

St Luke's in the City

1st Sunday in Lent

25 February 2007

Celebrating at the CROSSroads

Dear Friends,

The Primates of the Anglican Communion completed their meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, last Monday. Their Communiqué can be found at:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/42/50/acns4253.cfm>

An interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury can be found at:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/42/50/acns4255.cfm>

The Primates spent a little of their time discussing the Millennium Development Goals (on world poverty and economic injustice), theological education in the Anglican Communion, the 'listening process' (on the experience of gay and lesbian people), and the Anglican Covenant (on holding the Communion together with a more rigid legal framework than presently exists). But the vast majority of the Primates' time, and precious energies, was spent discussing matters of homosexuality. The Episcopal Church ('TEC', formerly 'ECUSA', the Episcopal Church of the USA) was the centre of attention, because that has been the principal battle ground so far, where it is said that about a quarter of all Anglicans dissent from their General Convention's resolutions. It also happens to be a very wealthy church, and undoubtedly everyone wants to get their hands on the property! Whether the TEC experience will reproduce itself in other parts of the Anglican Communion remains to be seen, but it is reasonable to expect that the same influences will be brought to bear. We are all affected by this, make no mistake. A new Puritanism has been growing across the Anglican Communion for some time, particularly since the ordination of women. The Puritan cause has found homosexuality to be the perfect vehicle for 'divide and rule'. The Primates' Communiqué makes it clear that the course set at Lambeth 1998 (Resolution 1.10), reaffirmed repeatedly in statements ever since, remains their only course. The evangelical imagination of bishops and Primates is clearly fixated below the navel. It would seem that their only plan for the 'unity' of the Communion, which all agree is to be desired, is to win it at the expense of gay and lesbian people.

Archbishop Rowan was asked in his closing press conference, "What message is this sending to people in the pews who are tired of this?" I suggest the more critical question is this: 'What message does this send to the rest of the world?' It is apparently imagined that enforcing a 'pure' teaching on this one issue will guarantee the security of the church. Will it? Can it? What is the world to make of a church which brokers unity by repressing gay and lesbian people? What are we to make of a church which makes sexuality the touchstone of Christian teaching? Could it be that this is a church which is hiding its own deeply conflicted sexuality? Is this a church using this single issue as a way of concealing its red-handed participation in economic injustice? Clearly, an evangelical (good news) vision is not going to come from the Primates. Thankfully, we know that the evangel of Christ is the irrepressible work of the Holy Spirit who blows where she will, arising in the most unexpected people and places.

With my love, David