

## A view from The BRIDGE

### Volunteers - valued or taken for granted?

The silver has not been cleaned for a while, things are getting a bit dull. The church needs to be brightened up a bit since Ivy our resident flower arranger has been in hospital for the past two weeks and things seem to have gone plain, not that this has affected our worship but flowers do add to the ambiance of the church. There is a new project starting at our local community centre and the committee are asking for helpers as volunteers.



The world of work these days is so stressed that even our churches ask what volunteering we have done. Volunteering has become a way of life from work experience for school leavers through to adults and even pensioners. We now interview volunteers, we expect them to be of a certain quality and integrity because of the impact they will have on the organisation to which their valuable services are being utilized. We now expect so much from them and sometimes we forget that the service they are rendering is their own free will and in their own time. Volunteers are required to be of a high standard and of impeccable character. Have we ever thought of calculating the savings we make by the use of volunteers – the hours and cost to any well organised association? Even if volunteers were being paid the basic minimum wage most of the grants and funds of these organisations would be wiped out in no time. Our reliance on volunteers has become so enormous that we sometimes take them for granted. Volunteers are not just the people doing the flowers or the silver or the tea, they are the life blood of very many organisations.

**Adeline Cole**

## “The Anglican Communion is alive and well” says Canon Andrew Nunn

It was a wonderful opportunity – to go back to South Africa, just a year after my sabbatical and to take part in a conference of the Anglican Communion.

It was wonderful but slightly worrying as well. Only a fortnight before the Primates of the Communion had been meeting in Tanzania. Our Conference would take place in its shadow and we feared that the atmosphere would be dependent on its outcome. As it turned out there was no reason to be worried.

The conference had been the idea of the Archbishop of Cape Town as a response to the meeting of the Anglican Primates at Kanuga in 2001. There he was commissioned to head up the Communion's response to the challenge of AIDS and poverty eradication. The Conference was to look at these issues in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the way in which the Communion can contribute towards their achievement by 2015.

### TEAM

So we gathered, 400 of us, from almost all the provinces of the Communion for an eight day conference called TEAM – ‘Towards Effective Anglican Mission’. I was one of five delegates from the Church of England and this was my first experience of what the Communion is really like.

We met in a Conference centre on the outskirts of Johannesburg, right under the flight path to the Oliver Tambo International Airport. It was an amazing place to stay, which was fortunate as we never managed to leave it. Well that is not quite true – we left twice during the eight days to go to church, on the first day when we went to the opening Eucharist and on the Sunday when I returned to Pretoria Cathedral to see our old friend Ossie Swartz, the Dean of the Cathedral, soon to be Bishop of Kimberly.

The opening Eucharist at which 1000 people were present, was celebrated in the Parish Church of All Souls, Tskane, a township on the outskirts of Johannesburg. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who preached, said “When we are set free to take the risks of love, then the spirit of the Lord God is visible; then the spirit of the Lord God is at work”.

### Welcome and warmth

The worship was so fantastic – it lasted 2¾ hours – and the hospitality so wonderful. Everyone of us sat down to a beautifully cooked meal after the Eucharist. And the welcome was so warm and real – the whole township was out on the streets to welcome the fleet of coaches that brought us – that Archbishop Rowan's words really rang true.

On the second day, Archbishop Rowan asked the critical question of the Conference, ‘how will the history of this moment be written?’. He went on to comment that ‘there are no gated communities in the kingdom, no communities that are protected from others’. TEAM ‘is about mobilising those small, precious resources we have that nobody else has’, he said, ‘the Church is probably the only organisation in civil society that can deliver goals concretely at grassroots levels in modest but real ways.’

Over the next seven days we looked at the eight Millennium Development Goals, established by the United Nations in 2000, which address the issues of poverty, health, HIV/AIDS, the status of women, education, sustainability and the place of children as they affect the developing world.

Contributors to the

conference included Salil Shetty, UN Director of the Millennium Campaign; Hellen Wangusa, Anglican Observer to the UN; Sheila Sisulu, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme and Professor Steve de Gruchy, University of KwaZulu-Natal. We felt we were hearing from people who really knew what they were talking about and in plenary we were able to make our own contributions, bringing perspectives from across the Communion.

The purpose of the Conference was to produce a set of recommendations that we could take back to our provinces which would set the agenda for the next seven years, recommendations about each of the MDGs, that were achievable and that we as churches could work with.

I was sceptical about whether that would be achievable given the diversity in the Conference. But the amazing thing was that, by the grace of God, we did it – and a full set of recommendations was produced and agreed by the time we left. Now all we have to do is persuade our Provinces to commit ourselves to the task.

### In this together

The issues we were hearing about, the statistics that were presented, were frightening; the situation in so much of the developing world is desperate and the implications are for all of us. As Archbishop Rowan reminded us – when one part of the body hurts the whole body hurts – we are in this together.

My misgivings proved to be without foundation. So what made this gathering of the Anglican Communion functional?

One important factor was that it was representative of the whole church. There were many bishops and archbishops present, but they didn't dominate the proceedings, they were outnumbered by other clergy and laity. The power struggles that typify so many of the meetings held in the Communion at the present time were not in evidence.

Another contributing factor was the subject matter. It all really mattered. These were critical issues facing the poorest people, the most marginalised, excluded and disenfranchised in the world. We could gather around them and find common ground.

### In the context of worship

But above all for me one of the real factors that made for this most remarkable experience was the fact that we did everything in the context of worship. We began the Conference with a Mass in a township church and we ended it with a Mass in the Chapel in the Conference Centre. The Eucharist began every day and worship heralded every evening. We studied the Bible together and prayed together, in each others languages, in each others styles. We danced with the Latin Americans, clapped with the Africans, meditated with the Canadians, sang with the Sri Lankans and found places where all our liturgies crossed over.

The President of the Final Eucharist was the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Rt Rev Katharine Jefferets Schori. She is an impressive figure – but what was more impressive was the fact that not one person complained that she was with us and everyone there was ready to receive the Sacrament from her hands. This was real communion.

I arrived less than convinced about the future of the Communion. I left enthusiastic about it and determined that for the sake of the world it needs to survive. So many people I met from Africa and the rest of the developing world were committed to its existence and conscious of everything it achieves and can achieve in the future.

At the beginning of the Conference Archbishop Ndungane said that ‘fresh winds are blowing through the Anglican Communion’. If the TEAM Conference is anything to go by he might just be right!

## The BRIDGE

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Tel: 020 7939 9400 Fax: 020 7939 9468  
e-mail: [bridge@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:bridge@southwark.anglican.org)

**Managing Editor:**  
Wendy S. Robins  
(Communications & Resources)  
**Editor:**  
Bryan Harris  
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**Editorial Advisory Board:**  
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