

Pyong'hwa, Rangimarie, Salaam, Shalom ... Peacemaking and Reconciliation & the Anglican Communion ...

Dr. Jenny Te Paa (Principal Te Rau Kahikatea)

Archbishop Park, host of us all, Archbishop Eames, shepherd of this gathering of the people, honoured guests, sisters and brothers, I bring warm greetings from your family in Christ from across the oceans that both separate and yet sustain us both.

I am deeply honoured by your invitation to speak and yet at the same time I am also deeply troubled by your invitation to speak on such an impossible issue! The worldwide Anglican Church's efforts for peace and reconciliation – what an issue!!

I am so pleased my elder, and my deeply respected friend Archbishop Eames is alongside me because he will surely provide all the dynamic distraction necessary away from whatever humble contribution I might possibly make!

To those who have made this conference possible please firstly let me enjoin my voice to the alleluia chorus of thanks and praise for your vision and your efforts to make this time together so rich in exchange and so poignant in contextual reality. Thank you also to those working so hard behind the scenes to take care of our every need. In my language, nga mihi aroha pau te kaha ki a koutou katoa – I have insufficient words of love to express my gratitude to you all.

As I have sat over the past few days in this meeting place of ours there are two images which have constantly touched me and I have been drawn to ponder them time

and again as I have wondered what best I could say today to us as Church, to us as sisters and brothers who are responsible for the future of this extraordinarily precious institutional treasure known as the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The images of which I speak are three on the magnificent banners before us all – they are the three beneath the letters T & O & P. I am drawn to them for two reasons. Firstly because to me these are surely the images toward which all of our work of ministry and mission, especially of peacemaking, is directed – the fullness of life in all its possibilities lived in freedom with peace and with joy for all of God’s little ones? Secondly, as a 16 month, old grandmother, I know I can attest along with those of you who are also grandparents that the perspective we have on the future is inexorably changed as we ponder the future prospects of the next generations gifted by God into our immediate care. Is not the Church we lead today, the one we wish at all times to consider worthy of becoming the legacy we nurture and prepare for the next generation – for those whose images are right here before us as we speak with one another, as we puzzle over how best to pursue, to make and to sustain God’s peace?

What is it that we are doing daily, weekly, consciously, intentionally to protect these indescribably beautiful and totally innocent little ones? What is it that we are we doing to deserve their tiny fingers wrapped tightly around ours with such certainty, with such consummate trust in our ability and in our willingness to protect them from all harm?

I earlier described the worldwide Anglican Communion as our shared institutional treasure because that is what I believe it to be and certainly as an indigenous woman that is how the Church was always represented to us in the teachings of our elders – we are in our time ultimately the guardians or caretakers of the legacy, the tradition, the institution as we have in turn received it from the ancestors. Ours is indeed the task of receiving it through our baptism, of being nurtured for a little time by it through the care and teachings of the elders and then in turn of accepting adult responsibility for ensuring its full and unfettered flourishing (including appropriate and necessary adaptations and changes) in order that it may be handed on to the next generation with unbounded pride in its goodness, with faith filled certainty in its

capacity to nurture and sustain only the fullness of life and with quiet confidence that only the best of the tradition has been preserved.

Let me now turn therefore to our Communion, our Church, our family of God, whether local or global, for it is without exception, entrusted for our time into both our individual and our collective care.

As we have heard reiterated time and again, there are a number of levels at which the Church as institution is unavoidably responsible for being demonstrably and consistently involved in any and all efforts toward peace and reconciliation. It is indeed in the very nature of being God's Church, for us to be always active in the pursuit of God's peace. We are unavoidably commissioned to be peacemakers.

Isn't it also, that every time we encounter one another in the Eucharistic feast we pause at an intentional moment to offer to one another a sign of God's peace – I have to confess that I do often wonder if this momentary touch isn't just a little token at times especially when what is effectively a very minimal act of human affection offered in the safest of environments, so often does not spill over into anything much else we do by way of spontaneous acts of affection with those who are truly as strangers to us, outside of the Eucharist itself.

How then do we move from symbolic to sincere and engaged action? How do we render explicit Jesus' call for us to be active agents as peacemakers – people responsible for making peace not just speaking of it or simply loving the idea of it?

Scripture we know only too well provides us ample encouragement. Throughout the Gospels we are instructed to seek to live at peace with all persons; we hear time and again that our peace with God is through faith in Jesus Christ. It follows surely then that our Christian experience of peace with God should enable us to be 'instinctive experts' in the art of peacemaking?

While there is indeed a very significant history of individual leaders drawn from across the entire spectrum of the global Anglican Church being involved in peacemaking activism across the world (many of whom are either so deservedly

represented here today either in person or in story), this is surely at one level no less than what is to be expected of those who stand in the privileged places of Church leadership? From my personal experience of so many of those leaders, I know that they too are the first to say in all humility the exact same thing – ‘I am merely doing what I am called to do’.

I know too however that the second thing many of our leaders experience but rarely tell us publicly, is that theirs is often a very lonely and often very misunderstood work of ministry. I have from the special place of shared friendship heard many lament the lack of peer support or even of interest in the critical and always desperately urgent work of peacemaking.

I want therefore to raise this issue momentarily as one of our own internal peace denying issues. Peacemaking is of necessity a highly political activity – it can be no other because it is right there in the polis, in the political realms of all of our societies that peace is continuously undermined, destroyed, avoided. And so why is it that among ourselves as Anglicans we often encounter significant forces at work claiming that any and all theologically political activism is inconsistent with the ecclesial traditions we are to promote and to live by. In this way we too often isolate and marginalize those among us working so selflessly and courageously in the polis to be as peacemakers just as Jesus was and is at all times, for us all.

Having been just slightly on the edge of this ‘marginalising’ phenomenon for a long time I have made it my business as a theological educator to puzzle about it. I may have a possible answer to the problem! You see after now nearly fifteen years experience in Anglican theological education across the Communion, I have found myself constantly dismayed at the lack of impassioned teaching interest or effort in too many of our seminaries and schools on this most critical sphere of ministry and theological formation. Peace Studies, if taught at all, is nearly always a stand alone ‘subject’, separated out from core theological curricula. Peace making as the practical outworking of effective Peace Studies must surely be a deeply integrated theological principle embedded in every aspect of every piece of liturgical worship and of theological teaching. It surely isn’t an optional extra to be attended to once we have done with history, biblical studies, Christology and pastoral studies – peacemaking is

surely all of these things and not just a sufficient, individuated portion of any of them. How do we expect to embed a peacemaking consciousness, let alone a proclivity for action, when we do not value it sufficiently in our work of crafting and shaping the life of those minds ultimately to be given over to God's mission and ministry?

This situation could be so easily remedied and it may well be one of the most significant outcomes of a gathering such as this one. Imagine if all of these great Anglican leaders here and now among us were enlisted to help develop and promote integrated courses of theological studies where the arts of peacemaking for and among the people of God were given the highest priority place in curriculum and pedagogical design? This would be a very concrete outcome for a gathering such as this one. It would be a credible measure of our enduring commitment to the 'doing of' instead of our merely 'speaking of' God's peace.

For it is only in this way that we can truly promise our Mama from Pyong Yang who shared her story with us on Saturday that while her name embroidered on her hat and on her shirt may well have been hidden from view by the soldiers, what is certain is that we collectively now know her name and as her sisters and brothers in Christ we are now duty bound to speak it out loud as we in our turn now share the story we have been privileged to hear from her. We must promise her to tell her story wherever and whenever we are able in order that some day, some way, some how, someone from her family will recognize her and that they will then know she never ever forgot, she never ever stopped loving or remembering or trying to return to those from whom she was so cruelly parted all those years ago. As teachers and as lifelong learners we are commissioned to keep alive the memories that matter, to proclaim the Gospel, to uphold the values of the kingdom.

Now having made my educationally political point for the future, let me turn to a moment of story telling for this is where there is ample evidence of what has been occurring within the realm of our beloved Communion – it is a story of which we can all be mightily proud and it is appropriate that it comes at this time toward the end of our time together where we need to take our leave of one another both challenged to do better but also heartened and reassured by what is being done so selflessly and courageously by many on behalf of us all.

I want to notice those who have provided exceptional leadership in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation across our beloved Communion, through their extraordinarily tireless work and dedication to the International Anglican Peace and Justice Network. This is of course one of a number of communion wide networks operating under the aegis of the Anglican Consultative Council.

Active since 1985, the Network is currently preparing to celebrate it's 25 year anniversary of activism and advocacy for God's Peace With Justice on behalf of the worldwide Anglican Communion across a very wide range of issues and sites of embedded and often institutional and or political or economic injustice. Let me give you some examples of the work APJN has been primarily responsible for bringing to the attention of the Communion:

1. As a result of an extended program of research, dialogue and advocacy with agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Network brought the issue of Third World Debt to the fore firstly at the level of the Anglican Consultative Council and then it was later picked up in Resolution 1.15 at the 1998 Lambeth Conference. The Poverty Trade Task Force also established by a later Primates meeting then in turn resulted in the magnificent TEAM conference held earlier this year in Boksburg.
2. As a result of taking seriously the mandate from the same Lambeth Conference for the Church to engage intentionally across the Communion in discussions on the vexed questions then arising on human sexuality, APJN did discuss the matter at its next meeting, which was actually held here in Seoul in 1999. We were one of the first among official Anglican groups to place the question of human rights fairly and squarely alongside the controversial and often contradictory claims by then being made by many in leadership.
3. As a result of our lengthy advocacy for peace with justice in Israel/ Palestine we were successful in having the 2004 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council urge all Provinces to take appropriate action if they find their corporate investments support the occupation of Palestinian lands or violence against innocent Israelis and it encouraged consideration of new investment strategies that support the infrastructure of a future Palestinian state.

We have successfully transformed our membership into being far more actively representative of the family of God – we are now lay and ordained, men and women, young and old! We have addressed in great depth issues such as civil war and civic violence in Sri Lanka, the Great Lakes region, the Philippines and Central America. We have written on issues of indigenous struggle, gender justice, economic injustice, child soldiers, refugees and even theological education.

Special mention needs to be made of the incalculably valuable support (both fiscal and administrative) given to this popular and well respected Anglican Communion Network by the Peace and Justice Ministries Desk of The Episcopal Church. Without the extraordinary commitment of Rev Canon Brian Grieves to this vitally important global ministry then the Network itself could never have achieved to the extent that it has. Popularly known as APJN this Network has been both derided and applauded for its tenacity and determination to bring to the attention of the Communion those people, those issues and those places so desperately crying out for God's justice. This Network could, would and must itself serve as a very significant resource for the sort of theological educational initiative I was earlier referring to.

Let me take a moment for us all to acknowledge with pride those among us today who are currently serving members of our Peace and Justice Network. Sam Koshiishi, Nathaniel Uematsu, Kumara Illangasinghe, Brian Grieves, Jeremiah Yang and myself.

I am very aware that within and at times among and across Provinces, there are large numbers of discrete activist groups, not least every single women's organization, the International Anglican Women's Network, Mothers Union, Anglican Women's Associations, Youth Ministries, Social Justice Desks – all are at work for God's peace, justice and reconciliation and tribute to them is also deserved.

And so it is that while we have our acknowledged exemplars as peacemaking leaders among us for those times when we face outwardly toward the peoples of God beyond our own immediate ecclesial confines, sadly of course it does not always follow that when we turn to face one another inwardly as global Anglican sisters and brothers that we see, hear and feel similarly abundant evidence of that 'instinctive expertise in the arts of peacemaking' to which I earlier referred.

Our outward and inward gaze ought not of course be toward separated, but rather toward totally integrated all of life realities. Our call to discipleship however does begin within a specific ecclesial realm and it follows that unless there is a deep and enduring inner peace within that realm then we are surely profoundly challenged at the level of credibility if nothing else when we endeavour to proclaim our peacemaking commitments beyond the immediacy of our own household of faith.

I have like many of us here been deeply troubled by the circumstances currently affecting the life of our beloved Church. Never before in my 50 odd years of belonging to the Church of my parents, grandparents and doubtless many generations previous to them, did I ever hear stories such as those that now abound around the Communion. Never before did I hear stories of Archbishops refusing to participate in the Eucharistic meal together, never before did I witness such bad behaviour by church leaders giving insult to one another by refusing to recognize the historically accepted protocols around Diocesan boundaries, never before have we all been subjected to the latest tool for public cruelty - cyber-violence, never before have I been witness to such deliberately divisive organizing and counter-organising, never before have I heard talk of such bitter and sustained enmity over any issue at all.

My friends, I do not believe this is the time for lengthy analysis or conversation on this most difficult of issues before us but certainly it would be irresponsible for us not to name with deep humility our own shared fallenness, our own shared vulnerability, our own shared imperfection as sisters and brothers of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The moral dilemma inherent in the presenting situation is unenviable but not impossible. I want to point us back toward the words of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in her urging of us to ask of ourselves how we deal with that most crippling of emotions – our fears and especially our fears of those we perceive as being ‘different’ from us. Her encouragement of us is to always see the divine image in one another, to always use our abilities for good not for harm, to always move together in the power of the Spirit of God, to dream together the dream of God for a restored and reconciled creation. This is the vision Bishop Katharine urges us to be lured toward so that we too along the journey can become the restored and reconciled body of Christ as the worldwide Anglican Communion able then to stand in the full presence and perfection of God.

Let us then with repentant hearts continue to pray for and to work consciously and boldly toward our own healing, our own peacemaking among and between ourselves in order that our mission and ministry among those who are indeed the least among us may some day very soon be undertaken with the fullest assurance and confidence that we act from within a household no longer unduly divided against itself.

I want to conclude with some sage words of advice from one of my own most revered of peacemakers, Father Elias Chacour, the Palestinian Melkite Priest and Archbishop, a truly noble and truly gentle exemplar of peacemaking.

‘Go to your Galilee, that place where someone needs forgiveness from you’

‘Look for the hibernating friend in that person. Do not look for the hibernating evil that is in BOTH of our hearts’.

‘We need to read scripture to find inspiration, not justification for preconceived ideas. It should storm your mind and bother your quietness ...’

‘We do not negotiate peace – we live it together ...’

I had the unforgettable privilege of visiting with Father Chacour some years back. I visited his uniquely visionary school in Ibillin up in the Galilee area. Ibillin is a school for all children irrespective of their religious faith or ethnic difference. Here is an exceptional example of how good our places of education could yet be when we take the lead from those who live and pray and then deeply imagine from within the experience of struggle and suffering a bold and radically new vision of schooling. Ibillin is a school whose teachers and pupils are singularly devoted to the faithfilled life of the mind, devoted to increasing the capacity of all within its institutional embrace to think independently, to think critically, to discern wisely, to understand comprehensively, indeed to teaching and to learning just how to do justice, to love mercy, to do kindness and always to do so while walking humbly with God.

In summary then I want once again to express my immeasurable gratitude to our hosts for your overwhelming kindness and your abundant hospitality. I want to remind

us of our duty as the collective grandparents to all of the little ones anywhere and everywhere to reassure these tiny fingers that they are indeed enclosed within safe and ever loving hands. I want to encourage us to reposition peace studies at the centre of all our theological educational initiatives and finally, I want to encourage us as Anglicans to be especially bold and especially loving in our own efforts for healing ourselves at this time in our global Communion life so that we can indeed continue with unassailable integrity to be blessed as the peacemakers God calls so patiently for each and everyone of us to be.

Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa

In Paju

November 17, 2007.