instruments*, IASCUFO, para. 16–17.

⁶ *Symphony of Instruments*, IASCUFO; see discussion in paras. 3.3.3–3.3.7.

role that was also envisaged for the Archbishop of Canterbury. In this sense both the Lambeth Conference and the See of Canterbury are not ‘inventions’. However, the modern deployment of the language of ‘instrument’ for both these ‘means’ of unity and communion, and the subsequent application of instrument language to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and Primates has significantly changed the way in which these particular four structures of Anglicanism are perceived and function in the life of the Anglican Communion. Instrument-type language is a peculiarly modern feature of institutional life associated with a mechanical and transactional temper that runs counter to more organic and relational forms of ecclesial life. The phrase ‘instruments of unity’ is a creature of this modern development. In this sense it is truly a recent invention which is not unimportant for the ethos and culture of Anglicanism.

The concept of instruments of unity had its origins in the Ecumenical Movement in the 1970s. It appears that the term ‘instrument of unity’ was used in discussions on the ecclesiological significance of the varieties of Christian councils that emerged in the post-war years. Lukas Vischer insisted that Christian Councils should be ‘instruments of unity’. By this he meant that the ecclesial reality should not be sought in Christian Councils but in the communion among the churches. He argued that ‘as structures, Christian Councils have only *an instrumental ecclesiological significance* in the promotion of this communion.’⁷ This instrumental and provisional role was underscored in the 1982 *Consultation on the Significance and Contribution of Councils of Churches in the Ecumenical Movement* in Venice and the 1986 Second Consultation on Councils of Churches as ‘Instruments of Unity within the One Ecumenical Movement’ in Geneva. The adoption by Anglicans of such language can be traced to the seventh meeting of the ACC in 1987 where the phrase ‘instruments of unity’ appeared in the report ‘Unity and Diversity within the Anglican Communion: A way forward’. It was used as a collective name for the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the ACC and the Primates’ Meeting. Before this, Lambeth 1978 used the term ‘structures

⁷ For the historical context, see *Symphony of Instruments*, IASCUFO, para. 6.2.1 footnote 86. This note quotes from Rev’d Dr Michael Poon’s paper, ‘The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches: On the historic significance of the Anglican Covenant’, a paper prepared for the South-South Encounter, 2010 and made available by Dr Poon to IASCUFO.

in the Anglican Communion' and in 1984 the Secretary General used the term 'inter-Anglican organization' in his ACC-6 opening speech.⁸

As early as the 1968 Lambeth Conference, the ACC was referred to as 'an instrument of common action'.⁹ The concept of 'instrument' was invoked in the *Virginia Report* of 1997.¹⁰ However it is attached in a rather loose manner to a range of phrases: for example, 'Instruments of Communion'; 'instruments of Anglican belonging at the world level' (5.28); 'international Anglican instruments of unity' (6.23); 'worldwide instruments of communion' and 'instruments of interdependence' (6.34); 'instruments of the Anglican Communion' (6.32). Furthermore the report states that the episcopate is 'the primary instrument of Anglican unity' (3.51) and it recognizes the need in the Anglican Communion for 'appropriate instruments' (5.20). The ACC is identified as 'unique among the international Anglican instruments of unity' by virtue of the inclusion of laity among its members (6.23). While not specifically noted in the *Virginia Report*, the ACC, as a consultative body, has a constitution to govern its functioning. Its creation required the agreement of two-thirds of the churches in the Anglican Communion. Neither the Lambeth Conference nor the Primates' Meeting required any approval from member churches. Three things are to be noted in the *Virginia Report*. First, an uncritical acceptance of the language of 'instrument'; second, a loose association of 'instrument' with a range of phrases relating to matters of ecclesial structure; and third, 'Instruments of Communion' was evidently the preferred general identifier regarding 'instruments'.

Certainly since the *Virginia Report* the language of instruments has become part of the stock-in-trade of international Anglican discourse. In Michael Poon's view the 'uncritical use of concepts from the ecumenical movement', such as the concept of 'instruments of unity', aggravates what has been referred to by some as an 'ecclesial deficit' in Anglicanism. The idea of an ecclesial deficit was discussed in the *Windsor Continuation Group Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury* in December 2008. The report noted that 'a central deficit in the

⁸ *Symphony of Instruments*, IASCUFO, para. 6.2.1, footnote 87, quoting Poon, 'The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches', para. 38.

⁹ See 1968 Lambeth Conference resolution 69.

¹⁰ *The Virginia Report: The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission*, Anglican Consultative Council (London: Anglican Communion Office, 1997). Paragraph references in text.

life of the Communion is its inability to uphold structures which can make decisions which carry force in the life of the Churches of the Communion, or even give any definitive guidance to them.’¹¹ The report then noted that ‘other commentators will argue that such mechanisms are entirely unnecessary, but this touches upon the heart of what it is to live as a Communion of Churches’. The ecclesial deficit concerns both the determination of the limits of diversity in the fellowship of Anglican churches and capacity to exercise authority to discipline churches that disregard such limits. What this means is that the notion of an ‘ecclesial deficit’ is an essentially contested ecclesiological concept. On the general issue of new terminology, specifically ‘instruments’ language, Michael Poon’s comments are apposite:

The last decade saw the creation of concepts and structures to uphold the Communion at international level, without thinking through their ecclesial implications and their connection to the ecclesial realities of the particular Churches. So the Communion structures unwittingly set Anglican Churches worldwide on a collision course with one another. These terminologies came from specific Protestant denominational settings; but there was little discussion and explanation of what they mean in Anglican terms ecclesologically.¹²

There is little to suggest that the concept of ‘instruments’ has been subject to any critical assessment as to its appropriateness or what it might signify. Instruments are things that you use to achieve certain ends. A hammer is an instrument for striking a nail in order to build or repair some structure; a dentist’s drill is an instrument. This tool-like quality is reflected in the etymology of ‘instrument’, meaning a ‘tool or apparatus’. It was originally connected with a musical instrument. Interestingly it also included the sense of ‘arrange and furnish’. The adjective ‘instrumental’ points to something that is ‘serviceable’ or ‘useful’.¹³ But how serviceable and useful are the Instruments of Communion?

¹¹ *Windsor Continuation Group Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury* 2008, section D, para. 51. <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/100354/The-Windsor-Continuation-Group.pdf>

¹² Poon, ‘Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches’, para. 38.

¹³ For further information, see ‘instrument’ in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (London: Guild Publishing, 1988).

A sympathetic imagination for the instruments

In times of tension and conflict in the Anglican Communion it is common to find fault with those structures and processes of consultation (commonly referred to as ‘instruments’) that are designed to sustain and enhance common life and unity. For some, the instruments have been rendered impotent to assist in the repair and mission of the Anglican fellowship of churches. As such they are pronounced useless; to be cast aside in favour of alternative mechanisms for ordering the unwieldy Body of Christ.¹⁴ It seems that the Instruments of Communion are no longer the subject of a sympathetic ecclesial imagination that ‘bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things’ (1 Cor. 13.7). A certain ecclesiological amnesia prevails. It is too easily forgotten that structures and processes for ‘peace and charity’ only work if they are informed and directed by a spiritual sensibility alive to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of God that weaves wisdom through the forms and structures of ecclesial life and justifies the depiction of the Lambeth Conference as a fellowship in the Spirit.¹⁵

Ecclesial structures and processes ought to function as conduits for the flow of divine energy. Indeed structures have to be Spirit directed to be fruitful. Conversely energies of the divine Spirit require a christomorphic patterning to remain faithful to the Gospel of God. The absence of a spiritually attuned sympathetic imagination in relation to ecclesial ordering is at heart a theological matter. And the absence of this quality represents a genuine ‘ecclesial deficit’. At its deepest level it arises from a failure to attend to the dynamic way in which the Holy Spirit brings to light and action the form of Christ in the church and the world. As soon as Instruments of Communion are evacuated of a sympathetic ecclesial imagination it is inevitable that they will become subject to sectional or personal interests. The Lambeth Conference, in a unique way among the instruments (to be developed later in this chapter), provides the optimal conditions for the recovery and nurture of just such a sympathetic ecclesial imagination informed by the Spirit of Christ.

¹⁴ See the assessment of Ephraim Radner, ‘Can the Instruments of Unity be Repaired?’, www.anglicancommunioninstitute.com, October 5, 2010.

¹⁵ The 1920 Lambeth Conference described itself as such: ‘The Conference is a fellowship in the Spirit.’

The gift-like character of Instruments of Communion

The appeal for a sympathetic imagination with regard to the instruments is counter-intuitive to the general way in which structures and processes are treated in the Church and more generally in society today. It is commonplace to regard social structures and processes as debased forms of ecclesial life operating at some remove from the purity of the Gospel and discipleship, at best necessary practical means to achieve certain ends. This utilitarian approach to the Instruments of Communion means they become mere artefacts to be manoeuvred and used as the will dictates. That will might be an individual, interest group, party or sectional church interest. The Anglican Communion urgently requires a positive theological appreciation of the Instruments of Communion. This needs to be allied with a corresponding spiritual discernment and energy to dwell in the instruments in a manner that honours the Gospel. This is important for all of the Instruments of Communion and, as I will argue later in this chapter, in a quite particular sense for the Lambeth Conference.

Developing a richer theological understanding of the instruments has been part of the challenge of the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury's *Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order* (IASCUFO). In a series of reports prepared for ACC15 (2013 Auckland) and ACC16 (2016 Lusaka), IASCUFO proposed a theological approach to the Instruments of Communion developed (a) in terms of instruments as gifts for deepening the life of the Anglican Communion and (b) as signs of God's grace for the building up the fellowship of Anglican Churches as part of the worldwide Body of Christ.¹⁶ These reports emphasized that the Instruments of Communion were made up of people with their gifts, graces and frailties. Because of this, the instruments require the care and attention of trusted servants who act as stewards of the Instruments of Communion. Extending this line of reasoning we note a number of things.

The Instruments of Communion are designed to facilitate communication, conversation and consensus building among the fellowship of Anglican

¹⁶ See footnote 2 above re: ACC15; and Resolution 16.21 of ACC16 on the Instruments of Communion, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/234449/acc-16-resolutions-2016.pdf>.

Churches. In short, the instruments provide ways by which the Anglican Communion seeks the wisdom of the Spirit of God for a deeper communion and faithful witness to Christ in the world. This suggests that the instruments may be more appropriately considered as gifts for deepening communion.¹⁷ The deepening of communion serves the Anglican Churches' mission in the world (Jon. 17.21). The history of the Lambeth Conferences bears witness to the importance of the Church's engagement with the world and a deep concern for the common good as a fundamental element of the episcopal vocation.¹⁸ Consequently the Lambeth Conference ought never be regarded as a self-serving instrument but one orientated towards mission.

The instruments are not states of affairs, nor static entities. Rather – because the people of God, in different and complementary ways, constitute the instruments – they belong to the rich communicative networks of Anglican life in the world. Their function and impact will inevitably become the focal point for change, controversy and new possibilities. This is all part of a dynamic catholicity.¹⁹ The vulnerability of the instruments to change and development does not diminish their gift-like character but simply witnesses to the way in which true gifts actually work in the world.

Concerns have often been expressed that the use of the word 'instruments' ignores the human and relational dimensions of the instruments. Certainly instrumental language can make it difficult to appreciate the instruments as gifts for an enhanced and dynamic Body of Christ. Accordingly it is vital to remember that the instruments are living gifts for communion. The gift-like character of the instruments can be more sympathetically received by the consistent use of the language of 'communion' rather than 'unity'. In contemporary usage 'communion' has a broader and richer connotation than the term 'unity'. Unfortunately, unity has been too easily associated with structural and legal aspects of the Church. Such things are important but they are not

¹⁷ For a more developed examination of the Instruments of Communion in terms of a theology of gift, see Stephen Pickard, 'Gifts of Communion: Recovering an Anglican Approach to the "Instruments of Unity"', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, vol. 11.2 (November 2013), pp. 233–55. The *Virginia Report* 1997, 1.14, referred to the 'instruments of communion which are a gift of God to the Church help to hold us in the life of the triune God'. However this brief reference remained undeveloped in the report.

¹⁸ For example, George Victor Browning, *Sabbath and the Common Good: Prospects for a New Humanity* (Echo Books, 2016).

¹⁹ *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, The Kuala Lumpur Report of the Third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2008), paras 45–49.

the only or the most significant aspects of union with God and each other. The language of 'communion' offers a needed relational balance to the language of 'instruments'. The emphasis on communion terminology is more resonant with the role of human agency and theological focus on God that actually underlies the purpose of the Instruments of Communion. Language, as is well known, has a significant part to play in changing expectations and attitudes.

The real challenge is to recover the priority of a gift-centred approach to the Instruments of Communion. The instruments always remain vulnerable to distortion and misuse. For example, the objectification of instruments leaves them vulnerable to sectional interests to prosecute their own ideas of communion, its repair and/or progress. It also promotes false expectations of what is possible. A gift-centred approach to the structures of Anglican polity is more resistant to the instruments being deployed to patch up or fix problems. A gift-centred approach belongs to an environment that fosters consensus-building, good quality communication and responsible and accountable engagement. The Anglican Communion is called to bear witness through common practice to the incarnate Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit. A gift-centred approach will encourage a reconceiving of the instruments as structures and forms of embodied wisdom for the Anglican fellowship of churches, for the purpose of strengthening witness to Christ in the world. The instruments have to be reassessed, reshaped and reinvigorated against this wider horizon.

I have argued that the instruments are God's gift for deepening the life of the Anglican Communion. But this is not an end in itself. Fostering communion draws people closer to one another and to God the Holy Trinity. This suggests that the instruments belong to the mission of the Church of God. Indeed nurturing communion for the inner life of the churches of the Anglican Communion would cease to be communion in the Gospel of God if it was an introverted or self-serving communion. The wider horizon for the operation of the Instruments of Communion is the mission of the Church. Moreover as gifts, the instruments have a sacramental character. It is in and through such relational church structures that the people of God may hear the voice of the living God and discern signs of God's presence and work in the world. As the Church is a sign of the coming kingdom,²⁰ so too the Instruments of

²⁰ The Church as sign of the kingdom is developed in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper no. 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013), paras. 25–7.

Communion can be understood as ecclesial signs enabling the Church to be a sign of God's grace and goodness. This sign-like character of the instruments orientates them towards the future and draws attention to their contingent and provisional nature. As a consequence they are signs that require the care and attention of trusted servants who act as stewards of communion.

Stewards of the instruments

This consideration raises an important question: What responsibility do human agents have for the Instruments of Communion? If the instruments are received as gifts and signs of communion, then clearly they have to be treated with respect and care. In this context those responsible for the exercise of the gifts do so as stewards and servants of the instruments. When this is undertaken well the Church's witness to the Gospel of God in the world is enriched. In this sense stewardship is a broad-ranging vocation set against the horizon of the mission of God in the world.

The concept of stewardship has been important when considering human responsibility for creation. The early chapters of the Book of Genesis point to creation as the gift of a good and caring God. The God of this remarkable and interdependent creation has the character of the benevolent care and kindly oversight in the ancient tradition of the shepherd King. Human beings, created in the image of such a God, are given responsibility to care for the earth and its creatures. As such the human vocation is to follow the pattern of care and delight in creation of the God whose image they bear. The human vocation as a steward of the garden of creation is a delegated responsibility from a good and kind God. Stewardship is an activity and calling that requires a close, respectful and responsible relationship with the earth and all living things.

This background of the stewardship of creation may be helpful when we deploy the idea of stewardship in relation to the Church. This involves a move from stewardship of creation to stewardship of the community of the new creation; the Body of Christ. Christ is Head of the Body and bestows gifts on the people of the Church in order that through the Church the many riches of the wisdom of God might be shown to the world (Eph. 3.10). Disciples of Christ, and in particular those called to care and exercise oversight of the Body

of Christ, are called to tend the garden of the new creation, the household (*oikos*) of the Lord. And they are called to undertake this vocation after the manner of Christ in humble obedience to the Gospel. In this vein the Apostle Paul refers to himself and his fellow apostolic leaders as ‘servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries’ (1 Cor. 4.1). The new household is the fellowship in the Spirit, the communion of the faithful in Christ. This household is the result of the revealing of God’s mysteries, that is, ‘the secret knowledge of God’s purposes, disclosed in the Gospel.’²¹ Stewards have responsibility for the good ordering and common good of the household of faith. As in the first creation, so in the new creation, stewardship is a delegated and representative responsibility. Moreover, it is a delegation of trust (1 Cor. 4.2). And this vocation mirrors the original creation, that is, it requires a stewardship of the communion of the faithful after the pattern of Christ the Good Shepherd (Jon. 10). Stewards of the mysteries of God, as is abundantly clear from Paul’s letters, exercise their calling on many fronts as ambassadors of Christ, pastoral carers of the churches, and as teachers of the spiritual truths of the Gospel.

This move from stewardship of creation to stewardship of communion provides a fresh way to reconsider the purpose of the Instruments of Communion. The instruments are intended to strengthen and enhance the Anglican Communion. But to fulfil this the instruments require the exercise of good stewardship. This provides a rich theological and missional horizon for the Instruments of Communion. It also draws attention to the great responsibility entrusted to the servants of God for the good functioning of the instruments. It also calls attention to the moral claim upon those called to fulfil this ministry of stewardship in the life of the Anglican Communion. The exercise of stewardship is undertaken by frail human beings, called to repentance and prayerfulness, subject to wilful blindness of many kinds; especially when it comes to the exercise of power and authority. The servants and stewards of the Instruments of Communion are called to exercise this particular vocation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with openness to correction and challenge.

Consideration of personal agency and responsibility for the good operation of the instruments highlights the importance of the careful appointment and

²¹ See C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle of the Corinthians* (2nd edn, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), p. 100.

ongoing education of all those called to high office in the Church of God. It also calls attention to the need for robust synodical processes for the election and appointment of bishops. This in turn puts a spotlight on those qualities that are particularly needful for bishops today. Relevant here are not only matters of personal character but also of ecclesial intelligence. This latter quality requires an appreciation of the particular contribution of the Anglican Communion to the vitality of the Body of Christ. Moreover, in a time of significant transitions in society and church, a bishop's capacity to listen, collaborate, harness conflict and embody spiritual and theological wisdom becomes critical. Such capabilities are especially important in appointments to episcopal leadership in order to balance the emphasis on management and provide a check on political and partisan interests that infect the churches and mimic their host cultures across the globe.²² Such considerations go to the heart of the capacity of the Instruments of Communion to function in the life of the Anglican fellowship of churches as genuine gifts, signs and witnesses to the coming Kingdom of God.

The Lambeth Conference: What kind of gift?

How might an approach to the Instruments of Communion in terms of gift and sign contribute to the renewal of the Lambeth Conference in the Anglican Communion? In this respect, I note that the very language of gift transforms the Lambeth Conference from *mere* instrument to achieve an end – in this case enhancement of the fellowship of Anglican churches – into something that is fundamentally relational. When the bishops of the Anglican Communion meet they are already saying something important about the life of the Body of Christ and their shared care for the churches. Their meeting is an embodiment of what it means to share in the gift of the Gospel that creates and sustains the Body of Christ.²³ The giving and receiving of the gift of God in Christ is unfolded, ordered and released through the episcopal body. Through face-to-face encounter,

²² See Martin Percy, 'Emergent Archiepiscopal Leadership within the Anglican Communion', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 14.1 (May 2016), pp. 46–70.

²³ For example, see *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, The Kuala Lumpur Report, Appendix 2, 'The Anglican Way: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church', Thesis Nine: 'The bishop serves the collegial life of the Church through the nurture of strong bonds with bishops of the Anglican Communion and those who share episcopate in other Christian churches', p. 64.

listening and common prayer, God's gift of Communion is honoured. And this dynamic quality of God's gift is magnified as the bishops of the church recognize the gift of God in each other and in the churches that they bring to Lambeth. From this point of view, the Lambeth Conference is not first of all an instrument to achieve an end. Rather gathering and being bishops together is itself a sign of the gift of God for communion with the world and its peoples. The gift-like character of the Lambeth Conference is a check on the natural human default of misusing the gathering for political ends that tends to undermine the unity of the Body of Christ.

The remarkable thing about the gift-like character of the Lambeth Conference is that it is recognized and overflows through a rich and attractive diversity of episcopal life. Bishops from the Communion display the marks of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and Christian ways of being in the world. The Lambeth gift is a gift of colour and life: a sign of the colour and life of the Spirit of life and love.

Of course the gift, like all gifts, has to be appropriated. God's gift of togetherness remains a task to be undertaken. This requires spiritual maturity, attention to the virtues and the discipline of the Holy Spirit. This will inevitably draw bishops into the costly dimension of God's gift. Sharing in life together, meeting for prayer and counsel, and learning to behold the face of Christ in worship: all such activities are a cause for great joy and humble recognition of the fragile character of the gift of common life. The Lambeth Conference is that time and place where these dimensions of the gift of communion with God and one another are tested, wrestled with and patiently endured. This is why the discipline and steadfastness of the Holy Spirit embodied in common prayer and Eucharist is the vital energy of the Lambeth Conference.

If the Lambeth Conference is an instrument of communion, it is an instrument in a very particular way patterned after the gift of God in Christ. In this sense, first and foremost – and prior to being an Instrument of Communion – the Lambeth Conference is a sign of the work of God breathing life and purpose into the Body of Christ. The bishops of the Lambeth Conference belong to a rich ecclesial ecology nurtured by the infinite identity of God in Christ. In this sense, the Lambeth Conference is caught up in the greater mystery of the Church in God's world. In short it is a participant in this mystery in micro as it were – having a sign-like character that is future orientated with an unfinished dynamic quality. There is an analogy here with the

ancient fourfold marks of the Church. Such marks represent both a gift to the church and an emergent property of the Church; marks that have to be received as a gift and a task that remains on the agenda. In a similar manner the Lambeth Conference is not simply something established and secure. Rather it is a mode of togetherness that requires reconstitution and repetition in order for it to be a living gift of communion for the churches. The Lambeth Conference is thus an emergent property of *koinonia* and as such requires responsible stewardship.

The Lambeth Bishops: What kind of stewards?

This leads to consideration of that other dimension of the instruments previously discussed, that is, stewardship. Specifically what kind of stewardship is required of the bishops of the Lambeth Conference? How might the Lambeth Conference exercise an appropriate episcopal stewardship in the Anglican Communion? These questions go to the heart of the importance of the Instruments of Communion. When the bishops of the Anglican Communion meet at the Lambeth Conference for counsel and prayer, they are gathered as seekers of a common wisdom in their ‘care of the churches’. How is such wisdom to be found and lived? Good stewardship of the Anglican Communion occurs when wisdom emerges through open, generous, truthful and sustained exchanges. This will inevitably be costly and require great humility. Being stewards of God’s wisdom may seem too lofty an ideal for the Lambeth gathering. One reason for this is that wisdom is multifaceted and too often it becomes ensnared in ecclesial brambles of the party or sectional interest variety. When this occurs, wisdom quickly evaporates. This requires further explanation.

In the nineteenth century, the famous ex-Anglican, John Henry Newman republished his essays on the *Via Media* of the Anglican Church (1879) – first published as the *Prophetical Office of the Church* in 1837. Newman identified theology as one of the three fundamental powers of the Church.²⁴ Theology (Newman’s system of philosophy) offered a critical stance in relation to the other two powers, the sacramental and worship tradition (ritual) and ecclesiastical rule (political power). Liturgy and polity required this third

²⁴ John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, 2 vols (3rd edn, London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1877), vol. 1, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism*, Preface, pp. 40 ff.

power (theology) as an essential hermeneutic for the ongoing faithfulness of the Church to the Gospel. Without this third power the Church was easily directed into an unhealthy sacramentalism and/or an unfettered abuse of ecclesiastical power. Church history bore testimony to the conflict that often occurred between these three indispensable elements of the life of the Church. Newman considered that the theological vocation was essential to preserve and foster a critical and reforming spirit.

Newman's approach to the powers of the Church (theological/critical; sacramental/worship and ecclesiastical/political) offers a fuller understanding of how wisdom is constituted and manifests itself. The history of the Lambeth Conferences indicates that it embodies all three dimensions of wisdom as it seeks common counsel, prays and breaks bread and engages in thoughtful dialogue. Moreover, a wise stewardship will seek a balance between these three dimensions of ecclesial wisdom. The great danger for the Lambeth Conference is that one element will dominate the others. In times of tension and controversy the temptation is to resort to ecclesiastical/political solutions. The sacramental/worship life can become somewhat perfunctory and its transformative power can be nullified when the overarching concern is for political/sectional outcomes. Similarly, genuine theological engagement can be too quickly set aside or dismissed as irrelevant to pressing practical concerns. The Lambeth Conference works best and fulfils its deepest aspirations when the delicate balance between theology, worship and polity is pursued for the sake of the well-being of the whole body.

The foregoing discussion suggests that the Lambeth Conference can exercise a stewardship of *koinonia* in the Gospel as it intentionally pursues a wisdom that draws upon the rich heritage of Anglican faith and order. This leads to a reconception of the Lambeth Conference in terms of stewardship of God's wisdom for the world.

The Lambeth Conference within the symphony of instruments

The present inquiry into the Lambeth Conference in relation to the Instruments of Communion points to the significance of the episcopate in the life of the Anglican Communion. In the normal course of ecclesial life, a bishop in his or

her diocese is the fundamental unit of the *ecclesia*. The fellowship of Anglican churches has approximately 1,000 bishops worldwide, exercising episcopal oversight over 80 million Anglican Christians in 164 countries. We might say that this phenomenon represents the Anglican part of the Body of Christ in its spread-out form; in *extensity*.²⁵ This dispersed body is called to be faithful to the good news of God in myriad local contexts. Being the Church in extensity mode is the way in which mission takes place.

When those whose charism is the 'care of the churches' are called together to pray, seek mutual counsel and work for the peace and charity of the churches, they bring with them the people they serve. They bring them in their hearts and minds, and by virtue of the office they occupy. The Lambeth Conference represents the episcopally ordered Body of Christ in *intensity* mode. The form of the Church concentrated in the gathered episcopal body is, in an important ecclesiological sense, the church 'in micro'. An interesting analogy is provided by Anthony Hanson who argued that the pioneer ministry of the early apostles did not create the Church; rather 'the ministry is originally the Church *in nucleo*'.²⁶ Accordingly, the 'ministry shows in miniature what the Church should be'.²⁷ In like manner, the bishops of the Lambeth Conference represent the Church *in nucleo* and witness to the character and form of the Body of Christ. This makes sense within an Anglican polity where the Lambeth Conference can be regarded as embodying a particular intensification of the Anglican Communion.

This consideration also means that the Lambeth Conference does not live to itself but is accountable to the whole body from which it emerges and in relation to which it exercises episcopal oversight and care. Indeed without the whole ecclesial body and its ministries the episcopate would not have emerged. In this sense it is the Body of Christ that brings forth the episcopal body. Yet the episcopate is a genuinely new entity within the complex institutional nature of the *ecclesia* of God. In this sense, the episcopate cannot be reduced to its constituent parts. There is genuine novelty in the ecclesial system.²⁸

²⁵ For discussion of the relationship between extensity and intensity in ecclesiology, see Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2001), pp. 109ff.

²⁶ Anthony Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1975 [1961]), pp. 86, 94, 155.

²⁷ Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry*, p. 60.

²⁸ On the novelty of the episcopate, see Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London: Penguin, 1991), chap. 10, 'Bishops and Authority'.

The episcopal order and the whole body of the Church release each other to be the Church. The episcopal body acts in such a way that the energy of the various ministries is released and directed for the purposes of the whole Church. Yet even as this occurs, the episcopal body is confirmed in its purpose and significance as the whole Church lives and ministers faithfully in accordance with God's purposes. In this way, the orders of ministry establish each other and foster each other's work and purpose. Thus it can truly be said that the ministry of the episcopate and the ministries of the whole people of God bring each other into being.²⁹ This fundamental interrelatedness of the whole body with the episcopate is the reason that the whole body of the Anglican Communion that comes to the Lambeth Conference, embodied in the bishops.

This discussion, about the relationship between the episcopal body gathered at the Lambeth Conference and the wider body, may seem somewhat of a diversion. However, I want to argue that it is straight to the point of the significance of the Lambeth Conference. In fact this relationship between the Lambeth Conference and the wider Communion gives to this instrument of communion a unique significance in relation to the other instruments. How so? In the first and most obvious sense, the Lambeth Conference

‘mbodies the collective pastorate of the bishops. As the corporate gathering of the most representative ministers of the Anglican Communion, it has considerable spiritual, moral and pastoral authority. It includes within itself the greater part of the other Instruments of Communion – there is some useful overlapping that points to the communion or harmony of instruments: the Archbishop of Canterbury belongs among his fellow bishops as first among equals, and the Primates take their place among the bishops too; the episcopal members of the Anglican Consultative Council are also members of the Lambeth Conference.’³⁰

This suggests that, from an *ecclesial* point of view, the Lambeth Conference has a particular primacy among the Instruments of Communion. It is the primary body in which the whole Communion is gathered in its episcopal form. While the See of Canterbury has historical precedence, nonetheless unlike Rome, this does not translate into a certain ecclesial and legal priority. Rather, the

²⁹ Stephen Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), chap. 9.

³⁰ *Symphony of Instruments*, IASCUFO, 2.5.1.

Archbishop who occupies the See of Canterbury is *of* the episcopal body in the same way as all other bishops. The Primates, while a further executive-type elevation of the bishops and archbishops of national churches, do not constitute another fourth-order 'extra episcopal', but are *of* the order of bishops. The Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury may contribute to the achievement of common counsel among the bishops, yet these more organisationally focused episcopal levels are always being drawn into the larger episcopal body and the whole Church which brought them forth. Although such bodies may behave at times in an executive manner, in fact their authority does not extend that far.

A recent example of the tensions that can arise between the instruments became apparent in the discussions and subsequent communications arising from the ACC meeting (ACC-16) in April 2016 in Lusaka, Zambia. The issue focused on the status of the January 2016 Primates' deliberations and their admonition of the Episcopal Church of the USA (TEC). The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, rejected criticism from six former members of the ACC's standing committee of statements they made during and after ACC-16. The comments centred on Resolution 16.24, 'Walking Together', which dealt with how the ACC responded to the Primates' Gathering and Meeting in January.³¹

What then of the Lambeth Conference in relation to the ACC? The ACC reminds us that the body of Christ is only fully itself when it is seen to consist of laity as well as clergy. For practical purposes and precisely because Anglican polity recognizes the dynamic and symbiotic relationship that obtains between the people and their bishops, the ACC has emerged in time and space to bring to focus the breadth and depth of all the baptized of the Anglican Communion. It makes sense within an Anglican polity. It does not usurp episcopal authority, but it does remind everyone how the Body of Christ is constituted and the rich and complex pattern of mutual accountability in the Body of Christ.

The uniqueness of the Lambeth Conference as an instrument of communion derives from the fundamental relationship between the episcopal body and the wider Body of Christ. Theologically they inhere in each other and when the episcopal body meets as the Lambeth Conference then the whole of the

³¹ For further information, see <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2016/05/secretary-general-rejects-criticism-over-walking-together-resolution.aspx>.

Communion is gathered under the form of the episcopate. This is not simply a high doctrine of the episcopate; it is a high doctrine of the Church. It also makes it abundantly clear, at least from an ecclesiological point of view, that the Lambeth Conference is accountable to the whole body to which it is yoked. It also means that withdrawing from the episcopal body represents a serious fracture of the ecclesial body.

It is probably not too much of an exaggeration to state that currently our ecclesial consciousness is somewhat brittle. This shows itself by the fact that as a fellowship of churches we struggle to appreciate that Anglican polity and life is premised on diversity and mutual discernment. When we lack this understanding it is exceedingly difficult to recover a truly sympathetic imagination for the possibilities for peace and charity offered to the Anglican Communion through its instruments. The danger is that we might fail to recognize that it is only when there emerges a deeper sense of the unity and/or integration between the Instruments of Communion that the true gift-like character of the instruments can be properly displayed. It is easily forgotten that the instruments are interrelated, that they form a true symphony of instruments. By treating each instrument separately, or by failing to recognize their interconnectedness, we lose sight of our own essential connectedness and accountability to each other, and the value of the instruments to deepen Anglican life. When this occurs the Anglican Communion suffers increasing fragmentation and disconnection. This in turn breeds greater dissatisfaction with, and rejection of, those means by which Anglicans maintain the 'bonds of affection' so essential for our common life.

Recovering a sense of the symphony of instruments for the common good and well-being of the Communion is vital. For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lambeth Conference have a natural reciprocity, as do the Primates and the ACC. Closer intentional cooperation between these different instruments nurtures the Anglican ideal of an organic, conversational and conciliar ethos. The fact that there may be tensions between these different bodies is natural and to be expected, but this is not a reason for jettisoning one or other of the bodies or diminishing one and exalting another. This is not the way of communion in the instruments. In truth, the instruments together exercise a collaborative ministry in and for the Anglican Communion and indeed beyond. As such, the instruments are orientated to or 'lean' towards

one another, they receive their life from each other and are best able to make their particular and unique contributions to the whole as they recognize their indebtedness to each other. In this way, they become living parts of the Body of Christ intended for God's glory.

Lambeth Conference: Unfinished gift for the unfinished church

The fact that the instruments have emerged in history – often in times of conflict and uncertainty in the Church – points to the fact that the instruments are contingent and therefore provisional and unfinished. The instruments will probably undergo change and modification as the contexts and circumstances of being the Church also change and evolve. So too we can and should expect the Lambeth Conference to undergo change with respect to its form and content over time and in response to new circumstances.

The contingent nature of the instruments goes hand in hand with their gift-like character. The instruments are gifts of the Spirit that have emerged through a process and within specific historical contexts. This means that, as stated earlier, the instruments represent both a gift and a task for the Anglican Communion. Their operation and ongoing value for the Communion requires active human participation and an imaginative effort to follow what the Spirit is saying to the Church as the future unfolds. For the reasons outlined in this chapter, this is a particular vocation and critical challenge for the Lambeth Conference.

The fact that the instruments are contingent and subject to change also means that there will be an inevitable messiness about the way the instruments function as God-given gifts. These considerations reveal the instruments to be not signs of a steady-state church, but of an unfinished ecclesial body 'on the way'. As such, the instruments are signs of work to be done for the sake of the Church's mission in the world. The Lambeth Conference participates in this ongoing work of the Body of Christ. As such, it too can be a means whereby the multifaceted riches of God's wisdom in Christ might be manifest in heaven and upon earth (Eph. 3.10).

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lambeth Conference

Paul Avis

Evolution of the See of Canterbury

The ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury goes back to the mission of Augustine (AD 534–604), who was sent by Pope Gregory I ('Gregory the Great'; Pope AD 590–604) in AD 596 to convert the Anglo-Saxons in England. Augustine, named after an even more famous earlier bishop, St Augustine of Hippo, was a monk and was soon made an abbot to strengthen his authority over his companion monks, but was not yet a bishop. Most of what we know about Augustine's mission comes from *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* by the Venerable Bede, which was completed by Bede in the monastery of Jarrow in the north-east of England in 731.¹ To compile his work, which necessarily he had to do on the basis of selective sources, Bede had access to documents that had been preserved at Canterbury since the days of Augustine himself. Bede describes the origin of Augustine's mission like this: 'Moved by divine inspiration ... [Gregory] sent the servant of God, Augustine, and with him several other monks, who feared the Lord, to preach the word of God to the English nation.'² The monks sensed that they were venturing into the unknown, to a land of pagan darkness and violence; they did not expect

¹ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill et al. (ed.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988); J. Robert Wright, *A Companion to Bede: A Reader's Commentary on The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Gerald Bonner, 'Some Factors in the Conversion of the English: The Men and the Churches', *Tufts Review* 1.1 (1997), pp. 14–29.

² Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation and the Lives of St Cuthbert and the Abbots* (London: Dent (Everyman Library), 1910), p. 33 (chapter xxiii). For Gregory, see R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).