

Anglican Youth, Co-Workers with Christ, Called to be Disciples

The keynote Address delivered by the Rt. Rev. Howard Gregory, Suffragan Bishop of Montego Bay, at the Provincial Youth Gathering 2009, held at the Starfish Hotel, Jamaica.

Introduction

The human person as created by God is described in the most benevolent term in the book of Genesis as “good”. And yet, taken at face value, it fails to reveal the complexity of that creation called the human person. One of the significant contributions of psychology is the insight which it has offered as a discipline to our understanding of the human person. One representative of this discipline who speaks to this aspect of the human person is Erik Erikson. He has suggested that the human person passes through a series of developmental phases in order to achieve a healthy level of maturity and wholeness, and which may be represented as follows:

Stages

1. basic trust vs. mistrust (infancy)
2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt (early childhood)
3. initiative vs. guilt (play age)
4. industry vs. inferiority (school age)
5. identity vs. identity confusion (adolescence)
6. intimacy vs. isolation (young adulthood)
7. generativity vs. stagnation (adulthood)
8. integrity vs. despair (mature adulthood)

Identity

For our purpose, the stage which is of greatest significance to an audience of this nature is that of *identity* versus *identity confusion* which comes in the adolescent years. According to Erikson, the major task of adolescence is the establishment of a sense of identity. The fulfillment of this task involves the production of a meaningful self-concept. This not only involve personal issues such as the acceptance of pubescent body changes, and emotional and libidinal (sexual) drives as part of self, but it is also driven by the peer group, as there seems to emerge a compulsive peer group conformity, which may often be in conflict with parental and familial influences. Also emerging at

this stage is the capacity to fall in love, not so much in the sense of a mature sexual nature as will emerge later, but in the confirmation of self which comes from being seen through the eyes of a beloved person.

I recall very vividly the Sunday when I discovered the first strands of hair on my chin and moustache signaling the fact that I was developing a beard. I paraded all over the house insisting that every member of the household take a look. They probably needed a magnifying glass for the purpose, but I was dead certain that I was now becoming a man. And if one is now becoming a man then girls have to come into the picture. I recall soon after asking my best friend who was just a year older than I what do you say to a girl when you want to “speech her down”. We clowned around and I don’t recall getting a direct answer from him, perhaps because, like most young men, he would not want others to hear what he says as it may come across as a stupid conversation. Perhaps some of the girls have a good laugh when they get together to compare notes and to share the things boys say to them. Perhaps though, the tables are turning as I am told these days that it is the girls who are now making the first move toward the boys.

Also of importance at this stage is the emergence of vocational interests and identity. This may be idealistic and may be influenced by vocational idols, sometimes resulting in an unrealistic evaluation of oneself and one’s abilities. This has led many young persons to claim that they want to be a doctor even though they cannot cope with the sciences. Some even reach as far as University and then discover that they have neither the stomach nor the inclination for the discipline. Of tremendous significance in a gathering of this nature is the formation of a personal ideology and philosophy of life which surfaces at this stage of development, but which may be subject to undue influence by other persons leading to a premature closure of this developmental phase.

It must then be evident to all and sundry why a Youth Gathering of this nature must be a priority for the Church, and why those responsible for the selection of the theme would chose one which lifts up the notion of identity in providing the focus for deliberations over these several days. And, if the Gathering is to realize its objectives, it must find ways to lift up and engage these various dimensions of the life of adolescents.

Many persons are prone to create a great dichotomy between psychology and religion, and yet, psychologists have helped us to understand the

development of person within the cycle from birth through retirement and old age. One consequence of their contribution is that we have come to see that the growth and development of religious faith is complementary to the developmental process outlined by Erik Erikson:

- The development of trust in childhood is foundational for the development of the faith in later years
- The nurturing of autonomy and initiative colours the individual's ability to perceive the benevolent/providential God and world
- The resolution of identity determines the individual's ability to affirm the sense of oneself as a whole person accepted of God
- *(Generativity which is experienced in later life has to do with the extent to which life has been lived as a vocation from God and with a sense of personal stewardship)*
- *A sense of integrity is experienced when one can assess life as lived as a mission accomplished and having been pursued with faithfulness)*

The theme which has been chosen for this Youth Gathering and for this address is one which begins with a definition of identity among the membership of this Gathering. It defines the participants as Anglicans and as such, people of faith. If we are not able to resolve the issue of identity then, based on the model to which I have been pointing, there will be deficiencies and deficits in our ability to move on to maturity and to face the tasks which come with each phase of the movement toward maturity on the path of Christian discipleship.

Anglican Identity

Who then is an Anglican? This is a fundamental question which all of us should be able to answer. Certainly, Seventh Day Adventists who now constitute the largest denomination in Jamaica, do not hesitate when you ask them who is a Seventh Day Adventist. The name Anglican comes from the Latin word for English and seeks to express the fact that the Church gained its unique identity in England. An **Anglican** is one who belongs to that branch of Christianity, which gained its distinctive identity in the English Reformation, and which is often described as the middle way, or "via media" between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This via media found expression in the English Church of the Reformation as it kept the early Catholic ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, while rejecting some parts of Catholicism, and making some reforms in the worship of God close to those made by the Protestants. One of the features of Anglicanism is the fact that from the very outset there was a definite attempt to make the

Anglican Church as broad and welcoming as possible to a wide range of Christian believers. In pursuing ecumenical relationships, the Anglican Communion has maintained as distinctives the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888: The Scriptures, the Creeds, the dominical sacraments, namely, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, and the historic episcopate as cited above. In addition, members of the Communion have asserted a further sense of identity through the use of the Book of Common Prayer, adherence to varying degrees to the thirty-Nine Articles, and the acknowledgement of the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The history of Anglicanism and its movement to our part of the world and to embrace a membership that looks like us today is one which is tainted and blemished, as Anglicanism, known then by the limited national and ethnic designation as the Church of England, was spread overseas by colonisation, settlement, and missionary work. Anglicans around the world today are joined together in a group of national churches in countries where there are Anglican Churches to make the world-wide Anglican Communion. The Communion is organized into Dioceses and Provinces. There are 38 Provinces in the Communion, each independent of the other but working in an interdependent manner for the good of the Communion. There are more than 80 million Anglicans in the world today.

Instruments of Communion

The Anglican Communion is served by four "Instruments of Communion" namely:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd and Rt Hon Rowan Douglas Williams.
- The Lambeth Conference of bishops which meets every 10 years solely at the personal invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- The Primates of the Anglican Communion who are the chief Archbishops, Presiding Bishops, Chief Pastors of the various Provinces of the global church.
- The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) which is the most representative body of gathered Anglicans amongst the Instruments of Communion. In their ranks are members of the laity, bishops, priests, deacons and religious. The meetings are held in various provinces, by invitations, every 2-3 years.

The Anglican Communion is struggling today with questions about homosexual and gay people in the Church, and more particularly the

ordination to the episcopate of persons living in same sex relationship, the blessing of same sex unions, and to a lesser extent, the role of women. Today, relationships within the Communion are often characterized as being in a state of “impaired communion”. There is a great chance that the Anglican Communion will not survive the stress of these serious issues, and will split into liberal and conservative groups. Already, there are Anglicans who have broken from the main Churches to form their own separate groups of believers. Some use the term Anglican combined with the word Catholic, Christian, Reformed, or Episcopal. For this reason a priest who turns up in the territories of the Province and claims that he/she is an Anglican is no longer allowed to function until it can be established to which part of the Anglican Communion does he/she belong.

While it is true that we are meeting as Anglicans at a time when there is the reality of division and dissension within the Anglican Communion, yet, the truth of the matter is that the Anglican Province of the West Indies continues to hold together a common position in relation to the Communion.

So in seeking to resolve the identity issue we must do so in terms of ourselves as persons with a measure of identity and wholeness as young persons, as Anglicans who are a part of a faith community of worldwide reach, and more particularly, as persons of Caribbean identity and part of a single Province, with a shared historical and socio-cultural identity.

Our theme goes on to give further definition to our identities by drawing on a scriptural image which seeks to affirm personal identity while holding it in tension with community, namely, Co-workers.

There is a ritual that has now crept into many Christian marriage ceremonies about which I have great reservation. It is supposed to be part of the attempt to make the marriage ceremony more contemporary etc. It is the ceremony of *the lighting of the candles*. What I find most objectionable is the couple proceeding to light a single candle from the individual candle which each is holding and which represents their individual lives, and then proceeding to blow out their own candles. While it symbolically deals with the issue of union, it does great violence to the notion of the continuation of the individual personalities which can never be obliterated if persons are to achieve wholeness and the purposes of Christian marriage. A healthy and wholesome marriage involves a man and a woman holding in tensions their corporate identity with their individual identity and personality.

But this is not only true of marriage, it is true of our Christian understanding off the relationship between the individual Christian and the community of faith. So the truth of the matter is that there would be no individual Christian without a witnessing Christian community, and there would be no Christian community without individuals who have made a commitment to God in Jesus Christ.

Co-Workers

Turning to the theme of this gathering we may note that it draws on a scriptural source in identifying the concept of **co-workers**. Indeed, there are several passage in the Pauline epistles which have been interpreted to be speaking to the notion of co-workers, but perhaps the most explicit one and the one on which I intend to focus is 1 Corinthians 3:9:

For we are fellow workers for God; you are God's field, God's building. (RSV)

In this passage there are several things being addressed, but the issue of major concern to us is that of Paul's relationship to Apollos and their work in Corinth. There is a problem in the church in Corinth, it is plagued by divisions. Different groups are claiming different apostles – Peter, Apollos, Paul – as their leaders. It has even been suggested that there was also a “Christ group” in the community as well.

While acknowledging to the community at Corinth that there are some distinctions between Apollos and himself, he insists that his mission and that of Apollos are directed toward the same goals. Accordingly, Paul who planted and Apollos who watered are equal because it is God who gives the growth and will in the end pay the wages. So Paul concludes that he and Apollos are God's servants and co-workers and were mediators of the faith to the Corinthian community. The Corinthian Church, then, was to be regarded as a missionary work/enterprise symbolized by Paul as God's field or building, and in which both had played a part. Likewise, it would seem then, that the choice of the theme of this Gathering is one which points to the fact that there is a missionary work/enterprise to which all the youth as Christians are called and which is most effectively exercised not in isolation or in competition, but in a recognition of the partnership and mutuality which makes for the effective execution of the task.

In another context, namely, Ephesians 3: 2, 9, Paul seems to widen the understanding of co-workers to embrace not just apostles, but the whole church. And so he speaks about his special calling to exercise a ministry and mission to the gentiles, going on to point out that this calling is not just a task for the minister, but the whole Church may be understood as the community called to be the means by which the plan of God is made known. The members of the Church, therefore, become co-workers with God, co-workers with the ministers of the gospel, and participants in God's plan in terms of embodying and proclaiming redemption/re-creation through Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Scriptures indicate that by our Baptism we are incorporated in Christ and thereby become co-workers with him, and this finds expression in the Catechism in section 111. This undoubtedly places the membership of the Youth Gathering as members of the Church among the participants in this mission of God as an expression of their discipleship. In this connection, the youth need to constantly challenge the notion that they are tomorrow's church. The youth are co-workers with Christ in today's Church.

Discipleship

In thinking about discipleship, perhaps the texts that most readily come to mind are those in which Jesus issued a call to the members of the group of Twelve disciples such as that found in Mark 1:17-18:

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. This is identified as a clear call of our Saviour Jesus Christ to these first disciples to join him in an adventure in Discipleship.

Here we have Jesus engaging/confronting specific persons with the good news of the gospel and the invitation to discipleship. They were about their daily business and routine of catching fish when he issued a call to them. The call to these two men is to make a response for themselves first of all, and then to come and participate in bringing others to this point of repentance and participation in this work which God was now unfolding in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In some ways these two, Peter and Andrew, although Jews, may have been like many of us Anglicans who have been in church for years, sitting behind a column where we hope too many persons won't notice us, we throw a little collection here and there-and then we leave church as quickly as it is over, or even before the end of service, so that we can get on with life without having any deeper commitment being asked of us. So they needed to move to another level and repent and believe

in order to respond to the call of Jesus Christ, and then to bring others to the same point. A true sign of commitment was to be a movement from hiding behind the crowd or giving a passing nod to the idea of repentance and discipleship to one that would be obvious and true.

One of my concerns about the Christian community is the extent to which we have experienced God and have a personal relationship with him. For, we will never have any sense of call to discipleship until we experience the living God at work in our lives and who engages us personally. So there is always that basic question which we need to ask of ourselves, namely, “do I know God? Can I offer any kind of testimony as to who God is and how I have experienced him in my life?”

My experience of God has been one filled with a lot of deaths and tragedies related to persons close to me – death of father at age 7, the death of my best friend mentioned earlier at the age of 14 after he was hit by a motor car as he walked beside me, death of my mother from cancer when I was fifteen, suicide of a member of my family when I was in Theological College, and death of my son in a motor vehicle accident less than two years ago. And yet I know and believe that God has been faithful and has led me through these years. Among the consequences of my experience and journey with God is that, among other things I now direct a cancer support group for persons who are survivors of cancer, and I recently started a grief support group for persons dealing with bereavement and loss.

An impersonal and distant God always stays out there where we keep him at arm's length. I urge you to look at the significant accounts of the call of persons in the Bible, look at the relationship between the individuals and God who calls and those who are called – Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah – and here in the text as Jesus calls. None of these persons was a "holy" person, and therefore, the kind of person who God was supposed to call, but when God called, they entered into a relationship which was deep and at times conflict laden, but they could do it because they knew first-hand the God to whom they were relating and who had called them. The call to Christian discipleship may take a different form for each of us, but we must be open to hearing that call and be obedient in following where God may be leading us. Hopefully each person in this Gathering will during these days re-visit and re-examine the nature of the call which is uniquely yours.

This, then, is part of the issue of identity which is embodied in our theme. No one can identify himself/herself as Anglican and Co-worker with Christ who does not know Christ in a personal way as the Lord of his/her life. And as our Confirmation liturgy reminds us, this is not just about putting up one's hand at an evangelistic meeting, though that may serve as a point of renewal. Rather, we are exhorted to "grow in grace and in faith, to worship with the family and to respond to the living word".

There are many religious traditions which have at the centre of their life and devotion, the worship or imitation of a founder/exemplar, whose life and demands on the faithful, place on the faithful an oppressive and impossible icon to emulate. Christian discipleship is of a different nature. Christian discipleship may be seen to be grounded in and enabled by one of those terms which St. Paul has contributed to Christian Scripture, and hence to the Church, namely, "Christ in me". Seen in this light, in Christian discipleship "Christ in me" becomes the enabler of faithful discipleship, rather than my personal effort or the imitation of an exemplar whose shoes I can never fill.

There is a reflection offered by James Stewart in a work entitled *A Man in Christ*, which seeks to develop this idea of Christ in me further.

"Christ in me" means something quite different from the weight of an impossible ideal, something far more glorious than the oppression of a pattern for ever beyond all imitation. "Christ in me" means Christ bearing me along from within, Christ the motive-power that carries me on, Christ giving my whole life a wonderful poise and lift, and turning every burden into wings. All this is in it when the apostle speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Compared with this, the religion which bases everything on example is pitifully rudimentary. This, and this alone, is the true Christian religion. Call it mysticism or not—the name matters little: the thing, the experience, matters everything. To be "in Christ," to have Christ within, to realize your creed not as something you have to bear but as something by which you are borne, this is Christianity. It is more: it is release and liberty, life with an endless song at its heart. It means feeling within you, as long as life here lasts, the carrying power of Love Almighty; and underneath you, when you come to die, the touch of everlasting arms.

At the same time, while the Christian needs to have an understanding of what it is to be "in Christ" there must also be an appropriation of the obligations and

responsibilities which follow from this. Accordingly, the great spiritual director and theologian, James C. Fenhagen, in his work *Mutual Ministry* has this to say about discipleship:

To become a disciple means to see for oneself the values that energized the life of Jesus of Nazareth, to struggle with them, until there comes that moment when by the grace of God they become our own. Commitment to an ongoing and disciplined enrichment of our relationship to God, the affirmation of human need and worth in the face of the demonic pretensions of those principalities and powers that control our lives, the desire to serve life out of love rather than power or reward, and a deep identification with the poor and the hungry and the oppressed; these are values that we can see in the *life* of Jesus. They are values which when affirmed and lived will make a profound difference in the quality of life of the world that is emerging. It is through psychic and spiritual intercourse with values such as these that we are called to be value bearers in the name of Christ.

Anecdotes

The question which we must confront in this Gathering is this, what would the opportunities and challenges of discipleship look like in today's world? In order to bring some sense of concreteness to this discussion I want to share with you a number of scenarios from life in the Caribbean which may help to put things into perspective. In this regard, I want to quote from an article carried in one of our daily newspapers here in Jamaica. The article was entitled **Jamaican Children in Trouble: 300 murdered in five years**. I now quote a brief section:

THE first annual report of the Office of the Children's Advocate has painted a disturbing view of the status of Jamaican children. According to the report, which was tabled in the House of Representatives last Tuesday, over the past five years more than 300 children - most of them boys - have been murdered. At the same time, the report noted that incidents of carnal abuse have continued to rise.

I wonder if you understand what it means to think about the fact that the children killed in Jamaica since 2005 add up to (the same or more) that the number of young persons gathered in this room. While the statistics point to children who have been innocent victims caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted in acts of revenge among adults, it is also true that some of our most violent crimes are being perpetrated by boys from as young as thirteen years of age. The potential and reality of violence and death are manifested constantly in our schools in the weapons being

confiscated from students and in the number of students being killed by fellow students.

2. Last weekend I was on the premises of one of our Kingston churches and noticed the many boys who were sleeping on the tombs in the cemetery at ten o'clock in the morning and congregating around others who were constantly coming and going from the road into the cemetery. These are boys who many persons will see at a nearby traffic intersection wiping windscreens and begging motorists for money, some of whom can become quite violent when their requests or advances are rejected. These are also the boys that, when there are protests calling on the state to have them removed, there are others who strongly suggest that they be left alone since this is the way in which many families survive, the boys having become the breadwinners for their families.

I inquired concerning the activities which I was observing among the boys in the cemetery and received the following distressing narrative. The young men who have reached the age of eighteen, and can no longer be accommodated within the program sponsored by the congregation, but who still linger around the churchyard and traffic lights, have been introducing the younger boys to the smoking of marijuana laced with cocaine, even as they abuse these younger boys, physically, emotionally, and sexually, and relieve them of any money which they may have. They literally treat the younger boys as if they were their personal slaves. I even received the most graphic account of the drug-induced behaviours when this concoction of drugs takes its effects on their brains.

3. Should you begin to think that this is another litany of the challenges which are posed by the boys, then let me share with you another experience. Earlier this year I visited the island of St. Vincent on an assignment with the Diocese of the Windward Islands at the invitation of the Bishop. While there, I was updated on some of the projects being undertaken by the church and some of the auxiliaries within the church. One such group is the Anglican Church Women Association. The President of the group shared with me a release which had been issued to the media and which was published in the SEARCHLIGHT, a weekly newspaper, on February 13, 2009, and which outlines their concern about the increase in the cases of sexually abused girls in the nation.

The release expresses the concern and upset of the women regarding “the growing social problem of the sexual abuse and molestation of young girls as revealed in the high incidences of teenage pregnancies, and the seduction and rape of under-aged girls”. The release further cited statistics indicating that 366 (or 20%) of births were delivered to teenagers, and that of the number, three cases were of mothers under the age of thirteen years. The release cites the role of adults in this dynamic of abuse, indicting various parties in a most graphic manner as follows:

“In homes, mothers uphold the rape of their daughters’ innocence by spouses and boyfriends for material gain. Mature males act as predators cynically pursuing young girls for selfish sexual desires, covering up their sins with the flash of dollars and sundry material things. For these reasons, agencies such as the Hospital, the Family Courts, and the Police are foiled in their efforts to bring justice to the victims and punish the callous offenders. The emotional/psychological trauma of these young girls has to be internalized (at what cost?) since their efforts to speak out and denounce the offenders are often met with brutal beatings by parents, thereby silencing protest.”

4. Some time ago I went back to one of my old High Schools to do devotions for new students, their parents and mentors. The Principal in appealing for the support of the parents and guardians told the following story. At the beginning of the calendar year he was asked by a high ranking official to take a 13 year old problem boy from another High School. He took him with conditions concerning his behaviour and the cooperation of the home. After 2 weeks he had to call in the parents. After 3 months he had to call in the parents again and inform them that the boy will have to go if things do not improve. One month later he again called in the parents to inform them that the boy must go now, and further informed them that the way in which the boy is behaving he is going to come to a tragic end. At the beginning of the week in which he was telling the new students and parents the story, news came to the Principal that the boy was one of four chopped to death by residents in St. Mary for robbery during the previous night. At age 14, he throws away the opportunity for High School education in two schools, turns to a life as a common criminal and is chopped to death by citizens.

5. One of the realities of life in today’s world is that the issues of sex and sexuality have become all pervasive. It is being driven by a moral pluralism

which says that we are to remove the barriers of everything that seems to be prudish, as well as a pornography industry which has exploded and is a major generator of wealth in the global context. To this scenario one can add the focus on sexual activity and the prevention of the spread of sexually transmitted disease brought on by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Technology is also an engine which drives this process as the internet has become a vehicle for the distorting and twisting of human life rather than being an instrument for the enhancement of human society. This technology in the hands of uniformed and immature youth has become a vehicle for their violation, exposure, and abuse.

At perhaps deeper levels there is need for even greater concern, for example, the use of music videos as an instrument for spreading music and lyrics which are debased. The type of content which is coming through on “dagging” songs, for example, is demeaning of persons and reflects and/or portrays a sense of self as a mere “thing” of animalistic features, whose engagement of relationships of a sexual nature is lacking in intimacy and delicacy. What is even more disturbing is the great reversal of the advances of those who have been proponents of gender studies, and who have sought to create a more positive appreciation of ourselves as Caribbean men and women and which these artistes of “dagging” songs seek to destroy. Men are being portrayed in stereotypical ways as insensitive studs whose claim to fame is their sexual prowess and the power of their genitals, while the women are characterized as things to be the recipients and receptacles of male violence and sexual prowess.

6. As Chairman of the Board of several educational institutions, I have to deal with some of the disciplinary problems which are now surfacing among students and, it is amazing the things the students, including the girls, are getting up to these days. And when the parents are called in, then the source of the problem becomes evident. The students are bringing drugs to school, because they are able to take it from the parents' supply at home. The students are getting involved in all kinds of explicit sexual behaviour on and off the campus, but they are only acting out what they see on the adult channels which parents pay for with their cable subscription. Likewise, the violence which we are now seeing in our schools is merely reflecting the ways of the larger society. We are therefore dealing with a world in which there are failing parents, leading some children and youth to grow up without adequate nurture, guidance, and direction, as a consequence some will be looking more to the peer group than to the home to fill that void, and

it is here that you the youth of the Church, their peers, must make your discipleship be manifested, as agents of influence and transformation in their lives.

These scenarios point to a persistent problem of distortion in human life? The gospel for last Sunday included Jesus entrusting authority to the disciples to cast out unclean spirits. This was in an age in which the popular worldview was one in which illnesses, mental disorders, and distortions in the life of people were perceived to be the result of the operation of evil spirits. We may not speak of unclean spirits as the New Testament does, but distortions abound.

In St. Mark 6: 7-13 there is recorded one of the accounts of Jesus sending out his disciples on a mission, The Mission of the Twelve. The mission of the Twelve as a response of discipleship is portrayed here in its **communal** expression. **The thing to note about this mission is that Jesus sends out the Twelve two by two.** It seems that the sending in two's was not intended to be an indictment of the ability of each, but to emphasize the corporate/mutual dimension of the church in ministry and mission, thereby effectively playing down the narrow personal/individualistic approach of many religious persons. What the theme of this Gathering does by pinpointing the notion of **co-workers** is to underscore the notion of mutuality, complementarity, and a sense of the corporate nature of mission and discipleship.

The notion of co-creators also seeks to confront the attitude which is present among some young people and adults who believe that they do not need to have a relationship with any community of persons to live the Christian life. In addition, there are those who seek to use technology as a way to avoid community, and who say that they can stay at home, listen to their radio or watch television and still be as good a Christian. These days there is the option of cyber community through facebook, twitter, my space, and blogging. The truth of the matter is that the Christian life is located in the context of the community of faith and is characterized by worship, **fellowship**, discipleship, ministry and evangelism, and an inter-play of individual and corporate dynamics in the face to face encounter.

Not only does the theme demand a sense of communal involvement and engagement, but it also points to the sense of partnership and accountability in the exercise of discipleship. The work of the young people at every level,

beginning at the congregational level and leading up to the Provincial level requires an awareness of and commitment to this principle.

Another feature of the sending out of the Twelve is that **Jesus gives them authority over unclean spirits**. As we have already noted, we are here dealing here with a worldview that is different from that of the 21st century. To be entrusted with authority over unclean spirits is to have authority over those things which bring distortion to the life of people. In addition, authority over unclean spirits is one sign of the presence and operation of the Spirit of God. Jesus was, therefore, sending them to participate in the divine mission of liberation and transformation for persons living lives of distortion and brokenness. Do evil and unclean spirits still exist? Perhaps! Perhaps not! Do distortions in human life still abound? They most certainly do! And the incidents which I have cited earlier are just a few examples of the manifestation of distortions. Christian discipleship among the youth of this Gathering can mean no less than a commitment to participate in God's ongoing mission of liberating those whose lives are characterized by distortion and brokenness.

Youth Gathering Challenges

I want to return to some of the things that we identified earlier with adolescent development and attributed to Erik Erikson. In this regard we may note the importance of the peer group and conformity to the same, the emergence of vocational interests and identity, and the formation of a personal ideology and philosophy of life. In light of these things we may assert that the development of a sense of identity as co-workers should not be particularly difficult for persons at a stage in life at which peer group alliances come naturally. At the same time, there must be a recognition of the fact that because there is a pressure toward peer group conformity, then those who are identified as leaders have an opportunity to exercise significant influence over others of one's peers. It is hoped that the persons who have come to this Gathering have come here because they have been identified as natural leaders at the local level. So it is the hope that this leadership and peer group potential will be garnered during this Gathering to realize the intention of the theme in mobilizing the collective resources of this group as co-workers with Christ within our Province.

It is also the hope that participants will focus on the vocational search which is part of adolescence and seek to re-examine their vocations choices to see whether they are being guided by considerations that are consistent with

Christian discipleship. Additionally, it is hoped that this Gathering will tap into the natural development of personal ideology and philosophy of life which emerges in adolescence and which can be garnered to fire the enthusiasm and visioning of this group for the transformation of life within the church, among peers, and within the wider Caribbean society. While we older heads who claim maturity are usually given to maintaining the status quo, it takes young and enlivened minds like yours to provide the driving energy for change.

Yet the change which is envisaged must not be change for change sake, but must reflect your identity as Anglican and Christian, and persons whose values are shaped by the values that energized the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and the desire to be faithful to one's call to discipleship. These values must find expression in a commitment to an ongoing and disciplined enrichment of your relationship to God, the affirmation of human need and worth, and a deep identification with the poor and the hungry and the oppressed. They are values which when affirmed and lived will make a profound difference in the life of other young people, and the quality of life of the world that is emerging. In so doing the young will demonstrate that they are value bearers in the name of Christ, something which the people of all ages need to hear.

There is a book entitled *Speaking of Sin: The Lost Language of Salvation*, written by an Anglican priest, Barbara Brown-Taylor. In that book she talks about the way in which we have sought in modern society to get away from the reality of human life as embedded in sin and distortion, and that the ultimate purpose for our existence and the realization of who we were intended to be is to be found in God. So she argues:

Deep down in human existence, there is an experience of being cut off from life..... deadly alienation from the source of all life.

Because we cannot stand the God-shaped hole inside of us, we try stuffing it full of all sorts of things, but it refuses to be filled. It rejects all substitutes. It insists on remaining bare. It is the holy of holies inside of us, which only God can fill. When we are ready to honour the bare space instead of trying to stuff it full, then we are ready to consider what kind of new life God may be calling us to.

These very profound words capture the reality of every human life, including that of every young person and the response which every Christian must make, and that is the message which we must proclaim as part of our mission when we leave this Gathering if we are to be faithful disciples in addressing the distortions of human life in our time.

Concluding Thoughts

I want to quote a few lines from the Final (Indaba) Report which was produced at the Lambeth Conference when over 600 bishops met in Canterbury last year and which speaks in part to the issue of discipleship and the place of young people in the life of the Church.

22. We affirm that evangelism concerns the making of disciples and spiritual growth. This must involve a personal encounter with the risen Christ and a commitment to discipleship. Evangelism is the cutting edge of mission in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour by word and deed. The Gospel is the life blood of the Church and involves mediating by proclamation, by word, and by action the good news of God's love in Christ which transforms the whole of life. There must also be a compassionate community, the enabling of others by the leadership of the church, and the marginalized must be kept in focus.

23. We affirm that we minister to the whole community, including children and young people. The history of Anglicanism has been characterized by a tradition of pastoral care which has centred around the care of persons through the various transitions in the life cycle. Of particular concern has been the ministry to the sick and housebound as well as the dying. In the indaba process there was expressed a particular concern for children and young people in the life of the Church. At the same time, it was acknowledged that many of the attempts to engage young people have been ineffective. Some models and understandings of young people are outdated. There is need for a greater effort to find fresh expressions of ministry for reaching the young people, and a sense of zeal and passion for their inclusion in the life of the church. There is also a recognition of the fact that young people are not only an integral part of the life of the Church, but can also make a positive contribution to the evangelistic work of the Church, harnessing their idealism, enthusiasm and creativity.

Perhaps coming out of this Gathering may be some perspectives that will help the bishops, clergy, and the church as a whole, to understand the

contribution which you have to make to the total ministry and witness of the Church. But, may you also emerge from this Gathering with a new and renewed commitment to making your exercise of discipleship more faithfully and effectively exercised within the sphere and context of this Caribbean reality within which you are called to live out your life.

(Let us pray.

Good Teacher, help me in this hour to hear your clear call to discipleship. By the power of your Spirit grant me wisdom, courage and strength to live as your disciple all day long. Amen.)