

Communications: Report to ACC 17

Background

The current Director for Communications took up the post in March 2016, one week before ACC-16 began. The previous Director had resigned a year earlier. Communications work had continued but was carried out by consultants and freelance staff. Development work led by the previous Director had stalled and important work remained unfinished. In this context the incoming Director used his address to ACC-16 to set out his vision for the three years ahead, rather than report back on what had been done.

Staffing

There have been significant changes to the Communications team. Gavin Drake, a highly-experienced journalist had been working as a freelance writer and editor for the Anglican Communion News Service. Another freelancer, Rachel Farmer, edited the quarterly magazine, *Anglican World*. The Director created the post of Communications Officer with editorial oversight for both ACNS and the magazine. Gavin Drake was appointed to this role in December 2017.

Part of the Director's vision was the introduction of a 12-month Internship Programme. The aim was to bring young people with the relevant skills to work with the Communications team at the Anglican Communion Office. Their role was to help develop communications with a younger audience. The scheme ensures that the intern receives training in various communication disciplines both in-house and through external providers. It is hoped that as a by-product of the scheme, the intern returns to his or her home province with a better understanding of the Communion and as an enthusiastic advocate for its work. The first intern, Amelia Brown, was recruited through The Episcopal Church's Young Adult Service Corps programme, and served with the ACO from September 2017 to August 2018. The second intern, Steven Fan, is from the province of Hong Kong. He will serve through to September 2019. A potential third intern has already been identified in Kenya.

Two other staff changes took place in 2018. Michael Ade, the Website and IT Manager, left the ACO. Michael had been with the ACO for more than 16 years and was a familiar face at Primates' Meetings and meetings of the ACC. Lucy Cowpland joined the team as part-time Personal Assistant to the Director; she also works for the Director of Unity, Faith and Order.

Anglican Communion News Service and the Anglican Communion website

The Communion and News Service (ACNS) websites remain the main shop window for the Communications department. Significant refurbishment has been carried out to both. This work has been done gradually to make the most of limited resources. More work remains to be done: it is important that websites are updated constantly.

The output from the ACNS has grown and so has the breadth of coverage. Over the past three years it has been the practice for ACNS to carry three news stories every weekday as well as longer features from time to time. The site is now clearer and cleaner. Better use is made of photographs.

There are also more videos and blogs and there is news in languages other than English. Newsgathering has remained a challenge. While some areas of the Communion have professional communication staff that can, and do, support the work of the ACO Communications team, many provinces have either volunteers looking after comms, or no-one at all. This means a considerably reduced flow of news and information and far less engagement with the ACO team. Nevertheless, ACNS has carried stories from all 40 provinces and work has been continuing to develop better links to ensure more news reaches London from all areas of the Communion

Readership and engagement has risen. During 2018, ACNS saw a 15% rise in the number of page views – just under half a million users visited the site during the year.

The Anglican Communion site was redesigned in 2018. It now has newer, more inclusive imagery and is more navigable. Work is continuing to update pages and add new ones. In addition, the Communications team is working with other staff at the ACO to reorganise how Resources are presented.

Videos, blogs and translated news

Three central elements to the vision set out by the Director in 2016 were the creation of more videos, the broadening of voices on the website and social media channels and the need for news in languages other than English.

Video output has increased considerably. Films have been produced to accompany significant events and stories such as the Primates' Meeting in 2017, the launch of the Season of Intentional Discipleship and the installation of the new primate of the Church of Central America in 2018. A special series of videos – *Countdown to Lambeth* -- was produced in June 2018 which captured the rising enthusiasm about the upcoming Lambeth Conference. A series of films has been produced for the Lambeth Conference website – each with subtitles in four languages. More are being commissioned in mid-2019. The Communications team has also experimented with video news reports. More of these are planned too. In addition, the Director organised training for many of the staff at the ACO in how to shoot and edit simple films on their smart phones

Another film commissioned by the Director introduces staff at the ACO and explains their work. This has been a useful resource for the Secretary General and Directors to show as they travel the world and for when visitors come to St Andrew's House in London.

Blogs have become a proactive part of the Communications output. Previously they were sourced from other outlets and the authors tended to be clergy. Now more than 60 people have been commissioned to write blogs for the ACNS site. These bloggers better reflect the diverse nature of the Communion – the authors are men, women, young and older, clergy and laity, drawn from across the globe.

The Director has made it clear that providing news and information in languages other than English is absolutely essential. But constraints on resources continue to limit the extent of what can be done. In 2018 a weekly news service in French and Spanish was launched. It was extended to include Portuguese in January 2019. More documents are now routinely translated into other languages and many videos have subtitles in other languages.

It had been suggested that volunteer translators were used to increase the amount of material available. But research conducted with other large, faith bodies indicated that this option carried

potential difficulties and so it was decided to continue to use professional translators with the requisite skills in understanding the nuances of Communion life.

Social media

Resolution 16.29 made clear the ACC's commitment to embracing digital communications to tell the story of the Anglican Communion. Considerable progress has been made but much more needs to be done. The social media portfolio in 2016 was confused. This has been rectified. Both ACNS and the Anglican Communion now have distinct Twitter feeds and separate Facebook channels. An Instagram feed was launched in 2018 and campaigns on it have generated wide interest. All channels are showing a steady increase in audience.

Successful social media requires on-going engagement- it is about having conversations with followers rather than 'broadcasting' to them. There is no lack of ambition to engage, the problem is resources. The Director considers that the Communications team at the ACO needs adequate support to fund a member of staff focused solely on digital media. Only then will this vital area of communications thrive as it should.

Collaboration with external agencies

The Director has built a strong relationship with communications staff at Anglican agencies such as the Mothers' Union, Church Mission Society and USPG. The groundwork was done in early 2017 when the Director organised a mini-conference with the agencies' communicators to devise better ways to co-operate. This bore early fruit. In March 2017, the MU and ACO collaborated on a film about their delegations at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The ACO has also worked alongside CMS and USPG in promoting their work in Kenya, India and Sri Lanka. Senior figures in the MU, CMS and USPG regularly contribute blogs to the ACNS.

Stronger links have also been established with communications teams at the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation. One tangible result of the deeper respect and closer relationships came in 2018 when the ACO seconded its intern to the WCC to assist their communications team with the visit of Pope Francis.

Changing *Anglican World*

Anglican World was a 24-page quarterly magazine. In 2016 it was commissioned, written and edited by a freelance journalist and printed and distributed by a company in the UK. Whereas it once had a readership of 4,000 (many of whom received it free), by 2016 that had dwindled to fewer than 1,000. For two years, efforts were made to boost sales: scores of copies were taken to various conferences and gatherings around the world by ACO staff; copies were given away to clergy and other guests visiting the ACO and a marketing campaign was launched with the generous support of the Compass Rose Society to encourage theological colleges around the Communion to subscribe on behalf of their students. All these efforts were to no avail. The subscriber list still hovered around 750 and the magazine continued to lose money. In mid-2018, it was decided that the printed version of *Anglican World* should be scrapped.

A new-look *Anglican World* is to be re-launched in July 2019 as an annual online report that is free to download. It is proposed that a small number of copies be printed and distributed to primates and provincial secretaries.

Supporting the Instruments and provinces

The communications team has continued to provide support for the Instruments of the Communion. This has included regular close collaboration with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Communications Director and her team to maximise the impact of their work – for example when Archbishop Justin attended the inaugurations of Sudan and Chile as new provinces in 2017 and 2018. In Chile, the ACO Director worked closely with local communications staff to ensure the inauguration reached a worldwide audience.

The ACO team organised communications at regional Primates' Meetings and the 2017 Primates' Meeting in Canterbury where they ran press briefings, press conferences and handled media inquiries. The communications team has also supported the work of the Primates' Task Group and has begun work on designing and disseminating the message of the Season of Prayer and Repentance planned for Lent in 2020.

Since early 2018 the Director and his team have been developing communications for the 2020 Lambeth Conference. A website was commissioned and designed with content written in four languages. The site went live in late 2018 and is regularly updated with news, videos and information. Momentum will build during 2019 and the volume of output will increase considerably from the middle of the year onwards. The Director has drafted proposals setting out how an international team of communicators could help to capture and communicate all of the elements which will make up a successful Lambeth Conference in 2020. Taking this forward will be the responsibility of new senior staff following the Director's decision to step down from his post immediately after ACC17.