

# Concluding

## Remarks





**T**he most enduring aspect of the Anglican Church's life is its mission. Over the two thousand years of Christian history, during which the faith has become global, the focus of Christian life has been mission. What we proclaim and how we proclaim reveal the shape and depth of our faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the research that has produced this report we have discovered that the shape of Anglican mission has been changing. The increasing emergence of Anglicanism outside the territories of the former British Empire and the pressures of engaging other religions have become central issues. Internally, Anglicans face disparities in resources and issues about leadership formation and theological education. In addition, well publicized tensions over issues of human sexuality rock the church's leadership, and clusters of frictions over authority and leadership cloud local and diocesan levels of Anglican life. The Anglican Communion faces serious obstacles in its quest for fresh forms of mission.

Nevertheless, fresh forms of mission are emerging, though they may not be obvious in the swirl of activity demanded by conflict. Among Anglican people at the grassroots, in the pews of Anglican congregations, a new sensibility is

emerging. It is a glimpse of hope and a hint of possibility. It is an urge to try something new, and a fresh conviction that God will guide such efforts. Touched by God's Spirit, new forms of vitality and a new feeling of promise are palpable. It will take a great deal of effort to sustain them. In some situations resources will be lacking, while in others proper guidance and direction will be unsure. At times there will be conflict and uncertainty over its resolution.

Anglicans in many places have a strong sense of belonging as Anglicans. This sense of belonging is "glocalized" in the sense that they feel they belong both to their local Anglican community and to a global communion, that the local and global ways of belonging are mutually enhancing and defining, and that they are active partners, not passive recipients, in the global dimension of their belonging. Anglican "glocalization" thus involves people in wide networks of relationship and meaning in which they are actors in creating these networks. While varying in intensity from place to place, this phenomenon is striking in that it is found in both Global South and Global North, in rural as well as in urban centers, in united churches as well as in more purely Anglican churches. Glocalization differs from globalization in that it highlights local diversity rather than global uniformity and local

initiative rather than global dominance.

In this environment of glocalization, what it means to be Anglican is in constant flux, and it is difficult to define it in either the outward life of communities or in the thinking of individuals. Continuing communion with the See of Canterbury is one objective identifier, as is historic continuity of worship life with the tradition of the Book of Common Prayer. Anglicans in many contexts see their church as one of tradition and order, which in turn promote stability in both church and society. In worship, creativity and diversification often make for very diverse relationships between current practice and prayer book worship. Similarly, while Anglicans value tradition and order, they often are key initiators in matters of social justice. Thus, while many Anglicans acknowledge the role of certain historic markers in their sense of identity, equally important is their experience of a historical process of creative innovation in relation to those markers, a process in which local initiative is key.

In the early years of a new century characterized by fears of terrorism, the

heightening of the religious aspect of ethnic and global conflicts, and intensifying crises of poverty, HIV/AIDS, participation in the Millennium Development Goals, and environmental degradation, it is striking that Anglicans in the four provinces researched are confident in their identity and in the contribution they are making in their contexts and in the communion as a whole. In this sense, their identity is not post-colonial, for they do not see themselves primarily as struggling to position themselves in relation to a colonial past. Instead, they are positioning themselves confidently in relation to the emergent needs and communities of the present and future in their contexts.

Anglicans in many places are adept both at living out a distinctive Anglican identity and in forming inter-dependent partnerships with other Christian groups, other religious groups, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Following Anglican institutionalization during the colonial period, Anglicans have succeeded in developing a communitarian ethos that forges new solidarities with diverse communities.

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# Future

## Directions





Young Polynesian dancers celebrate the ordination of the first Bishop of Polynesia in New Zealand

**W**e plan to extend the research that has produced this report. This is indicated for several reasons. First, this report offers a snapshot of four locations. If we are to make a more effective contribution to the life of Anglicans world-wide we need to extend the range of locations and to move beyond snapshots. We therefore plan to extend our research into new sites and to track a variety of Anglican issues and initiatives over time. Possible themes to explore include the indigenization of spirituality and worship, dynamics of evangelism and conversion, leadership development and theological education, community organizing for social justice, HIV/AIDS, and inter-religious initiatives. Research may be carried out cross-regionally rather than in single provinces or countries. We hope to include as researchers persons from more provinces in communion. This will enable a greater understanding of the impact of Anglican

mission and of the leadership patterns that sustain it.

Second, this research has involved a good deal of field work in which we went to locations and listened to people on the ground. We found that this way of approaching the research encouraged conversation. Such conversation enhanced our understanding, and through our reporting it is enriching many in the Anglican Communion. For our fellow Anglicans, we hope to be a catalyst for conversation that encourages imaginative and inspired approaches to mission. We have glimpsed the vitality of the renewing of the life of the church in its mission in the places we have visited. Now we hope to broaden the scope of what we may yet discover. We believe that God is calling us to be people of vitality and of promise. It is to this hope that this work is dedicated.

# Appendix



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