

**REPORT ON THE ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION CHAIR OF COMMITTEES’ CONFERENCE HELD IN SYDNEY FROM AUGUST 10-12TH 2012**

I had the privilege of representing Perth Diocese at the above Conference in place of our Chair, The Venerable Lionel Snell who was unable to travel to Sydney. The Conference was held at the CMS Conference Room and the ABM Board Room. Most Dioceses were represented.

**Friday 10th**

After Morning Prayer the National Director, the Rev’d. John Deane, welcomed delegates.

A general conversation followed with questions and answers on various matters such as

* Ordination Stoles. Reference was made that ABM stoles were available as a gift to those being ordained. This might be extended to other occasions as well.
* Pilgrimages. Reference was made to the Perth Schools Program with the Rev’d. David Lord. There is a possibility for further pilgrimages for students taking a “gap year” and also for older people.
* Anglican Relief. John explained some of the difficulties ABM face when having to account for money that has been spent because different projects need different sorts of auditing (e.g. development projects) He also highlighted some of the difficulties occurring in some of our partner churches where there are different Anglican agencies working in the same area (e.g. The Province of North America which has broken away from ECUSA)
* Bishop David McCall made a request that future ABM posters portray some identification of the Christian origin of ABM’s work. He cited the current poster showing a bishop with his cross reaching out as a good example of what he meant.
* Administration costs. John explained how different projects sometimes cost more or less in terms of administration costs. However in Church to Church programs the cost is generally 10%which is in line with industry standards and requirements to which ABM has to adhere.

This discussion led into the first session conducted by John and Christopher Brooks. It was entitled *“Master Clergy – preparation and support for speaking engagements”*

During this session John and Christopher were giving delegates some ideas as to how they might approach the task of giving a talk about ABM to parishes or groups. It was acknowledged that there were different protocols and expectations in the various dioceses as to who could speak etc.

John in his presentation made the following suggestions

1. Think about the audience you have been invited to address – what is it that they are expecting to hear from you?
2. What is it that you want to tell them?
3. How are you going to structure your talk or address?
4. What story or illustration are you going to use?
5. What outcomes do you want to achieve?

After lunch, Myrtle Shay a great and faithful ABM stalwart from Bendigo Diocese showed a short DVD that Brad Chapman had made on his recent visits to the 4 ABM Rural Deanery Rallies that had been held around the Diocese.

The next session was an opportunity to meet Lorraine Forster who had organised the arrangements for the Conference. Lorraine is a fairly new member of Staff who has worked for IBM for over 20 years. She spoke of her new Committee Support Role and asked what expectations the Committees had of her. She was finding her way as there seemed to be little in the way of guidelines or notes from the past. Mention was made of the Handbook produced for Committees just after the State offices were closed but no copy could be found in ABM’s office. Lorraine has taken the initiative and arranged for ABM packs to be sent to all Diocesan Synods and this has involved her in a great deal of work. She apologised for upsetting one Diocese by not contacting the Committee about this. As she is still learning about the different methods and expectations of the 23 Dioceses she has decided to set up an information base so that she is aware how each Diocese operates and who is the best person to contact. The request was also made that ABM web-page also be kept up to date with staff changes and who should be contacted about which matter. Lorraine will be a wonderful asset as a Committee Support person.

Her session was followed by one conducted by her daughter, Sue Horlin, who is a partner with Price Waterhouse. She explained how we might read and understand ABM’s annual financial report. John Deane was able to explain further about some of the complexities in reporting ABM’s accounts because different agencies have different requirements which have to be met and complied with.

The final session in the afternoon was a session where we were divided into 2 groups and given some practical helps in preparing and writing an ABM promotional talk.

Dinner followed in the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel where most of the delegates had been accommodated.

**Saturday 11th**

After a Eucharist celebrated by John Deane, arrangements were made for those going out to parishes on the Sunday.

This was followed by a visit from a couple (sorry didn’t get their names) who are co-coordinating much of the work of the church in their homeland Myanmar. There are 6 dioceses with about 70000 Anglicans in Myanmar’s large population of 60 million people. Although small, the church is busily engaged in many projects and a PowerPoint presentation showed the Church in Myanmar being involved in growing crops and encouraging and helping people become self-sufficient. 60 Education centres have been established and the Church is in the process of also establishing small Health clinics in many of the parishes. In the agricultural area there was also animal-husbandry, salt production, agricultural finance, rubber plantations which take 6 years to mature so vegetable are grown in the ensuing period to provide a livelihood; motor repair workshops, water programs and disaster relief, environmental programs and social development programs for young people from around the country.

It was reported that the situation for the Church was becoming increasingly easier for the Church. (John later reported that this would actually make it more complex for ABM as more Aid type agencies would want to work in Myanmar and they often had their own agenda and requirements. John was keen to build up trust and a good working relationship between our partner church there and ABM) The relationship with the Buddhists was good and monks often attended Christian gatherings and events. Our friends from Myanmar gave each of the delegates an inscribed and painted key ring with the text “Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.”

The next session was with John Deane and was entitled “The next 5 years”

He began by mentioning that his Annual Report was available in print form where he reviewed ABM’s work. He was hopeful that this report could be incorporated into the reports that are presented to Synod each year. (I have a hard copy – an electronic one is in the process of being forwarded)

John also said

1. That the Board now feels more needs to be done in the way of educating the Australian Church regarding ABM (with special emphasis on schools)
2. ABM needs to seek more support from the 40-50 age group
3. The telling of stories is very important and in particular the production of DVD’s that tell these stories
4. The Board is investigating ways it might conduct appeals for disasters in Australia
5. The Board is hoping to raise more money that ABM can manage as distinct from money received from the government
6. When ABM was first founded, one of its aims was to minister to indigenous people. Now that Aboriginal people are correctly seen as people living in Australia, ABM needs to engage more with NATSIAC and continue to be involved with the reconciliation process. One staff member has been appointed on a 3 day a week basis to further this work.
7. ABM was continuing to have a mature relationship with partners and establish relationships. (This has not been the case with the Church in Japan which hasn’t responded to ABM’s invitations)

After lunch we were addressed by Julianne Stewart who told us that in 2009 the Board decided to investigate further involvement with the Church in Africa. As a result Julianne went to Africa to investigate the possibilities. There are presently 4 countries that ABM is involved with - Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia and Sudan. Julianne presented a DVD of the work in these countries and mentioned that she is also presently investigating a further connection with Eldoret in Kenya which has come about through a visit there by the Rev’d. Angela Webb from Perth Diocese. This is to do with assisting women.

As John Deane was about to leave for Africa, he then spoke about “ABM Quarterly figures – so what?” and he asked how the quarterly giving figures that ABM sent out were used by the various committees. This led to a wide ranging discussion on how best the figures might be used. Brisbane makes a point of going to Deanery meetings to get its message across, Melbourne targets people and parishes for their Annual ABM Meeting; Perth used to write and thank Parishes and record their contributions.

Discussion also took place on the date and place for the next Chairs’ Conference and it was decided to work towards the 16-18th August in Melbourne.

(In the evening quite a number of the delegates went for an evening meal in the Hotel that was formerly ABM’s Offices. We were pleased to see that ABM got a mention on the back of the menu where the history of the hotel was recorded!)

**Sunday 12th**

Three of the delegates were speaking at 2 suburban parishes (and Bishop McCall) at St. James, King Street. Delegates went to the three venues and some also went to Christ Church St. Laurence whose patronal festival was being celebrated. After Church most returned to the Castlereagh Hotel for lunch and a short session on “Where to next?” when delegates were encouraged to say what their next step would be.

(Mine was to report to the Committee forthwith!) I re-iterated that we would like to make plans for next year and that our Committee would be preparing for Synod. Bunbury want to liaise more with the Perth Committee.

In separate discussions with John Deane, he was more than sympathetic to having Drew Schmotzer (or someone whom Drew might nominate) come again for a longer stint in Perth and Bunbury. John was going to talk with Christopher Brooks about arrangements).

The delegates sent Rae & Lionel Snell their warm wishes and assurance of their prayers. Thank you for reading this far and also for allowing me the opportunity of attending the conference.

Fr. Jack Thomson

13:08:2012