

JESUS CHRIST OUR LIVING HOPE

We don't know, of course, what the summer of 2022 will bring. The landscape of our world is changing and taking unpredictable turns that leave us trying to catch our breath. However, currently bishops in the Anglican Communion are planning to gather at Lambeth Palace in England next summer for a conference that happens only every ten years. It was scheduled to happen in the summer of 2020 but was postponed due to Covid.

To prepare for our time together, Archbishop Justin Welby has organized a series of Bible studies and conversations around the book of 1 Peter. The theme of the conversations is "God's Church for God's World." Yesterday, I was blessed to gather virtually with about 12 other bishops to discuss I Peter 1:3-9. We were from all over the world (in fact, I was one of only two American bishops on the call) and from many different time zones. Our greetings to each other ranged from "Good Morning!" to "Good Evening!" We didn't know each other but we quickly found brother- and sister-hood in the words of Scripture which we were studying together.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...(1 Peter 1:3-4)

The question that we were charged to center our conversations around was: "How does the church proclaim Good News in the world when there is so much bad news in the world?" We discussed our different contexts and the bad news that assailed all of us – some were in countries where there is unrest and unstable government, one was from Canada where recently burial grounds were unearthed containing the remains of indigenous residential school children who never returned home, many were confronting the remnants and scourge of slavery, one was facing a suicide pandemic among youth in his diocese, some were facing natural disasters. All of us struggled with the deaths resulting from the pandemic. What, in fact, IS the good news in the face of such bad news?

By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope! Our focus is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the **LIVING** hope. He is the one that confronts our death-dealing world and conquers it. We must maintain our focus on this living hope. As one indigenous bishop described it – we create a Sacred Circle and put Christ in the middle where everyone can see Him and focus on Him. This is our inheritance. It is undefiled, imperishable, unshakable, unfading. And it is kept for us because we are God's children. This is good news in the face of bad news. We are not defeated – perplexed perhaps, slowed down, stymied a little, but certainly not defeated. The Church is God's Church for the world and we have a mandate from Christ Himself to keep Him first and foremost in the eyes of the world. Jesus Christ is the living hope and death is not the victor. Praying for all of you as you help your church to become God's church for God's world.

Blessings and peace in Christ,
+Susan

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