

# Lambeth Conference 2022

## Reflections from Bishop Audrey Scanlan

### Tues, July 26:

Ya know that feeling of taking a hot shower after you've been on multiple trains, planes and automobiles and been wearing the same clothes for 2 days? Yes, heaven is a hot soapy shower! Made it to Lambeth with no problems, reunited with many friends and looking forward to meeting new ones. I "minded the gap," managed to keep most of the water in my bathroom with no shower walls, and figured out the secret wifi code. Tomorrow- a walk into town in the morning and then we begin in earnest at noon.

### Wed, July 27:

And so it begins...

### Thurs, July 28:

Day... Two? (does one start counting from the departure from home... or the arrival in Canterbury... or.... what? Hard to tell, especially when our "Opening Eucharist" is slated for "Day Five" on the Programme...

Yesterday we got our bearings. Introductory sessions and greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and his wife, Mrs. Caroline Welby. Also, the fantastic Rose, Bishop of Dover! We were in Plenary session with more than 1,000 people- bishops and spouses- representing 165 countries and, according to the ABC, (Archbishop of Canterbury) more than 2,000 languages! We do have interpreters and headsets for translation. We will be required to wear headsets in all of our sessions which, for once, is a great equalizer.

In the morning I took a quick walk down the hill (about 1.5 miles) with a bishop friend through a grassy meadow and through neighborhoods into the town center of Canterbury to re-familiarize myself with the village and to purchase the all-important tea towel for my sister- a family tradition when we travel. We stepped inside the close for a look at the cathedral framed by a brilliant blue sky. Some of the cathedral is under scaffolding. (Have you ever met a cathedral that isn't?)

Back up the hill in the afternoon we met with our small groups (we've been meeting on Zoom for nearly a year in introductory conversations) and began the good work of discussion and building relationships and learning about ministry in other parts of the Communion (that's the central "nugget" for me at this conference- learning about the gospel work across the globe in Jesus' name.)

We had an international food truck festival with outdoor seating and a jazz band as our celebratory "first night" supper. I spent some time with our TEC (The Episcopal Church) women bishops, but also met and chatted with old friend The Rt. Rev. Charles Davidson (Guyana) and his wife Monica, the bishops of Switzerland, Utrecht (Old Catholic Church), Bermuda, and several others... too many to name.

Today and tomorrow we are in retreat as a collegium of bishops at the cathedral, back down the hill. We will begin our reflecting together on 1 Peter and begin to hear the diversity of voices and understandings that make up our Communion.

Please pray for us. Especially that the British believe that instant coffee is a "thing." (Just kidding).

I have been holding our diocese in prayer and am grateful for the chance to be here, and to represent our church. "Cheers," (as they say.)

### [Fri, July 29:](#)

Day Three. (Friday)

I'm not able to release a video today like I usually do- so here's a written update for those on FB

We walked down the hill to the cathedral yesterday for our opening retreat session. The focus of our retreat was on 1 Peter and we heard three different addresses yesterday. The most notable was from Dr. Esther Mombo, Professor of African Church History, Gender and Theology at St. Paul's Uni in Limuru, Kenya. The theme of her talk was the brokenness of the world ("There's a hole in the bucket") and the interdependence of the world's woes and our position as religious leaders in its healing with privilege and power. Dr. Mombo talked about how the brokenness of the world emanates from broken human relationship and suggested a way forward with "Four 4s:" Recognize, Repent, Redeem and Redress. It was a heavy and important talk that reminded me of my exceptional privilege as a white person living in wealth and with access to things- material and non-material- that are lacking in most of the world... and my responsibility as a Christian leader.

The retreat addresses were interspersed with time for reflection and prayer in the cathedral and worship. We were invited to spend time of silent prayer in the crypt or to have informal discussions with others in the nave. There was also the opportunity to reflect in the sunshine in the cloister. I did a little bit of all of that, not wanting to miss the opportunity for discussion, but also appreciating the space to be quiet. There is a lot to absorb and to take in... it's a bit overwhelming, to be honest. New ideas, new people, the complexities of this Conference in general (that deserves its own blog post) and the gift of being with colleagues and friends in such an ancient and important seat of our tradition.

One other important note. I was in tears several times as we enjoyed Morning Prayer, Holy Eucharist and Evening Prayer at the cathedral which featured the boys' choir and, later,

the cathedral choir singing Howell's Magnificat and, as an anthem, Orlando Gibbons' "I was Glad." (Gibbons is buried in the cathedral) Our hymns were sung 600-people -strong and hearing The Lord's Prayer prayed in many languages echoing around the room was a real Pentecost moment.

After all that we hiked back up the hill to dinner and I tucked into bed early. I had a chance for a quiet dinner with a bishop friend whom I have been missing- and that was a gift.

Today we finish our retreat and then it's back up the hill for a THREE hour session for "The Photo." I'm not sure why it will take three hours to get 640 bishops lined up in vestments for a photograph but... we will see.

### Sat, July 30 (Part 1):

Day Four (?) Saturday morning July 30.

Lambeth update: Yesterday's retreat for bishops at Canterbury Cathedral continued in the morning with its focus on the letter of 1 Peter. We heard two addresses, including the final address in our retreat that was given by The Rev. Dr. Jenn Strawbridge, a former classmate of mine from Yale/Berkeley who now teaches New Testament at Oxford University, UK. Jenn's sermon/address focused on a citation from the 5th chapter of 1 Peter: "Cast all your anxiety on him (Jesus)." (5:7) There's plenty of anxiety being cast here, and so, perhaps this is a good place to get into all that.

If you've been following the Episcopal News Service (ENS) updates and other news from this conference, you've no doubt heard about how, originally, we were going to be asked to "vote" on re-affirming the resolution 1.10 from a former Lambeth Conference which states that marriage is only between a man and a woman.... and then, after some conversation as our conference got going that statement was removed from the "Call" that we'd be voting on... and now the bishops of the Global South Fellowship of the Anglican Communion have reintroduced the same idea in another "resolution," asking, again, that we vote on the heteronormativity (and exclusivity) of marriage. These same bishops are refusing to receive communion in our common worship as long as there are gay bishops among us and also those (like me) who affirm gay marriage in our dioceses. You probably know all that if you've been reading along on FB or Twitter.

So, here's some factual stuff.. and then a response-

Factual stuff: The Lambeth Conference, while one of the 4 "Instruments of the Anglican Communion" (the "glue" that keeps us together) is not a legislative body. What we do here is not directive. Our church is the Body of Christ made up of lay people, priests, deacons, and bishops. We pray and work together to determine the path of our church. 650 bishops on an island for 14 days treated to music from the English choral tradition, drinking bad coffee (I've switched to tea) and roaming around the grassy close at Canterbury will make no binding decisions about the future of our church. This conference is for study, prayer, fellowship and

building relationships. That some have elected to remove themselves from the very core of this fellowship by remaining in their pews as the rest of us go forward to receive the grace and nurture and strength of the Sacrament... it's very sad. (I guess I've lapsed into the "response" portion of this post.)

I sat yesterday during communion (having received and returned to my seat) and watched as God's people stepped forward to receive. In any large eucharistic celebration, this is always my favorite part. I marvel at the diversity of God's humanity and watch carefully how people approach the altar- eager, hopeful, peaceful, expectant, with humility, seeking transformation and grace. Yesterday I watched my brother Thomas Brown, bishop of Maine as he walked by, hands clasped in front of him, patiently awaiting his turn to receive. Thomas is one of our bishops who is gay. I was sitting next to one of the dissenting bishops who refused communion, and who had stayed in his seat. As Thomas walked by, I got all teary. I was so proud of him- for his bravery, for his faithfulness, for his "yes" to God's call.

I respect that other bishops are passionate and firm about their own interpretation of Holy Scripture. And if we are really here to listen, and to learn from one another, then I need to be willing to open my heart to an understanding that is so different than my own. There are ideas that I will not compromise on- and one is the belovedness of each person in God's eyes and their freedom to express their God-given sexuality and commitment to their beloved- regardless of gender- in marriage. I do not see a way forward on this issue right now, at this conference. If my brothers from the Global South are not willing to open themselves to God's transforming grace at communion, then how can I expect them to open themselves to conversation in small bible study groups? And how will I be in that setting? (Our first groups meet today, so time will tell.)

In his evening address, the Archbishop of Canterbury talked with us about all this in as direct a way as his British upbringing would allow. He admitted that he does not think that this conflict of differing views of human sexuality in our church will be settled before Jesus comes again. And so, he opined, let's get on with the work of God's church. The title of this Lambeth conference is "God's Church for God's World." The ABC's first address focused on "God's World" and, in keeping with the theme of the day of suffering (1 Peter 4) and anxiety (1 Peter 5) he outlined for us the great roaring(s) of the lion (1 Peter 5:8) that seeks to devour us: poverty, economic injustice, the climate crisis, nuclear war, persecution, cultural and civil disorder. He cautioned that if we spend our time focused inward on the disagreements and dealings of the church, that we do so at the risk – and sin- of ignoring the cries of the world for healing, succor, and strength (my words, not his).

And so, we press on. It will be very interesting to see who is in my bible study group and how we will address our various Lambeth "Call" statements. Will we, indeed, "vote?" Will we talk at all? Will we listen?

The other event of yesterday was the three-hour circus of getting 650 bishops onto a stand of bleachers for a photograph. I was three rows from the top and had a death grip on my brother bishop Rob Skirving's shoulder, trying not to look down, but to keep my eyes trained on the top of the trees. Yes, it took ages and ages to get this photo. One person fainted and was removed. Fortunately, that person was in the third row and so it did not cause the great domino of tumbling bishops that I was imagining as I stood near the top of the bleachers. We also took a picture of the 97 women bishops in attendance. That made me cry. More tomorrow. Keep praying for us, as we do for you.

### Sat, July 30 (Part 2):

Recap of Day 4 in anticipation of Day 5 (or, "What day is it, really?")

Friends, it was a full day today- Saturday- and it's an early morning tomorrow (we are supposed to be vested in rochet and chimere and ready to board the bus for the cathedral at 7:45...) and so this is an evening's recap which might be a little "raw," without the benefit of an evening's sleep and overnight processing.

Today we prayed, we read scripture, we listened, we talked, we talked some more and listened some more and... we did something that looked a lot like voting even though we were told again and again that what we were doing was not voting. (I'll explain. Hang on to that thought)

The theme of the day was Evangelism and Mission. We started in a plenary session with a bible teaching by Archbishop Justin that was augmented by some short films of young people telling their stories of coming to faith. We then were sent off to our small groups for the first time. All of the groups are carefully designed to offer a diverse grouping of bishops; my group has bishops from Australia, South India, Kenya, London, Los Angeles and Scotland. Besides me, there is one other woman in the group. We spent our morning session coming to know each other a bit and discussing the idea of Hope and Evangelism in 1 Peter. We were polite, good listeners, and kind to one another. We were also crammed into a single dorm room sans furniture on folding chairs with one slightly open window, lest you imagine something more palatial for our proceedings. I do expect that we will express some theological differences at some point in our group but "Evangelism" and "Hope" and "Mission" seemed like a pretty safe place to start.

Following our small group session, we regathered in plenary for a dynamic presentation by the Archbishop of York and Primate of England, The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Stephen Cottrell. He is the second in command, so to speak, after the Archbishop of Canterbury and a charismatic, wry and engaging speaker. I'd had the benefit of having lunch with him and my former bishop Ian, two days before in the Cathedral close, and can attest to his warmth and personable spirit. In his short presentation/sermon he reminded us that the work of the Church is to make disciples, and disciples make peace. We are not disciples of Jesus to build an institution, he reminded us,

but to share God's good news. He told us to be humble, "act as beggars telling other beggars where to find the bread... don't be fooled into thinking that you are the baker." He was just great. His address was the highlight of the day, really, and it reminded me of the impact of really good preaching.

After lunch we returned to the giant plenary space and were greeted by a sea of round tables with numbers on them, corresponding to our bible study groups. We sat with our small groups and reviewed the first of the "Calls" that we are to issue from this conference. To say that this was a mess of a process with ill-informed participants and facilitators and unclear directions would be... too kind. We were given sheets of a draft paper on Evangelism and Mission that has a few different sections: an (1) Introduction with a tie-in to scripture from 1 Peter, a (2) Declaration that seemed to try to list things that we think we already hold in common on the subject, (3) an Affirmation that seemed like exposition on the Declaration and, finally (4) specific requests "The Call." As an example, one of the "Calls" for Evangelism and Mission was that "Every Christian joyfully understand that they are to witness to Jesus Christ praying that through this at least one other person each year might come to faith and grow as a disciple."

It wasn't the content, necessarily, that made this excruciating as much as the bad process. Based on a 20-minute conversation at our tables in a giant stadium-sized room that was at least 85 degrees Fahrenheit, we then got to cast our vote- I mean, affirmation: Press 1 to agree, Press 2 to say no, Press 3 to say that you believe this needs more work. But, hey, that's just the shorthand... because 1 meant that you would agree that the Call "...speaks to me and I add my voice and commit myself to take action I can implement it", 2 meant, "This Call does not speak for me. I do not add my voice to this call." And 3 meant, "This call requires further discernment I commit my voice to the ongoing process." (whatever that is) Confused? Me, too.

We were told that pressing the buttons was really just a way to record our "choices" and that Lambeth Conference is really in three parts- the pre-conference Zoom sessions, the in-person meeting, and then some mysterious third part which will include the refining of the Calls, their distribution and implementation.

So- when will I get to see (and approve?) the final version? Not until it is out, apparently- or ... never.

Now, this isn't too big a deal when discussing things like Evangelism and Mission. But hold on to your hats when we get to other things- like "human dignity." Many bishops elected not to cast an "affirmation" of any kind, and a third of those who did pick up the clicker voted for #3: "this needs more discernment." If you've read this far, you deserve to know how I voted: I punched #3. I think that unless something is totally egregious, that will be my pattern because how would you ever punch #1 saying, "Yes! I commit! Sign me up!" when you haven't seen the final draft?

I finished my day with a great seminar on Creation Care which deserves a longer report (there is good work happening around the Communion on how we care for our planet and its ecosystem!) and then, in an act of self-care, I went for a quiet hike in the woods before dinner. There are some lovely trails here on campus that wind in and out of the woods.

Tomorrow will be lots of pageantry as we do it so well in Big. Worship. Pictures coming from there.

### Sun, July 31:

July 31. I guess we could call it Day Five?

I sat in the Choir at Canterbury Cathedral this morning- during the long, prayerful distribution of Holy Communion to more than 1,000 worshippers- doing a simple math problem in my head.  $2022-2005 = 17$ . It had been 17 years since I had last sat in these same stalls, but under very different circumstances. 17 years ago, I was on a trip with my mother and sister, making our way around England on a self-designed tour of favorite cathedrals that we wanted to visit and, of course, visiting Canterbury was at the top of the list. It was a return to England for my mother and sister- they had lived here for a short time in the early 80s- and for me, it was a celebration of my ordination to the priesthood... a trip that my mother wanted to give to me that had been delayed for a couple years but that, in 2005 finally came to be.

We attended Evensong at Canterbury, lapping up the Anglican choir tradition, marveling at the crystal-clear notes of the boy sopranos and fawning over their starched and ruffled collars. We met the then (and just recently retired) dean, The Very Rev. Robert Willis, and he was charming. He made immediate connections in our conversation with people whom he knew in The Episcopal Church in Connecticut. Our visit to Evensong worship concluded what had been a full afternoon at the cathedral touring its many chapels and crypt, and spending time, of course, at the spot where Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury had been martyred in 1170, murdered by knights of Henry II while at prayer.

This pilgrimage to Canterbury, seventeen years ago, felt right. It was a grounding in the tradition that I had elected to follow- as an individual following Jesus, and now, as a leader in the church. I could not have imagined on that November day that almost 2 decades later I would be sitting in the same pews, but having just made my way down that long, long aisle and up the stone steps in a procession of more than 600 bishops of the Anglican Communion. It was especially poignant because just last week, we marked the anniversary of my mother's death; she would have been proud- if not a little surprised, maybe- to know that I had returned to Canterbury in rochet and chimere!

Now, in my family, we have a saying: "It's not all about you." And, that's very true. But pilgrimage is always a personal endeavor- a quest in which one goes looking for God, and, sometimes, in the process, finds oneself, as well.

This trip to Canterbury has brought back happy memories, and it has also been challenging and expansive (and we are only on Day 5!). The church that ordained me those many years ago has changed. Our service this morning included a beautiful Durufle motet, but also, a choir singing Zimbabwean music in procession, songs from the contemporary evangelical music tradition, and a preacher- The Rt. Rev. Dr. Vicentia Kgabe- from the South African diocese of Lesotho. We are a global church, made stronger and more beautiful in our diversity, challenged by our differences in theological and scriptural understanding, and all in love with God our loving Creator, Jesus our Savior, and empowered and enlivened moment by moment by the Holy Spirit.

Now. Here's the latest. We are One. And, our divisions persist. The work of this conference is not moving to a facile solution and the cost is being borne on the back of the Sacrament. I do not expect that to change. There are meetings, and conversations with folks way above my pay grade... and, much of it is happening out of the general flow of our common life- except for when we show up in church.

After our morning worship, we were transported back up the hill for lunch and our plenary session on Safe Church. It was a presentation that offered a global perspective on issues of abuse in the church and the critical need for resources, training and development of protocols that allow for the creation of safe spaces for our communities, discipline for those who breach the sacred trust of holy relationships, and care for those who are survivors of abuse. It was a moment in which I became aware of the exceptional resources and mission priorities in The Episcopal Church in this area as compared to other provinces in our Communion. I was also so proud that my good friend Robin Hammeal-Urban had a part on the drafting team and represented our Episcopal Church in this Call presentation. The plenary featured a short film that offered a very personal perspective from a survivor of many instances of abuse in the church... and a "round robin" presentation from several parts of the Communion on how issues of "safe church" are regarded in their contexts.

Clicker news: They are gone. In an odd moment in which the Archbishop of Canterbury took to the stage to announce that the clickers had been removed and our general assent – or lack thereof- on each "Lambeth Call" would be taken without the aid of mechanical devices, we were relieved of what had been a contentious mode of "voting" and returned, instead, to what had been the original "spirit" of the "Lambeth Calls": offering words to the Church from the bishops that show our current thinking on any number of important topics, and pledges to move forward with various measures of implementation. The new form of "assent" will be for us to simply remain silent when invited to offer our blessing, with the option for those who do not agree to offer a vocal "no." On a day in which we were discussing abuse in the Church, to suggest that saying nothing was a "yes," was an awkwardness noticed by more than a few.

But this is how – for now- we will move forward. I am grateful that the "voting" is gone, and that, instead, a more congenial and dialogical approach to consensus is what is on the



table, now. It seems that all of the “Calls” will require more work, editing and re-writing (as one does when 650 opinions are in the mix) and, again, a reminder to all that, in spite of its impressive congressional appearance, nothing that we do here is binding.

I finished the night enjoying an “off campus” dinner at a spot in town with some fine friends, some vegan pizza, and a pint.

The rain fell softly as we hailed a cab back up the hill.

## Mon, August 1 (Part 1):

Lambeth Conference Day 6

It's August!

Part One- before dinner.

For those who are hanging in there with my daily reflections, thank you.

For those who are thinking- “ugh, not more...” or “Lambeth? Who cares?” feel free to scroll on by- no harm, no foul. I think that today's reflections might come in 2 installments- this is #1. We have entered the “Convention Rhythm” that I believe the designers had intended: Prayer, Bible Teaching, Bible Discussion, Plenary discussion on a related topic to the Scripture theme, and then a consideration of the “Lambeth Call” later in the day on the same theme. It's smart (Brits would say “brilliant”) that we would work through prayer, study, communal and individual discernment on any one topic. Toss in some morning and evening worship and a few cafeteria meals and, that's the day.

A note on the campus and our meals, since I haven't yet reported on all that: The campus of the University of Kent is massive to this small-town girl who attended a college with a total population of no more than 1,200 people. There are about 1,200 people at this conference alone when you count all the bishops, spouses, presenters and staff... and... we are filling just a small part of the available housing here at the University. In order not to burden the food service, though, we are assigned to a variety of meal venues. Mine is located a good 12-minute walk from my room which is helping me to achieve my step count each day. (On Wednesday, for example, I walked 23, 498 steps. That's more than twice what I walk in a day at home.)

The cafeteria that I've been assigned to is a dark, cavernous space but big enough that taking off my mask to eat doesn't feel threatening. The vegan options are ever-present but limited. It's a steady rotation of “chick'n” cutlets and a mysterious minced “meat.” There are a lot of potatoes. And also vegan cake! It is a bit of a carb fest. Fitting into my cassock on Wednesday in London might be a squeeze.

Today's advertised theme was “Anglican Identity” and, indeed, our bible study on 1 Peter 2: 1-12 brought us there as we considered what it is to be a “holy people” who are called to “rid (our)selves of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander... and... as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.” In the

plenary bible presentation, Archbishop Justin included these statements among his remarks (I took notes): “The call to holy living takes us into the world, it is relational. It (holiness) is always interdependent. It is a call on all people. It cannot be detached from Christ. Holiness is being actively committed towards the other in acts of self-sacrifice as shown to us first in Jesus Christ. It is a gift of the grace of God. It is the movement that leads to transformation. We are able to be holy- through grace not works.” (Here, the Archbishop pointed out that “those with physical and intellectual disabilities are holy,” citing the L’Arche communities [somehow I’d never doubted that]...) and that “holiness can be used as a weapon to exclude.” Instead of us using holiness as a weapon, as a recourse, the Archbishop taught, “Holiness is about the action of God. We go to the front lines and pull others over into the frontier of holiness.”

Following on this was a film with many young people offering their definitions of holiness, and then a panel discussion with three bishops of the Church (our own Phoebe Roaf - W TN) among them!) discussing their understanding of holiness.

It was a lot.

It made me wonder: What do I consider holiness to be? What do you consider holiness to be?

On our first day of shared bible study in our small groups, I offered that while I believe that we are all secure in our belovedness by God by virtue of our very creation, that holiness was something that, as Christians, we strived for. This remark was met with silence. I don’t know if it was the initial affirmation of all of God’s creation as beloved and good... or the striving for holiness that didn’t go over, but it was a bit of a lead balloon. I do believe in grace... and I also believe in human agency and participation in our own yearning for wholeness and the striving to do better (moving towards achieving holiness) simply by virtue of our hunger to grow closer, always to God and to achieve the “mind of Christ.” I dunno. I wonder what YOU think. What do YOU think holiness is?

It's time to run off to dinner (all women bishops tonight) and then there’s more on the Call on “Anglican Identity” yet to come in part 2. Pictures then, too!

## [Mon, August 1 \(Part 2\):](#)

Lambeth Conference Day 6

Part 2 of 2

I’d never intended on writing such long reflections- but there’s so much to say, and it’s a nice way to process it all at the end of the day, to be honest. So here’s an end of the day reflection on two things: 1) the Continuing Saga of the “Lambeth Calls” and 2) Women Bishops are Awesome. (my titles)

The Continuing Saga: We were told that we’d be discussing topics of interest at Lambeth Conference. We were presented with drafts of “Calls” to consider and discuss. Then we were told we’d be voting on them with clickers. (registering our affirmation or dissent- a.k.a. voting).

Some people complained. The voting went away. On the next day, there were no clickers. And so we gave our assent with silence (ugh). The error of that way was revealed, and today we were asked to both orally and visually (with voice and raised hands) either say “yes” or “no” or “needs more work.” Really.

We were discussing Anglican Identity today which, if you talk to most people who care enough about the Church to take vows as bishops, is a big deal. We were asked to weigh in on the Instruments of Unity and to imagine creating a new one. (Reminder: The 4 Instruments of Unity are 1) the Archbishop of Canterbury 2) The Lambeth Conference 3) The Anglican Consultative Council 4) The Primates Meeting.) We were asked to weigh in on things like the Creeds (Part of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral). We were invited to think about creating a new instrument of unity that would give voice to women, indigenous people, youth and marginalized folk but, somehow the economically challenged or racial minorities or LGBTQI2S folks didn’t make the cut. We were also asked to weigh in on conducting a feasibility study of an Anglican Congress that would hear (some of) these marginalized voices and be held in the Global South and take place before the next (10 years from now?!) Lambeth Conference. To say that there was a lot that needed lengthy discussion, prayer, discernment and unpacking would be the understatement of the year... or maybe the century. But in 75 minutes we discussed, heard feedback from 6 randomly selected tables, and ended up “raising our hands and giving voice.” At the end, though, we couldn’t tell what the outcome of each “not vote” was... and so we went on to dinner.

SMH.

Tomorrow’s the day when we will discuss Human Dignity. I wonder how that will go. Dinner was a delight. We had nearly all of our 97 female bishops at Lambeth present and had to open up another part of the banquet room to make space! Over dinner we enjoyed remarks from the brand-new bishop of Hokkaido in Japan (who is a personal friend of the Honomans, parishioners at St John’s, Lancaster!) and also Marinez Rosa Dos Santos Bassotto the bishop of Amazonia in Brazil (she not only has to look out for crocodiles on her ventures but also pirates, apparently) and Bishop Margaret Vertue of the Diocese of False Bay in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. Wow. Such beauty and strength and passion for God. Date cake with pistachio frosting (vegan!) was a special dessert and we were given gifts as well to take home- a commemorative banner from South India and a St. Brigid’s cross.

It’s always wonderful to share conversation with other women in ministry. This bond of sister-bishops at Lambeth is especially rich because of the diversity of contexts. I said, again, to one of my American friends that each day I realize, again and again, the gift and privilege that I have serving where I do. I am inspired by the faith and strength of my sisters.

Time to rest up for another big Lambeth day tomorrow!

[Tues, August 2:](#)

Lambeth report

Day 7 August 2

Friends, I am just back from a day that I am still processing. I am not sure that I grasp the entirety of our actions and their meaning- yet- and, as a straight white person living and working in the United States, I may never ever fully grasp the significance of the day. But let me give it a try.

For starters, I want to name the most obvious but significant “teaching” that this conference has delivered to me so far: the expansion of my ecclesial and political world view. It is one thing to read stories and articles and watch Netflix documentaries about life across our globe. It is another to hear from the lips of those who have lived experience of typhoons, wildfires, gender based and sexual violence, political coups, civil war, the devastation of land that makes sustainable agricultural impossible... and the vulnerability of faithful people that is a result of politics, environmental degradation, world economics, and ecclesiastical doctrine. I want to say that we did not “do enough” today. A week ago, I would have said that, emphatically.

But today, I have a more nuanced understanding of something that we call “The Anglican Communion” and how that relationship of churches works in relation to the values that we hold within a larger system. Let me explain:

Today, we gave voice to a lived reality in our Anglican Communion that has not before been given voice before in a measured way. We acknowledged (in our “Lambeth Call” on Human Dignity) that all people are made in the image of God and are worthy of respect and inclusion in the Body of Christ. We said that for some churches, that means that marriage is between a man and a woman. (That’s not new.) AND, we said that in other churches, a process of theological study and discernment has brought them to a different place where marriage between same gendered persons is practiced. Saying that out loud in an “official statement” (not a resolution, not binding, not voted upon) but said out loud... is a big deal.

This took place after a week of discussion and angst and letters and meetings and holding the Sacrament hostage... and, in what was a brief presentation from the Archbishop of Canterbury followed by 30 minutes of table discussion, ended up in all of us standing in silent prayer and affirming the movement of the Holy Spirit that allowed these two differences to be held in tension and in love.

This probably feels like a “no-brainer” to many of you. And I am still learning of the depth of its significance as I talk to people here at Lambeth.

We also discussed a “Lambeth Call” on Reconciliation. (That was actually first, in the morning). In that presentation we heard from two bishops – one from Mozambique and the other from the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia- and the President of the Mother’s Union. We heard about the sore need for reconciliation in military conflicts, xenophobia, tribal conflicts, the chaos of human migration, and terrorism. We heard about the

unhealed wounds of apartheid, colonialism, and slavery. And we also heard of hope, and action. In a dramatic exercise, the bishop of ANZP challenged the bishops to remove their pectoral crosses from their necks (cherished and precious items) and to give them away to someone in the room whom they did not know. If this sounds like a bit of a stunt, I'd encourage you to try it with something that you love and cherish- like your wedding ring, your mother's pearls, your father's fountain pen. In this exercise, we were not invited to part with these items for ever- it was about an hour, for the balance of the plenary session- and... it was still very powerful. The exercise was about trust and building relationship which are critical steps in reconciliation. It worked. I put my cross over the neck of a bishop from Malawi. And he gave me his.

In the early evening I went to a speech given by Dr. Mary McAleese, the former President of Ireland, who spoke on behalf of the Global Interfaith Commission on LGBTQ+ Lives. I'd signed up for this weeks ago. We did not know then that it would have come on the heels of our "Lambeth Call" on Human Dignity. Dr. McAleese spoke very personally about her family's journey with their gay son and her faith as a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Her talk was inspiring as she did not hide the theological struggles that she, as a faithful Catholic woman had experienced, and she and wondered with us about the faith lives of young people as they discover their sexual identities.

So, that's a lot.

Tomorrow, we head to London. The theme of the day is "Environment and Sustainable Development." We'll be meeting some climate activists and will take part in the launch of something that is being billed as the "Anglican Communion Forest." More on that tomorrow.

### [Wed, August 3:](#)

Lambeth Update

August 3 (I've stopped counting days.)

Today was a bit of a fairytale day. If my mother were still alive (she died 11 years ago) it could have been her 97th birthday today. She was an Anglophile. She taught English Literature and, in her early retirement, lived in the Cotswolds (England) for a time. She would have loved knowing that I spent the day at Lambeth Palace, the home of Archbishops of Canterbury since the year 1200. Yes, I've written about my mom in these pages a lot on this trip- her presence is near.

At former Lambeth Conferences, apparently, there's been a garden party at Buckingham Palace and an audience with the Queen. Her Majesty in her advanced age doesn't seem up for having 650 bishops and 400+ spouses over for lunch these days (under the best of circumstances, that seems like a stretch, if you ask me) and so the ABC and his wife Caroline and daughter Ellie were game to take us on. We were greeted with Zimbabwean singing as soon as we made our way through the ancient gatehouse and handed glasses of cold water, juice and lemonade. The ice was sparse, as I've come to expect. (-; Making our way through ivy-

strewn archways, we followed the gravel paths through the gardens and across the lawn. A steel drum was playing its joyful music. The gardens had been carefully curated for our visit allowing for a prayer walk focusing on Creation Care. Despite the recent heat, the gardens looked lovely; my favorite was something that resembled a wildflower meadow with ample grasses and small bachelor buttons and daisies and a few other native blossoms. The path wended its way past some bee hives, under grand mature trees and... I came upon a harp player lending a serene melody to the already rarefied air as bishops and guests sat in striped canvas beach chairs, some meditating with their eyes closed to the dulcet harmonies. It was a little unreal. I collapsed onto a picnic blanket strewn on the grass for those inclined to more serious lounging and, a few minutes later, regretted my choice when I tried to rise from a nearly prone position back to standing, all the while keeping my linen suit straight. We were called to lunch under what looked like a fancy giant wedding tent and enjoyed a fantastic meal of green curry, rice, and a lovely berry compote and peach sorbet with a basil sprig. This was not cafeteria dining.

Before lunch, we heard a greeting from Her Majesty, read aloud by the Bishop of London. We had an important presentation from climate activist Elizabeth Wathitu, and Archbishop Julio Murray Thompson of Central America led us through exploring the key points of the Lambeth Call on Environment and Sustainable Development. (At some point when I get home, I'll link to all of the Call texts on our website). Following our presentations and lunch, we had a liturgy on the lawn that included the planting of a tree, the first symbolic planting in the "Communion Forest," an effort to heal and re-populate our fragile ecosystem with trees of all species. I love this idea of a "global communion forest" and hope, through our work with Greg Williams in Altoona who is working to distribute free tree saplings around the diocese, that we might team up to include his venture with this global Anglican venture. I'm looking forward to bringing that idea home!

As the afternoon waned, we were guided across the street to board boats for a ride down the Thames River to Greenwich where our buses back to Canterbury awaited our arrival. I was lucky enough to stand near a British bishop on my journey who pointed out all of the sights: Parliament, the Tower of London, the Royal Navy, Cutty Sark (it's not just a whisky), the observatory where Greenwich Mean Time is derived, and the Millennium Dome.

After all of the hoopla last week and leading up to yesterday's affirmation of the Call on Human Dignity, it felt a little weird to (apparently) assent to the Lambeth Call on Environment and Sustainable Development with nary a nod. It felt disrespectful, really, to those who had worked so hard on the draft of this Call to not give it the benefit of discussion. But we did our prayer walk, enjoyed the speeches, and, in the leaves of our beautiful take-home printed booklets (I grabbed a couple of extra ones) we said "yes" (I guess) to supporting- "urgently"- commitments to address the triple environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We also said that we'd build on the reach and influence of the Church to challenge

ourselves and humanity away from exploitation of the natural world to one of relationship and stewardship... to equip communities to build resilience to help them withstand and recover from disasters... to join in the Communion Forest Initiative, to use our resources and invest our assets ethically... and on and on. It's a lot. A lot of super important and valuable material that I want us to follow up on and not leave behind in the memory of a lovely (if not a little warm) afternoon in the shadow of a 12th century palace.

No, we didn't go inside. (Imagine having 1,000+ people in your house!)

No, we didn't see a "royal." Not even a "minor royal."

Yes, there was a "pop up shop" on the way out, and I may have bought a Lambeth Palace tea towel, as one does, when invited over for lunch.

Tomorrow, it's back to work.

### Thurs, August 4:

Lambeth Update

August 4

Suffering in Christ

Today we focused on the concept of suffering as introduced in 1 Peter. Our Bible Study guide says, "Suffering is mentioned more times in 1 Peter than any other New Testament text... Peter's communities are small groups of Christians who are minorities in their culture, living in an empire that is hostile to them, that is fearful of their beliefs, and that views them with suspicion. Suffering here is not because a person is evil. Suffering is for the name of Christ."

It was, again – this discussion of suffering- an opportunity for me to listen and learn from my small group members, some of whom live in countries where their faith (Christianity) is not only in the minority but puts them at great risk.

Suffering, of course, is a universal concept. No one escapes suffering in life. Among the top three questions that I have been asked again and again as an ordained minister in the church is the quintessential: "Where is God in my suffering?" Where is God in my ... (fill in the blank)- health crisis, broken relationship, unemployment, addiction issue, insurmountable debt, cancer, grief, loss of a loved one? Where is God when I suffer?" God, of course, is close by.

Archbishop Justin taught in our bible exposition that "suffering is not redemptive or good for you... (and when) we equate suffering with Christ's suffering, it can be an excuse not to do anything about the injustice of some of the suffering of persecution." He also noted that our call as Christians is to "have compassion for those who are suffering and to listen to others in their pain. Christian love commends hospitality to those who are suffering. We are called not to judge but to love and embrace. We do this through the strength and grace of God."

And so, in our local contexts- where do we meet suffering? Our own, and that of our neighbor? And what do we do about it? Our bible study group was filled with examples of how we try to walk with people who are suffering...and also honest conversation about the times

when we fail at it. Our small group is beginning to know each other better and the conversation today went deep.

Our Lambeth "Calls" today focused on Ecumenism and Interfaith relations. It was timely, given the focus on suffering and how we are companions on the Way for those who are in need of love, prayer, and support. Both "Calls" were affirmed with prayer and a show of solidarity by standing and, when prompted, looking deeply into the face of our neighbor. These short exercises are uncomfortable and bring home the point, every time.

At lunchtime I took a hike down the hill into Canterbury to pick up a couple of small things at the Cathedral gift shop... and then hoofed it back up the hill getting my sweaty leg stretching for the day.

I attended Evening Prayer after our final session of the day- it is not attended each night by every person because of the location of the venue and the timing- but I wanted to make a special effort tonight because the host officiants were from South Sudan. The worship was lively and featured two African songs sung (with added clapping percussion) by the large Sudanese congregants in the first few rows.

Things here feel a little different. Today's work was done well despite the heavy topic, and the small groups seem to be closer. That's what a week will do. We also have the contentious "Call" behind us on human dignity, and the final "Call" will be tomorrow on "Discipleship." It's been beastly hot and people are tired. More than a few are sequestered in their rooms because of Covid, and I am wearing my mask everywhere. One of our TEC (The Episcopal Church) Covid patients emerged this morning after several days' seclusion and is better and testing negative. I pray for all those who are not well, and that those who are still well, remain so.

### [Fri, August 5:](#)

Lambeth Reflection

5 August

More.

More, and more, and more.

I knew when I looked at the pre-conference material that there was going to be a breadth of subjects covered in our two weeks together and we have been plowing ahead with a momentum that keeps us moving forward though, someday, it feels a little bit like a train headed down a steep incline. The pace is not run-away, but the gravity and momentum is pulling us along in addition to the already challenging pace of the conference.

We have continued with the routine of prayer, bible exposition, bible study, plenary speakers and communal discernment... all punctuated with tea and biscuits at every turn (the catering crew appears at every break with big vats of hot water, tea bags, milk, coffee for the un-converted, and biscuits- i.e.: cookies.). We stand around in the hot sun drinking hot tea and



reviewing what we've just done or anticipating what we are about to hear. The spirit is convivial and collegial- there's lots of comfort in just walking up to someone whom you don't know, lifting your name badge to exchange a greeting, and then just getting into it. I usually begin with "Audrey from Pennsylvania" and, if that rings a note of familiarity, I qualify that it's really "Central" Pennsylvania and we are off and running- usually confirming that, no, it's not Philadelphia... and no, it's not Pittsburgh- it's all that stuff in between. If there is an even greater sparkle of familiarity, then I get into the whole "5 dioceses in PA-thing" but, really, there's lots more to talk about.

Today we focused on Discipleship. The bible study from 1 Peter 5 focused on three aspects- our call as shepherds, the need to act in and with humility, and what the "roaring lions" (1 Peter 5:8) are in our local contexts. In his bible exposition, the Archbishop of Canterbury (ABC) noted that our task as leaders is to protect the flock, to confront and resist the adversary, and to rest, knowing that God is the chief shepherd. In a moving video, the Archbishop of Kenya – the Most Reverend Jackson Ole Sapit- shared the story his early years as a boy trained to participate in the hunt and the process of surrounding a lion and going in for the kill. At one point in the video- (it was an interview with the ABC) he rolled up his shirt sleeve and showed the ABC (and us) the scars from where the lion's fangs had pierced his arm in the capture. His description of the roaring of the lion, the clanging of the bells tied around the hunters' thighs to confuse and overwhelm the lion, the thrusting of the spears, and the overtaking of the lion in the chaos of the hunt was astounding. He then spoke with passion about how, as a bishop, he cares for his people and protects them and leads them from danger. This is a global church and there are amazing lessons for us to learn. While doing my day job in Harrisburg, I don't often hear about or reflect much on lion hunts...

Other highlights of the day included a fantastic speech by a young bishop from Wellington, New Zealand- The Rt. Rev. Dr. Eleanor Sanderson- who talked to us about discipleship and the formation of intentional communities for young adults who want to follow Jesus. She spoke of the sacrificial act of leaders who leave comfortable homes to live in community with young people searching for meaning and faith in a group context. Our own Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Co-Chair of the Anglican Communion Commission on Evangelism and Discipleship, had a few words to frame the plenary presentation.

Late in the afternoon the ABC again took the stage and offered his second of three "Presidential Addresses." This one was titled "Living In the World as a Christian." He opened with notes of the different "roars" that exist for us, continuing to highlight that for many at the conference, their very identity as Christians puts them in peril and danger- and then, hitting on many of the themes that we've already covered (and some that we've yet to address, like science and technology) he sounded a balanced note urging us to faithfulness and resistance. Wrapped up in this was an opening reminder of our sinfulness and need of redemption and, at

the end, a thread pulled that tied it all up in the Christian walk as one of ongoing transformation, or “being, becoming,” as he put it. It was a bit of a soup-to-nuts address and I’d love to see a copy of it printed for my better understanding of its organization (I am not a good auditory learner.)

I learned, by the way, that we will be giving the Creation Care Call its proper due and consideration at our discussion tables in the days to come. (I had thought that it had gotten short shrift at our London Garden party. I was wrong).

I ended the day at a short concert given by a quartet of singers from the Canterbury Cathedral choristers. These talented young adults sang a cappella close harmony and charmed us with tunes from Gershwin to the Beatles.

Tomorrow- more.

### Sat, August 6:

Lambeth Conference reflection

6 August

Winding it down.

There are signs of ending all around us: translation headsets collecting in return bins, lines at the PCR Covid testing tent for those who require a negative test result to board a flight for their homeland, increasingly full laundry bags, and a queue at the Transport Desk for double-checking reservations for Monday morning bus rides to Heathrow. We still have a full day tomorrow, but it takes a lot to move +1,200 people out in an organized fashion.

Our sessions are winding down, too. We had our final bible study yesterday; processed the two final “Calls” this morning (Environment and Sustainable Development, and Faith & Science) with good but limited discussion; and also received “Letters/Statements of Support” from around the Communion. These “Letters of Support” were written by various Primates (head of Provinces- +Michael Curry is ours) on issues that need our focused and sustained prayer. Primates that had submitted Letters were invited on stage by the ABC and allowed to read the first sentence only of their offering. (We got full copies via email yesterday.) There are about 40 Primates. Not all of them submitted letters. Not all of them were asked to do so. (This may be due to perceived need... or the fact that some Provinces have been “sanctioned” in the recent past for their allowance of same gendered marriages... or just an oversight.). The Episcopal Church was among those to submit a Letter and Presiding Bishop Curry wrote asking prayer for the epidemic of gun violence that we are experiencing. Other letters addressed civil war, religious persecution, human migration, poverty, and climate devastation.

The retiring Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon (Nigeria) received an honorary degree from the ABC (it is one of his peculiar powers to confer degrees on behalf of the Communion) in a long ceremony that included the reading of several citations in the presence of a lord (?) who wore a powdered wig and another chap in

preaching tabs and robes, the candidate offering verbal recognition of the Queen, and the donning of doctoral robes. Idowu-Fearon has served in this capacity since 2015. (in the world of 7 Degrees of Separation, when I received my honorary doctorate from Berkeley Divinity School in 2015, the other two recipients at that ceremony were the then-retiring Secretary General Kenneth Kearon, whom Idowu-Fearon replaced... and a guy named Michael Curry who had just been elected Presiding Bishop of TEC.)

We enjoyed a plenary session today, too, which featured conversation on “The Next Decade.” His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, Rome (RC Church) gave an address with a touching story at its center about how a young man had connected with the bishop at a retreat for youth and, in a moment of sentimentality, the boy asked the bishop to sign his autograph on the t-shirt that the teen was wearing. More than a year later, His Eminence met up with the boy again, by chance, and the boy confessed that he slept with the since-un-laundered shirt each night with it folded up under his pillow; he had found in the bishop a connection that he so desperately needed (he was without a father) and the talisman of the autographed t-shirt had given him strength and hope. This was a story of connection, resilience, and Christian family-making. It was a nod towards the hope that we have in our Communion in the next decade as long as we continue to focus on relationships and Christian love. The morning finished with a panel of spouses, a couple of bishops (our Jose McLoughlin from Western North Carolina among them!) and a couple of volunteer stewards who were each interviewed by the ABC and Mrs. Welby and invited to share their “take aways” from the Conference. They all centered on hope, connection, grace and the love of God.

In the afternoon session I attended a workshop on Mental Health and Covid. We heard four presentations, each offering a different approach/ program to assist those whose mental health has suffered as a result of the social isolation, loss of employment, sustained grief and suffering that the pandemic has wrought. It was good to learn about The Anglican Health and Community Network, an organization across our Anglican Communion that is collaborating on this important ministry to all people: victim/survivors, and caregivers.

Tonight, I will attend a dinner at the “Old Palace” next door to Canterbury Cathedral. Each bishop and spouse have been invited to a dinner hosted by the ABC and Mrs. Welby at this, their Canterbury home, at some point during the Conference. I’ve heard great reports from others about this opportunity for conversation with the ABC and am looking forward to it. It’s time, now, to dig out the one dress that I brought for the occasion. Cheers.

### Mon, August 8:

Lambeth end.

Heathrow edition

8 August

This is the final installment in my “Lambeth Notes for Friends Back Home.” I promise that when I get back to the States I will cease and desist on Face Book for a while! In fact, I have a busy week back at the office taking care of a few things that have been developing in my absence, and then I’ll be off for a couple weeks of vacation after that.

I’m sitting at Heathrow right now, waiting for my plane to board. It was an early morning- we left campus at 5 AM- and I had an unfortunate check-in event that took 45 minutes at the desk for Immigration to approve my travel plans. My passport was taken from me (!) and two agents disappeared for more than a half hour to determine what the problem was. Honestly, I got over here with no problem. Why should returning be so hard? They did finally decide that my re-entry to America was not an insurmountable risk... and I cleared security in good time. I was reunited with other bishop friends, and we had a great big breakfast. Hopefully my “Full English, Plant-based breakfast” will set me up for a long nap to Newark.

Yesterday’s events seem like a lifetime away, already. The Archbishop closed our conference with his final keynote address which reviewed all that we’d experienced (stressing, above all, our coming together in Christian love despite our differences) and then we donned our magenta wool cassocks and headed down to the Cathedral for a closing service. The service included the same band that had played all week featuring music from many cultures, and the Cathedral Choir also joined us and sang some stunning motets. The service was a eucharist with con-celebrants Archbishop Bishop Thabo Makoba (S Africa) and Bishop (Primate) Linda Nicholls (Canada). Bishop Nicholls was the first woman to make it behind an altar all week.

There was a sense of familiarity and fondness among us in this eucharist that showed how much had transpired during the past two weeks, but sadly, it was not enough to move some of the dissenting bishops out of their seats to receive communion. That was a great sadness for me, but not surprising.

After church we made our way to the pub, and then to dinner ( a multi-option burger-fest) on the great lawn with a jazz combo. We wandered back up to the pub for a final nightcap and then we reluctantly headed to bed, all too aware of the wee-hour wake up calls ahead of us.

It’s easy to get sentimental at the end of an exhausting and long trip and offer multiple messages of kumbaya. I’ll need some time to reflect more on this trip but know that there have been lasting messages of hope, fellowship, the strength of the gospel and love, that I will carry with me, for a long time.

And, now... we are boarding. Thanks for traveling with me to Lambeth, friends.