



Commission for the Environment

Anglican Environmental Network challenged to pursue sustainability

The International Anglican Environmental Network consists of delegates from each of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion around the world and, consequently, of the 75 million Anglicans in our communion.

The Network's meeting in Canberra last month was confronted with many challenges, not least by Professor Ian Lowe who asked:

What would we need to do to create an unsustainable future for ourselves, our children and our planet?

His answer was:

- ♦ Ensure exponential growth of the human population,
- ♦ Ensure growing consumption per person,
- ♦ Deplete mineral resources, eg oil,
- ♦ Over-use fisheries and forests,
- ♦ Disrupt the global climate,
- ♦ Widen inequality between the rich and the poor, and,
- ♦ Replace spiritual values with materialism.

Congratulations Ladies and Gentlemen we have been completely successful!

He further asked us:

Given what you know about the state of the world, is it your top priority to become twice as rich in the next 20 years, and to double your consumption?

He then pointed out that this was the top priority of governments – to achieve continuing 3-4% annual economic growth.

His presentation followed the reports from the representatives of the Anglican Provinces around the world where a common theme was the increasing occurrence of extremes in weather events, whether drought, as in Australia and parts of Africa, or storms and cyclones, as in Europe, America and the Pacific.

Needless to say, we were all feeling pretty depressed by this time and were left wondering if there was any point in struggling on.

Luckily Ian Lowe then pointed out that dreams have been turned into reality before:

- ♦ In 1780 who would have believed in a world without systematic slavery?
- ♦ In 1880 who would have believed in universal adult franchise?
- ♦ In 1980 who would have believed in Berlin without the wall, or South Africa without apartheid?

The Network reports to the Anglican Consultative Council, a peak body of the Communion, and in its report it said:

“God has given us stewardship of the world to ensure that it remains fruitful for the future. We



VISIONARY: Professor Ian Lowe from Griffith University presented a depressing picture of environmental decline before pointing out that vision can become reality.

understand the world is being degraded by us now, and we know how to eliminate the harm we are doing. This is a breaking of the most fundamental commandments known to us, in that we are knowingly causing the world to be transformed out of our greed and selfishness, rather than living with and protecting the design that issues from the Creator's generosity, Adam (humanity) is explicitly told to be content with what is rightfully allocated and not be tempted to take that which is appropriately denied. Ignoring this injunction continues to be our abiding sin. It is one matter to act out of ignorance, it is quite another to act out of wilfulness.”

The report commended all Anglicans worldwide who are contributing to the protection of the

environment in response to the call of our baptismal covenant to serve Christ in all creation.

Amongst other things it encouraged all Anglicans to:

- ♦ Recognise that global change is real and that we are contributing to the despoiling of creation,
- ♦ Respond to initiatives that address the moral transformation needed,
- ♦ Understand that, for the sake of future generations and the good of God's creation, those of us in the rich nations need to be ready to make sacrifices in the level of comfort and luxury we have come to enjoy,
- ♦ Pray for and support those who courageously set standards in developing countries, knowing in the short term these very standards may slow the process of development,
- ♦ Expect mission, vision and value statements to contain commitments to environmental responsibility at all levels of church activity
- ♦ Ensure environmental education is an integral part of all theological training
- ♦ Revise the liturgy and lectionary to more fully reflect the role and work of God as Creator,
- ♦ Press for urgent initiation of discussions leading to a just and effective development beyond the Kyoto Protocol, which includes all nations,
- ♦ Support the work of the World Council of Churches Climate Change Action Group, and,
- ♦ Bring before governments the imperative to use all means, including legislation and removal of subsidies, to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

Barry Richardson

Rowan Williams: a planet on the brink

In an article published in the UK newspaper *The Independent*, the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned that the price of our continued failure to protect the earth will be violence and social collapse:

Too often in recent decades, the two big “e” words — ecology and economy — have been used as though they represented opposing concerns. Yes, we should be glad to do more about the environment, if only this didn't interfere with economic development and the liberty of people and nations to create wealth in whatever ways they can.

Or, we should be glad to address environmental issues if we could be sure that we had first resolved the challenge of economic injustice within and between societies.

So from both left and right there has often been a persistent sense that it isn't proper or possible to tackle both together, let alone to give a different sort of priority to ecological matters.

But this separation or opposition has come to look like a massive mistake ...

The full text is available on the Archbishop of Canterbury's website, at http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/050417.htm