

The Leadership Crisis and World Mission Today

Sadlier Mission Lecture
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Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks to the Principal of Wycliffe, the Rev Canon Professor George Sumner for inviting me to give the annual Sadlier mission lecture for the third time. My heart goes also to the excellent team of faculty and staff members at this College for their role in preparing leaders for the Church of God here in Canada and beyond.

George and his wife Stephanie played a key role in the formative years of my ministry by giving me and others excellent theological education in Tanzania early in the 1980s. More importantly they trusted me in those days of my training long before they could imagine what my ministry would look like three decades later. George and Stephanie are my best example of what missionary service overseas should be, not least because they have maintained connections with the people and a culture they served, trusting when others are suspecting, negotiating when others dictate, guiding when others rule, sincere when others are manipulative, respectful when others are paternalistic, and genuinely compassionate when others do charity.

Last year George and Stephanie and their two children Matta and Sam were in Tanzania attending my consecration together with over 2,000 worshippers, 21 bishops including ecumenical leaders, as well as over 100 priests from all over Tanzania with the Head of State as the Guest of Honour. George was the preacher – the first time a priest had the opportunity to preach at a consecration service in the Anglican Church of Tanzania. George deserved it, and did very well.

Unlike some of the ex-missionaries who have served in parts of Africa and the rest of the Global South, George and Stephanie have continued to be excellent leaders in world mission. Look no further. George is leading Wycliffe College, the largest Evangelical theological college in North America, moulding the lives of so many upon whom the future of world mission in Canada and beyond will depend for years to come. Under George's leadership, Wycliffe has taken a bold step to invite me to come here and make a contribution to world mission. I am humbled and feel privileged and will always discharge my duties faithfully as I have done in my various ministries for many years in Tanzania and overseas. I became a priest. What a partnership in world mission: a bishop serving under the leadership of a priest!

Speaking to an audience at Wycliffe College can be a challenge. I believe that some if not many of you and I share a broad theological base and perspective on world mission. Therefore I am conscious that I am largely speaking to the 'converted'. Indeed I may end up saying the things that you have heard over and over again. It is for this reason that I make an apology in advance.

However, it is my hope that we will be able to engage in an illuminating discussion when I get a feedback from each of you. Also I know that there are also some people here and out there who will read my lecture on the Wycliffe website or on my blog and feel that I have not recognized their hard work and the contribution they are making to world mission. My heart goes to such people – bishops and clergy alike. I want to encourage them to keep up their good work and request that they join me in reading the signs of our time and in praying for world mission today.

I could not think of a better way to proceed now by making reference to one of the main issues that have dominated world headlines for nearly three years now, namely the financial crisis or the economic downturn. The news of the debt crisis in Greece has just been taken off the international media headlines. What is happening in the secular world reminds me time and again about the interdependency of the world in which we live. Nations trade with one another and are conscious that what is happening far away can have serious impact on their own economies.

Yet it seems to me that it is not what causes a crisis that tends to catch our attention. Rather it is how the leadership responds to a particular crisis. In Europe, especially among the countries of the Euro zone, the leaders of France and Germany appeared to have taken or are taking the centre stage.

They provided the leadership that prevented a bad situation from becoming worse, if at all. The quality of leadership anywhere will always make the difference.

In the world in which we live today, it is not the politicians alone that are faced with challenges that need strong and visionary leadership. The Church has its own challenges too – challenges that require the best of leadership within and beyond the borders of any country. This evening I want suggest that the leadership of the world church is in crisis. I want to suggest also, that this crisis has tremendous impact on world mission. Let me be clear. In reflecting on this, I want to confine myself to the leadership within the Anglican Church or the Anglican Communion partly because it is the church I belong to, as a Christian and as a leader.

Let me revisit briefly the history of the global Christian mission because it is a story with lessons for us today. Some of the stories of world mission make us all feel very uncomfortable. By 'all' I mean the people of all the continents. I am aware that some people do not like to hear about the attitudes and the actions of some of the early missionaries towards the local people in the places that were regarded then as the 'non-Christian lands'. Those who served in the 19th century and a little beyond, especially up to 1960 often get a negative assessment. Indeed some of the actions and behaviours of the early missionaries left a lot to be desired.

Yet let us not forget. The early missionaries were children of their time. In most cases they had good intentions. The people who sent them were visionary leaders with good intentions. Let us be mindful too, of the fact that always, and in all ages including our own, there is always going to be a gap between the written policy of any organization and the actual practice or implementation of that policy. Let us be mindful, also that the missionary societies that were formed towards the end of the 18th century and in the 19th century in Europe and North America emerged out of the convictions of strong and visionary leaders - lay and clerical.

They were people who had been influenced by a wave of what one might describe as strong informal spiritualities. Think of the influence of the Keswick Movement in England, or the East African Revival Movement. Both had a pietistic theology that challenged and changed the status quo. Clerical church leadership, whether in the home churches or in the far lands had little choice – either get involved and win credibility, or be left out in the cold and freeze. Such spiritualities became so distinct and compelling so much that even some of the intellectuals at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford could not resist surrendering their lives to Christ – the Lord and Saviour.

Some of those who offered their lives to Jesus as Lord and Saviour went even further. They offered themselves to missionary service overseas. Some like Rev Canon Apollo Kivebulaya in Uganda, East Africa rose from among the ordained priests to become a missionary to the Congo. Others like Samwel Ajayi Crowther of Sierra Leone became a missionary to Nigeria. Both Apollo of Uganda and Samwel of Sierra Leone became leaders of world mission beyond their own countries.

To them it was world mission that was the focus of their work, not the status quo. As for the early Europeans, we know that a number of them died overseas and their dead bodies never made it to their home countries. They were buried where they went to serve. Some like Dr David Livingstone were fortunate to have very loyal and committed African companions. Susi and Chuma preserved and transported his body on a stretcher from Zambia to the east coast of Tanzania, and then accompanied it to London via Zanzibar. The graves of Apollo, Ajayi, and Livingstone are all a living testimony to us today, that world mission is costly, but it is possible.

World mission takes place only where there is strong leadership with a focused purpose, and it starts with one person who is in a leadership position in the local church. Then it spreads like the forest fire in the dry season. Yes the context of the world has changed considerably. In terms of world mission, we no longer have the so called the 'Christian lands', and the 'non-Christian lands' in the old sense. In fact the centre of gravity of the Christian church has changed beyond belief. Today over three quarters of world Christians are in those parts of the world that were referred to as the "non-Christian lands", or worse the 'dark lands' at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910.

The challenges of world mission have changed too. Let me highlight one or two, but I do so with great awareness that such challenges have always existed in each age and generation. What might be different is the quality of leadership in each generation to face the challenges. In the West the Church's ability to engage in world mission is significantly challenged by the high pace of scientific

and technological advance, for better or for worse, not least in the fancy communication industry of the Blackberry, iPad, iPhone, iPod, Facebook, Twitter. These as well as the internet and its .com culture have made the world a global village. The challenge is how to make use of such innovative technological advances for world mission.

Secularization of society in the West and in indeed in much of the world is both a friend and foe of religion. But in the West, it appears that secularization has made religious faith its major captive. It has created an atmosphere that makes religion a private matter while helping the enemies of world mission among some leaders in the Church to find good excuses for not standing up for Christian values in society. It is interesting that in recent years recession in the West has forced governments to bail out banks. In some countries banks have been nationalized. Even the 'god' or the 'goddess' of capitalism is now failing to solve the economic problems of the West. The emergence of movements such as the occupy Wall Street, Occupy Toronto and so forth is a perhaps a clear sign for us that a section of people, especially the youth in society is disillusioned.

Go to Asia and the East. Countries such as China, India and South Korea are emerging as new economic superpowers. Think for a moment about your shopping. Take a look at the label of the product that you got from the supermarket or shopping mall or a departmental store. It is likely that the label reads 'Made in China'. If not, the label is likely to read 'Made in India', or 'Made in South Korea' and so on. Such emerging economies are now able to set tougher trading conditions on Western countries. We hear that China now has huge foreign currency reserves some of which might be needed for bailing out Greece and other European countries. The official voices in the West that used to unleash heavy criticism on China regarding human rights issues are all but muted. It is not easy to upset the person whom you want or depend on as a major trading partner, and has bought so much of your sovereign bonds. Then think of the life of the Church and its mission in those countries, especially China and India.

The context of mission in much of the developing has its own challenges too. Many people in the developing world live below poverty line and earn or live on less than a dollar a day. But more disheartening is the knowledge and the fact that many parts of the developing world have abundant resources - minerals, oil, wildlife, and commercial crops - among many. These could have been used to lift millions out of poverty. Yet poverty levels are rising. Poverty is therefore one the major challenges of world mission today. The lack of the political will among the politicians in the developing world to use the resources available to fight poverty is a cause for concern. Corruption and corrupt practices are rampant among the politicians and their appointees, as well as among the civil servants, the police, the magistrates and the judges who are entrusted with the dispensation of justice.

Resources in the developing world are either looted by the citizens in positions of power or are plundered by Western multinational corporations who go to the developing world in the name of investment and job creation – so to speak. In Tanzania, my own country, the middle 'class' is growing, but it is a middle class that is full of men and women who lack patriotism and positive nationalism. Some of these are greedy and selfish people. They are enemies of the people and national development. It is painful when one realizes that some of those who steal from national resources go to churches and mosques on a weekly basis. The culture of impunity means that principles of accountability and transparency are lacking in many governments.

So frustrating that the North Africans have recently decided to oust their dictators through popular uprising, and those who refused to go have met with their deserved fate. How can one unelected person rule a country for three or four decades? One is inclined to suggest that corrupt politicians, government officials and civil servants in many developing world are now the greatest obstacle to the fight against poverty. Roughly, that is the external context of world mission in many countries of the developing world.

If I have done anything so far, it is to highlight a few issues that I believe form the general secular if not the socio-economic challenges that the world Church is facing in our time. The list is not exhaustive though, and all of us can add our own issues to it. But I also believe that it is a context that is likely to force many to retreat and see participation in world mission as an option, and not a necessity. It is a context that can inject fear and a sense of helplessness in the mind of many ordinary people sitting in the pew to the point of feeling that the world's problems are far too big, and there is

little an individual can do in the rich nations of the West and the poor countries of the developing world.

These challenges demand a decisive response from those entrusted with the leadership of the Church at all levels. That leadership has to be one that is neither insulated from the troubles and challenges of the world nor fearful and pessimistic. The moment for visionary and bold leadership for world mission has come. The world is need of clear voices and clear messages delivered with authority by leaders who will not shrink and remain within the comforts of maintenance of the church buildings and the ministry alone.

This is the moment for leaders who are willing to take risks. Sadly in my view, only a handful of bishops and the clergy are living to the test of the time. I offer my apology to that small group who are on the frontline of world mission, lest they wonder and ask, why have I said what I want to say next. To such people I say, keep it up. Jesus is with you until the end of the time.

I said earlier that I will confine myself to my own Church – the Anglican Church or call it the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Communion has developed the five Marks of Mission to guide the mission of its member churches, dioceses and Provinces. These marks are, first, “to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; second, “to teach, baptise and nurture new believers”; third, “to respond to human need by loving service”; fourth, “to seek to transform unjust structures of society”; and last “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.”

Despite the fact that each national church, diocese or parish can charter its own course, yet it is likely that what we do in mission will fall broadly or narrowly within one or more of the five marks identified by the Anglican Communion. The significance of the role of the bishops and the clergy in making real those marks of mission is captured well in the Anglican Covenant. A section of the Covenant states that each Church affirms “the central role of bishops as guardians and teachers of faith, as leaders in mission, and as a visible sign of unity, representing the universal Church to the local, and the local Church to the universal and the local Churches to one another” (Section 3.1.3).

Bishops are not the only key leaders in the Church of God. Clergy too - priests and deacons have their place. A section of the Study Guide on the Anglican Covenant) states that clergy are “ordained for service in the Church of God as they call all the baptised into the mission of Christ.”

But let us pose for while, and ask: do we have enough mission-oriented leaders in the majority of our churches today – leaders who can lead the Church in its local and international mission? In my view the leadership of the Anglican Church worldwide is in crisis and that crisis is hurting world mission today. I say this with a degree of conscious humility. I do not want to be perceived as someone who is pointing fingers to others or claiming a high moral ground. Far from it. Indeed, though I have been in the ministry for 29 years, first as a lay minister, and then as a priest since 1985, my Episcopal ministry began only last year. Therefore I have huge respect for my fellow bishops as well as the clergy wherever they may be. As a newcomer, I am open to criticism and scrutiny. Yet I am not talking about individual situations within individual nations. Nor am I interested in individual successes or failures. I am concerned with the global picture of world mission today, and to be precise, mission within the Anglican church worldwide.

The question that might be asked is this? How do you know that there is a crisis? How do you arrive at such a conclusion? Where do you get your authority from? My answer is this. I am reading the signs of the time. I am looking at the symptoms or better, the indicators. You may disagree, but let me outline a few of those symptoms that indicate that church leadership is in crisis. The list is hardly exhaustive.

The first indicator is that we have been witnessing the dwindling of the prophetic voice of the Church anywhere in the world. The world is faced with issues that challenge us all and threaten our ability to have influence in society and the desire to participate in world mission. I have been thinking about the evil policies of the apartheid regime that was brought down a few years back. Though I do not share the broad theological base and some of the perspectives of the former Archbishop of Cape Town Desmond Tutu, yet I believe that his prophetic voice and outstanding leadership played a crucial role in the fall of the inhumane, unjust and the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa.

Where are the leaders in the developing world when politicians are looting the resources with a culture of impunity while also protecting the officials they have appointed? Where are the church leaders when greedy multinational corporations from the West plunder the resources and cause irreversible environmental damage in the name of investment and job creation whereas in fact some of them cheat on the profit they make and pay only a small fraction of the corporate taxes. Where are the leaders when such multinational corporations strangle the poor in the developing world, suck their blood out, and leave them to die slowly?

Where are the church leaders in the West when their elected governments cannot regulate the actions and behaviours of the multinationals operating overseas? The crucial question is this: why can't companies from the West that operate in the developing world uphold the same Western values of justice, fair play, respect for human rights and stop engaging in unethical practices that undermine human dignity?

The fact is that we are all in the crisis, dreadful of the politicians and unable to lead the society that God has called us to lead. At best we let the secular society determine what we should do in our Churches. We are afraid partly because Anglicanism has taught us to be nice people, insulated in our little churches, and when we step out we have no message to the society. At worse we are easily divided by the rulers and we are the ones who rush to support the politicians who say that religion and politics do not mix. The prophetic voice of the Church is mute because the leadership is in crisis.

The second symptom of the leadership crisis is the failure to resolve controversies quickly and move on. On the one hand, I am aware, as many will be, that there have been many controversies throughout the history of the Christian Church. The Anglican Church is no exception. So one might say, there is nothing new under the sun. What is different though is the way each generation deals effectively with its own controversies.

Indeed, in my view, and in our time, the issue of human sexuality that has been going on for almost a decade now is a cancer in the body of Christ. Unlike other controversies, this one has forced church leaders especially bishops and clergy to be too political and dishonest if not somewhat hypocritical about what exactly unites or separates them. It has caused deep divisions and lack of trust among the bishops and the clergy within the local churches organized in the form of dioceses and parishes, and between national churches in the Anglican Communion, and between the bishops and some of their clergy.

The effects have been felt far and wide, literally everywhere. Court battles are raging, bishops are being deposed, cross-border interventions are happening, new jurisdictions have been formed by those who feel that they are being marginalized and ignored by their powerful superiors or peers of different theological persuasions. No one is willing to follow the example of Christ. People no longer regard each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, but rather as 'enemies' in Christ. Commissions and working groups in the Anglican Communion have done their best in mapping out the way forward, but their findings and recommendations are often ignored by those that I would like to refer to as the 'troublemakers'. Endless official discussions and large conferences have been funded by those on either side of the sexuality debate. Strong statements have been made at the end of the conferences but these have lacked strategy for action.

A culture is now developing in the Church – the Anglican Communion - to avoid open discussion on difficult issues lest the atmosphere erupts into a consuming fire that is likely to quicken the separation of some churches from the historic See of Canterbury, or the expulsion of the troublemakers. As always, we know well, that controversies that last for a long period often do have a lasting damage to world mission. How can the ordinary Christians get focused on world mission if their leaders are divided, and worse, can't sort out their divisions?

A third and related indicator that shows that the leadership of the church is in crisis is the manner in which the financial resources are now being used in the Anglican Church worldwide. In my view, they are used rather too politically to reinforce positions or to mute the voices of those who seem to be on the other side of the debate. I am only falling short of saying that the resources are now being used in corrupt ways. Those with more money are now using it to buy support. This is sickening. It is an open secret that in most cases a handful of Bishops and clergy in the Global South have been bought. But the best kept secret is that the congregations and parishes under the leaders who are being bought

are often not told the truth. They are often made to believe that their leader shares a similar theological and ethical standpoint with them.

Yet at night, their leader receives the money to support a viewpoint that is neither his own, nor coming from the people he is leading especially after a fair Synodical discussion and resolution. Why take the money through the back door if the money is for the mission work of the diocese, and not for personal gain? Those who are offering money should also know that they are taking advantage of the economic disparity that exists between certain regions of the world. I wonder why they do this at all if they too were confident that their particular view on sexuality has legitimacy?

The resources that are being used for manipulative ways could have been spent in new initiatives in world mission. In my own country, Muslims and Christians co-exist peacefully, knowing that each faith has the right and is free to engage in persuasive evangelization. Yet that is not the case in other countries. Also there are places where Christians are a minority, and have been persecuted. I stand to be corrected, but little official and organized resources have reached countries such as Pakistan where extremists have rounded up Christians during the worship services, set them on fire and burnt down the church buildings.

I mentioned earlier about the flourishing economies of China and other countries of Asia. We know how small the church is out there and is struggling to survive. Imagine the impact and the difference the Anglican Church could have made if it chose to support the mission of the churches in places where Christianity is a minority faith. Instead a lot of resources have been spent, and continue to be spent on the sexuality issue, facilitating endless discussions and processes whose outcomes are bent to suit the powerful at best. More often the politics of the semantics get their way too. Words such as 'repentance' are avoided because they are not in the theological vocabulary of those who gave the money to facilitate the work of the commissions.

Some would like us to believe that the debate on human sexuality is merely a matter of cultural differences between the church in the Global South and the Church in the West. I would disagree. In my view, it is a clash of perspectives and approaches to Biblical teaching. It is a power struggle between those who trust that the Bible has final authority in matters of faith and ethics, and those who hold the opposite view. This is why the people on both side of the debate are found all over the place - in the Global South, in North America, Europe, and in Asia.

Ironically the most brutal and frightening experiences resulting from the divisions over the sexuality debate have taken place, not in the Global South, but in the 'democratic' West. It is in some parts of the West where a new Anglican jurisdiction has been formed as result of the disagreements among those in the leadership. Not in Africa. It is in certain places in the Western world where a bishop has been deposed, and others might be deposed too, because some of their fellow leaders are unable to tolerate their viewpoint and live with it in the context of freedom of opinion and faith. Is it not in the West where court battles over church property are raging, and hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars are being spent in legal costs? Or is it not some places in the West where the people of God have been forced out of church buildings because of their position on human sexuality? Indeed it is in some parts of the West where some orthodox clergy are afraid to speak against their bishops and are being threatened with expulsion if they continue to refuse to bless same sex unions in their parishes. This is food for thought. Is this not a symptom of leadership crisis, or even leadership identity crisis? All this leads me to refute any claims that cultural differences between Africa and the West are the cause of the current mess.

What some leaders of the Global South have done and which I think they will continue to do for some time is to support their brothers and sisters (bishops and clergy) in North America who are being abused, intimidated and treated like second class citizens. In fact if some of the leaders of the Church in the West do not stop their aggression and manipulations in and outside the Anglican Communion meetings, we might as well see some of the moderate Bishops and Archbishops being drawn into cross-border interventions before the end of this decade.

Many of the indicators that I highlighted above focus largely on the leadership crisis at the level of the bishops. My fourth and last indicator is more to do with the clergy rather than the Bishops, and this is the prominence given to maintenance of the ministry at the expense of world mission. The crisis here is that some clergy are not leading their churches for mission. They are captives of fear, and scared of

taking the necessary risks. Let me point out that it is sometimes hard to strike the right balance between maintenance of the existing ministry and new mission ventures on mission. The option many would take is to do the easy thing, yet that is not necessarily the right thing. The pursuit of mission and creating mission-minded congregations is harder.

It demands courage that some clergy may not have. It requires the courage to allocate resources for mission. Look at the parish budgets. How much do clergy allocate to local mission, let alone to world mission? I can sympathize with clergy who have the passion for world mission but think that their congregation cannot afford to engage in mission because of lack of money. These need to be encouraged to take the risk and engage in some sort of mission activity that would take only a fraction of their resources. But I am sorry for the clergy who don't think about mission at all, or have the psychological barrier.

This type of clergy will be trapped easily under the bridge and the bridge will soon collapse on top of them. The congregations that they have worked so hard to insulate from mission will get thinner by the day as people get older, and the buildings and the ministries become too expensive to maintain. In the end, it is likely that the congregation will be asked to merge with another, or the church will be closed altogether. The clergyman who thought that mission was an option will find himself or herself told by the bishop that he or she is the option. It is high time now that the clergy in the Anglican Communion realize that they have a key role to play in making congregations think and do mission. To me, world mission is like a bailout fund for the local ministry. Thriving congregations are likely to be those whose ministers are mission-minded.

Let me conclude my talk this evening by suggesting that the Church of God, and in particular the Anglican Church has had its fairer share of indecisive if not inward looking and destructive leadership during much of the last decade. We now need to pull our socks and energy together to address the challenges of world mission today.

I am hopeful, on the one hand, that the Anglican Communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury as its spiritual leader may still survive the test of the current leadership crisis and disunity in our time and continue to play its role in world mission. However, on the other, I see a growing trend of more and more Bishops and clergy becoming disillusioned with the way the Communion functions, together with the increasing marginalization of the leaders of the Anglican Church from the Global South who represent the majority of the Anglicans.

We may well be seeing the next decade as the decision time about the relevance of the Instruments of the Anglican Communion for world mission. Let us remember that over 300 Bishops from the Global South (Africa, Asia, and South America) boycotted the Lambeth Conference in 2008. Not a small number at all! Let us recall also, that three senior African Archbishops have resigned from the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) to give way to those who want to play manipulative games in the meetings of the Committee.

Let us not forget that the new and sometimes younger generation, is often impatient, at times for good and justifiable reasons. If our concern is world mission, we need to be able to sit down, discuss our genuine concerns and of those we serve and do so from sincere theological and ethical basis without manipulations and the use of resources to buy or sell support. God is waiting for all of us to make the right decisions for our children now and for the future generations. Now is the time to decide.

Thank you. May God bless you.