

Episcopal News



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Embracing Christ, Engaging the World

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Bishop Ted Gulick, second from the right, was among the 670 bishops who participated in the Walk to Witness march urging world leaders to help end poverty. Photo provided by the Episcopal News Service

Lambeth 2008 was 'amazing' say Bishop Ted and Barbara Gulick

By Mary Jane Cherry
Episcopal News Editor

The workdays were long (typically 16 hours) and the temperatures were atypically hot for England, but Bishop Ted and Barbara Gulick have returned from Canterbury excited to talk about the 2008 Lambeth Conference, which both described as a transforming experience.

"I would say that Lambeth 2008 was one of the best experiences I've ever had. It was profound, and it was deeply converting for me. I feel that I have

returned from Lambeth a better Christian as well as a better bishop as a result," Bishop Gulick reported in a telephone interview a few days after his return to the United States.

The Gulicks were among 670 Anglican bishops and their spouses from 37 of the 38 Anglican provinces who attended the three-week conference, which meets once every 10 years, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Meeting July 16-Aug. 3, Lambeth 2008,

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2008 camp leaves labyrinthian legacy at All Saints

By Mary Jane Cherry
Episcopal News Editor

Sometimes they walked side by side, heading in the same direction until their paths diverged. Sometimes they walked slowly, one pausing at each turn to let others pass him and another dashing, her flip-flops making a statement on the concrete pavement. Most were middle school students. All were silent as they prayerfully walked All Saints' new labyrinth or waited nearby.

With a full moon punctuating the still, mid-July sky, the pavilion was aglow with the 36 votive candles delineating the labyrinth's entrance and outer border. Only cicadas challenged the low chant from a CD of Hildegard van Bingen's music.

That evening, 41 seventh and eighth graders, joined by 29 camp counselors, staff and volunteers, followed its painted paths, a permanent fixture in the lower camp pavilion that overlooks the swimming pool and Rough River.

The labyrinth's creation came out of a wish of Ben Linder, the diocese's youth and camp director, who wanted to use one



The Senior High Camp, which explored "The Amazing Journey," was the first to use the completed labyrinth at All Saints. Photo provided by the camp program staff

as a spiritual formation discipline during the senior and middle school camps. He had a canvas labyrinth in mind when he proposed the idea at a planning meeting with the Revs. Ben Maas and Amy Coultas. The idea, however, "snowballed" as they considered the usefulness of having a permanent labyrinth, which could be used not only by the summer

Summer arrivals and departures

By Janet Irwin
Episcopal News Writer

Two called to Christ Church

In June, communicants of Christ Church, Bowling Green, celebrated the arrival of a new associate rector, and in July they called a new rector, due to arrive this month.

The new associate rector, the Rev. Mitch Bojarski, and his wife, Beth, moved to Kentucky May 31, just weeks after both were graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary. Mitch officially became associate rector on June 8. Their son, Eliot, was born shortly after their arrival.

Now as summer ends, Christ Church members are looking forward to the arrival of their new rector, the Rev. Dr. Michael Blewett, his wife Heather, and sons, Joseph, 4, and Aidan, 7. They will officially join the congregation on Sept. 14, although the family plans to arrive before that date to settle into their community.

The Blewetts, both priests, are coming from the Church of St. Michael and St. George, a large parish in Clayton, Mo., where Heather and Michael had various

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camps but also anyone visiting the conference center.

The idea became reality thanks to the work of Coultas and the Rev. Ellen Ekevag, who mapped out its geometric pathways during the Young Adults retreat June 6-8. The design is based on a labyrinth they walked last year at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco,

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Lambeth 2008 was amazing, say Bishop Ted and Barbara Gulick

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the Gulick's second, was the first time bishops from across the world gathered in one place since tensions erupted in the Communion in 2003 over the U.S. church's consecration of a partnered gay bishop and the Canadian church's approval of blessing same sex unions. Controversy continues over the ongoing moratoria and incidents of bishops' incursions into other dioceses.

Unlike the 1998 Lambeth Conference, this gathering began with an intense, two and a half-day retreat and its structure made daily Bible study and conversations central to the conference work. Bishop Gulick was the leader of his Bible study group, which included two bishops from the Church of England, two other bishops from America, two from Zimbabwe and one from Malawi. Afterwards the Bible Study groups joined with four other groups in what were called "indaba" groups of 40

members each to discuss their roles as bishops and the challenges they face. At the end, the bishops produced a document of reflections gleaned from the 40 hours of conversations reported daily by the 18 indaba groups.

While the bishops met, their spouses had a parallel conference, also structured around daily Bible study groups and plenary sessions.

Like the bishop, Barbara Gulick was the leader of a Bible study group and she also spoke about how moved she was by what she saw and heard. Her group, composed of women from the U.S., Sudan and Ireland, faced challenges because of educational and language differences. Unlike 10 years ago, when many groups "crashed and burned" because of their differences, however, she said, "Our group stayed together to the very end, and we treated each other gently and respectfully." As a result of their conversations, she said, she corrected some assumptions she brought to the conference.

"I found out that they [the Sudanese women] were very, very young (one of them could have been in her 20s, another in her 30s), and their spouses had only been bishops for a few weeks. But they have experienced war, danger and losing people. They have experienced poverty. They want their children to be educated but there's no guarantee.... It's good to have a reality check ... to see the lives my sisters, bishops' wives, have."

At this conference she also was surprised to learn that "the Communion was more evangelical than I thought," and she was made vividly aware that there are Christian martyrs today. The spouses heard from a Melanesian monk, who told them about six monks from his order who "literally put themselves in the no man's land between two warring factions" and lived there to help negotiate peace. They were found tortured and killed, however. "He showed pictures of virile young men who looked like they should still be

alive," she said. "That was a very moving and eye-opening experience for me," she said. The bishops later got a "amazing" glimpse of their story, she added. During the closing Eucharist, a group of Melanesians sang a litany for the young men as they processed through Canterbury Cathedral as they carried the martyrs' names to the Chapel of Martyrs.

Reflecting on the conference in general, Barbara Gulick observed that "it became clear to me that throughout the whole conference... conversations had value. People knew that they could talk, and the talking was accomplishing something." While some have criticized the conference as just a lot of talking she said, "the fact was, you've got people who are very, very different in so many ways and they kept the conversation going, open and thankful. That accomplishes a huge amount."

Following is the full interview with the bishop, who cautioned that he is just beginning to process the experience.

Why was this Lambeth Conference, as you said, one of the best experiences you have ever had?

Several reasons, but I would say primarily the radically different format of this conference.... [It] began with two and a half days of retreat... and the Archbishop of Canterbury was our retreat leader. His meditations were profound and challenging, and they had that capacity to open my heart to Christ. ... We had the entire cathedral to ourselves as well as the beautiful environs. In that spaciousness, I felt a sense of God's presence and grace as well as a deep longing to know those bishops that I was with better.

That retreat was soon followed by the opening Eucharist, which was so different from the previous Lambeth's opening Eucharist.... At the previous Lambeth we had processed by discrete provincial groups. At this one, the bishops processed with whatever partner bishop they found. They could have been walking beside a bishop from Zimbabwe but that was just the luck of the draw. ...

Also, we spent an hour and a half each morning in groups of eight doing Bible studies on the "I am" statements in John's gospel... Our group had this profound sense of unity very early, and I will never be able to tell you what it was like to read St. John's prologue, come to the phrase, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" and have two bishops from Zimbabwe talk about how they were hanging on that phrase as their hope When you hear about parishioners being beaten as they line up for holy communion and you meditate on that phrase ... for me to be with those bishops for two weeks, watching, learning from their courage and seeing their strength and their commitment was profoundly re-orienting.

What about the indaba groups? How did they function?

That term comes from a southern African concept of a way you talk about issues in community. The Bible study groups combined to make an indaba. So there was a sense of real knowing and very, very honest conversation, the goal of which was not to make a resolution or a pronouncement but a deep, respectful knowing. ...

[Gulick then explained the process by which the conference's final document was created, based on the indaba groups' conversations. Reporters, he said, from 18 groups met daily to discuss that day's discussion, and a group of writers then drafted their reflections. Several

hearings were held to get feedback. Gulick said he spoke at a hearing near the end of the process "because the drafters talked about moratoria as if they were all in the future." He pointed out "that the fact that the Episcopal Church has been in a moratorium must be in this document," he said. "It [abiding by the moratoria] is a costly decision for The Episcopal Church. For many of us, it goes against conscience and our canons, and yet out of a sense of forbearance, we have given this gift to the Communion and it must be acknowledged in the final document." He said several bishops who are not American told him they were glad he spoke up because "our document would not have been accurate without that."]

What were the major issues addressed at Lambeth, and how were they handled?

Please back away from the word, "issues." You'll miss the spirit. Each day, we talked primarily about a different aspect of the bishop's roles. ... In one sense the Lambeth Conference didn't deal with the issues that the press was interested in until the last three days. The conference was primarily about helping bishops be better bishops in their roles as evangelists, gatherers, and leaders.

What about the Millennial Development Goals and sexuality?

There was absolute excitement and tremendous unity around the Millennial Development Goals. Being on the march ... hearing the prime minister's address was profound.... And then [while unrelated] just two days after the march our Congress and president signed a bill that gives \$48 billion of support to fighting AIDS and malaria in Africa... it made me more proud of my nation than I had been in many years. ... Generally speaking, the Millennial Development Goals were the most unifying aspect of the conference. The bishops are of one mind of those goals.

What about sexuality?

We had in-depth conversations, and very wisely the planners put that topic towards the end of the conference. Of course, the press was getting antsy and certain polarizing elements on the extreme conservative and liberal ends were getting antsy. They wanted an issue that has been in the West for 40 years and is now becoming a reality in the developing world resolved in neat, clean packages. That's not the way we worked. The American and Canadian bishops, certain British bishops and those from New Zealand

and Australian listened very carefully as bishops described the pain of feeling that the American church had acted in a unilateral and dismissive way in making the decisions we did One of the things that I re-learned in-depth is that the Episcopal Church probably has the most federal understanding of what the Anglican Communion is and the churches in the developing world have the most organic, or unified understanding of the Anglican Communion. ... If you're living in southern Africa and you go to Eucharist in Zimbabwe, you feel like you're in your church. It feels like one church to them.... From our end of the spectrum, we feel like we're in a federation of churches that share a heritage. ... As they expressed their reaction to our our actions, they were also expressing the depth of their sense of communion with us.

Also, we were able to hear how certain aspects of sexuality are manifested in their cultures, and they heard from us that, because of prejudice, cruelty, discrimination and oppression, we have in our cities larger than average numbers of gay and lesbian people, and they must be in our pastoral care. I heard bishops from South Asia say to me, "You are absolutely right, and we know you must care for them." That kind of conversation could not have happened, had we not been in dialogue on other parts of our ministry for 10 days.... Coming to an agreement that can be published and coming to a depth of understanding are two different things. We came out of it with a much deeper understanding and a much deeper knowing.

How should we understand the final document from the conference?

It is simply a description of the parameters of the conversation. I think there are some amazing things in it, however. I think its doctrine of Holy Scripture is probably one of the best things that has been written about an Anglican understanding of scripture. ...

I think part of what's going on is, people are hungry for a technical response to issues and what is really required is careful listening and adaptive, over time response to emerging realities. But I would say that the 670 bishops that attended this conference came out of it more deeply committed to the Anglican Communion than they were when they began (certainly this bishop did) and with the sense that the bishops, though different, were amazingly (and through the power of the Holy Spirit) given a sense of unity beyond what we would have expected. To be in a

conference where you literally heard in the 21st century ongoing stories of people who are surrendering their lives for the gospel and to have the profound sense of gratitude that we are part of a church that produces such devotion—that created a sense of Communion that's almost impossible to describe. I think most of the bishops that walked out of the [closing] Eucharist that night felt the same.

What were the most illuminating, spiritual or intellectual, aspects of the conference?

The thing I haven't talked much about was the intellectual quality of this conference. ... At four o'clock every day you could go to a self-select group. It was like being at a delicious parish potluck; you didn't know which to try. ... You could do a section on the hermeneutics on the scripture passages dealing on sexuality and have a Kenyan biblical scholar and a scholar from Canada talking about how they read the Bible on these issues. ... We had a wonderful evening with Jonathan Sacks, a rabbi from Great Britain who has also been to Louisville as part of the Festival of Faiths. He gave a stupendous lecture one evening about covenants of fate and covenants of faith. ...

What are you bringing back from the conference to the diocese?

I'm praying every day for the Zimbabwe bishops as they do their ministry.... I'm thinking about what the Archbishop of Canterbury asked us to think about, what it means to be a disciple who is a bishop. I'm thinking about our world and church in different ways. I'm looking so forward to talking with the diocese about all of this. I'm still in the early phases of processing it, but I hope to put a powerpoint together when I get back that I can take on the road. ...

What's the status of the the proposed Anglican Covenant draft that was circulated and discussed at the conference?

All bishops had real questions about the present draft. I think it will be dramatically changed. Pastorally, I don't see us in any way changing our understanding of our baptismal commitment to all of God's people, including gay and lesbian people. I don't see the Episcopal Church backing away from that. I think we're going to care for our people, and everything we do will be with a more intentional and more informed sense of what it means to be a part of the Anglican Communion. How that will play out remains to be seen.