



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

23 March 2020

A Letter to the Bishops of the Anglican Communion about the Lambeth Conference

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, your Graces,

Responding to the corona pandemic is a shared responsibility that we are all taking very seriously across the Anglican Communion.

In recent weeks we have been prayerfully thinking through the impact of COVID-19 on the plans and preparations for the Lambeth Conference.

The conference is a hugely important opportunity and meeting of Anglican bishops – and yet every day as the pandemic worsens – we face increasing challenges for the event, to which we must respond.

Following consultation with the conference Design Group, Primates and Trustees, I have taken the difficult decision to reschedule the Lambeth Conference until the summer of 2021.

As I write to you, I know that you all – as church leaders - have a vital pastoral role to play in your Provinces and Dioceses. The imperative at present is that we care for each other and for bishops to care for those given to our trust.

Indeed, the place of a Bishop at a time of difficulty is the place of a shepherd when a wolf is attacking the flock. It is to be alongside them. To love them. To suffer with them.

The words of 1 Peter – the Biblical focus for the Lambeth Conference – feel particularly significant:

‘Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly’. (**1 Peter chapter 5 v. 1-2**)

At a time of extraordinary circumstances, it is not appropriate to continue our lives in what we thought was a ‘normal’ way. God is calling us to be ‘God’s Church for God’s World’ in new and responsive ways.

My wife Caroline and I send our greetings to all the bishops' spouses that are also attending the conference. Together, we say may God keep you and bless you.

I know that you will all join me in praying for the Anglican Communion worldwide. May we show courage and bravery, knowing that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Through God's grace, we will meet together in 2021, when I look forward to welcoming you to the Lambeth Conference.

Yours in the peace of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Justin Welby!". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

**The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury**