

# Deep Engagement Fresh Discovery



Report of the Anglican Communion “Bible in the Life of the Church” Project



# Contents

Page

1	Foreword	
3	Introduction	
5	Core Message	
7	<b>Section 1:</b>	Methodology and broad conclusions from the regional groups
13	<b>Section 2:</b>	Regional Reflections
39	<b>Section 3:</b>	Other work undertaken by the project
47	<b>Section 4:</b>	Resources, exercises, study courses, case studies and other ideas
59	<b>Section 5:</b>	Reflections on the project by an 'Anglican Outsider'.
65	<b>Section 6:</b>	Acknowledgements and Thanks



# Foreword

*By the Archbishop of Canterbury*

How is the Anglican Communion to be, in the fullest and most authentic sense, a family of 'biblical' churches? This question is at the heart of most of the tensions that have been in evidence within the Communion over the last couple of decades, and it is not one that admits of a quick answer. The Anglican way in theology exists as a distinctive voice partly because of the Reformation impulse to make the Church once again a community in which people listen as directly as they can to what God is saying – a community, therefore, in which what the Church thinks or does is always being tested and judged in the light of what God says to his people in the Scriptural record of his historical dealings with them.

But it has never been a way of theology which has imagined that we can solve every issue by appealing to the plain words of the Bible and no more. The mainstream of the Reformation, including the Church of England, sought both to affirm the absolute authority of the Bible as God's self-communication and also the crucial importance of training people in a discerning reading that drew on the history of interpretation and the intelligence of the whole community. It is a great mistake to think that the Reformers held the same views as extreme modern fundamentalists. Christians in this tradition knew they were always reading Scripture in company with believers of every age and place, and bringing to bear on their reading the perspectives and skills of their human culture. Yet Anglicans have consistently given Scripture the supreme role of deciding the limits of what can and must be believed; and they have tried to listen to Scripture in the expectation of being converted and transformed by the Spirit whose action underlies the words on the page.

This project, commissioned by the ACC, welcomed and encouraged by the Primates and the bishops at the Lambeth Conference, is an attempt to let the churches of the Communion reflect on the ways in which they actually use the Bible – how they read it, whom they read it with, what they bring to the reading, what their experience is of transformation. It is not a project that seeks to advance some agenda, 'traditional' or 'liberal'; simply one that seeks to help us understand ourselves better and so, we hope and pray, to allow the Scriptures to speak to us more powerfully and freely. It is an attempt to share across the Communion what people want to say about the importance of the Bible. One of our challenges seems to be that we do not often enough experience how Anglicans in another setting are reading and using Scripture, and so can fall prey to various caricatures. This project looks towards a future in which we can not only read Scripture with clearer eyes but understand each other's reading with clearer eyes as well – with more love and patience and willingness to be taught and enriched by each other.

The title of the project is all-important. This is about the Bible in its true place – not in a library, not even on an individual's bookshelf, but in the life of the fellowship of believers. It is a book read in public, read in worship; a book whose words worshippers make their own in prayer, private and public; a book whose purpose is to show what a human life looks like when it is lived in loving intimacy with and obedience to the living God, whose eternal Word became flesh to reconcile us to the Father and transform us by his Spirit. The inspiration of Scripture is the presence of this Spirit, moving us to be reconciled and renewed in the likeness of Christ. Scholarship alone cannot do this; nor can a reading of the Bible as just a code of behaviour which we can follow by our own effort. The Spirit works in Scripture to convict us of sin and

to open us to the grace of Christ. That is why we need to hear from each other in the Church what it means to be judged and restored in the process of reading the Bible – or, to put it more sharply, what it means to meet Jesus Christ the Word Incarnate in what the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England call the ‘Word written.’

Often we, like other Christians, talk about the Bible more than we really listen to it; sadly, many churches will acknowledge that their people do not have the habit of familiarity with the Bible that they need, or that their Bible reading is restricted to the bits they like and know already. One of the things that I personally hope this project will help us develop in the Communion is a wider and fuller biblical literacy, in which the outlines of the one great story of creation and redemption will be clear. To be a biblical Church is surely to be a community that lives out this great story day by day and commends it to people everywhere as the most comprehensive truth possible about the nature of God and God’s world. May God use this work to further that end, in our Communion and in all communities of his people.

+Rowan Cantuar  
August 2012

# Deep Engagement, Fresh Discovery: The Bible in the Life of the Anglican Communion

## Introduction

The Anglican Communion has always cherished Scripture and given it a central place in its life. This emphasis was historically summed up in Article 6 of the 39 Articles, “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation” and is confirmed by the way Scripture is so heavily drawn on in our liturgical life. In recent years the Communion has sought to handle the diversity of opinions in relation to moral and ethical issues. However, in turning to Scripture for insights we have discovered that we reach different conclusions as to the way forward. This raised the question as to whether we might benefit, as a Communion, by exploring in some depth the way we go about this engagement with and interpretation of Scripture.

So in 2009 the “Bible in the Life of the Church” (BILC) project was mandated by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) at its meeting in Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> The aims of the project were over the next three years to:

- ~ explore how we, as Anglicans, actually use the Bible by sharing experiences of using the Bible to explore two major contemporary issues;
- ~ distil and develop from these explorations the working principles of Anglican hermeneutics;
- ~ produce resource materials for use at all levels of Christian education;
- ~ provide a guide to significant literature on this topic; and
- ~ offer a report and make recommendations to ACC 15

To fulfil these aims the project undertook *four* major pieces of work:

1. It created a network of Regional Groups across the Communion, each facilitated by a regional coordinator, to participate in explorations of Scripture providing a series of windows into how different regions engaged with and interpreted the Bible.
2. It reviewed what the Anglican Communion has already said about Scripture through its Lambeth Conference resolutions, official reports and reports of our ecumenical conversations.
3. It commissioned a piece of empirical research based on a number of existing studies exploring how ‘ordinary Anglicans’<sup>3</sup> view and understand the Bible.
4. It collected a range of resources that would enable the church, at all levels, to engage more deeply with Scripture.

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1. ACC-14 - Resolution 14.06

2. Throughout this report we have chosen to use ‘Anglican’ and ‘Anglicans’ to describe both the churches of the Communion and those who call themselves its members. We recognise that in parts of the Communion ‘Episcopal’ and ‘Episcopalians’ are the names used. For simplicity and consistency we chose to use the former.

3. Throughout this report the use of the term ‘ordinary Anglicans’ refers to members of the Church who have no formal theological education or training.

This report contains the fruit of this work and comes from the Steering Group of the project. Its core message is summed up on the next page and this is then expanded in six main sections:

- Section 1** – Methodology and broad conclusions from the Regional Groups
- Section 2** – Regional Reflections
- Section 3** – Review of Anglican documents and the empirical research
- Section 4** – Resources, exercises, study courses, case studies and other ideas
- Section 5** – Reflections on the project by an 'Anglican Outsider'.
- Section 6** - Acknowledgements and Thanks

In addition, we have created appendices on the web or on the memory stick accompanying the paper Report that include a rich variety of background material which informed the creation of the report or add additional insights to its findings.

The title of this Report - **Deep Engagement, Fresh Discovery** - is both descriptive and aspirational. As you will see, deep engagement with Scripture leading to new insights and inspiration is alive and well in the Communion and comes in many different clothes and colours. Yet, it is also true to say that Anglicans are not engaging as deeply as our forebears and official documents suggest we might. Our hope is that through the stories told, examples offered and resources made available we might *'raise the bar'* of our engagement for the sake of both God's Kingdom and Christ's Church. As you will see from the Core Message that follows this Introduction this Report comes with the express desire to *"invite us, as a Communion, to deepen our love of the Bible and the rich treasures its pages offer."* We offer it to the Communion as a gift that might enrich our life together.

**Archbishop David Moxon,**  
Chair of the Steering Group,  
Bible in the Life of the Church Project  
October 2012

## Core Message

Anglicans love the scriptures of both Old and New Testaments; these have a central place within our common life. For 500 years or more we have valued their availability in vernacular translation and treasured them in our worship. They speak to us, and the societies in which we live, in many ways - permeating our liturgy, Bible study, preaching, commentary, story-telling, song, scholarship, dance, music, and art. The nature of these encounters differs from context to context, adding to both the variety of interpretations and the complexity of the interpretive process.

The richness of these encounters was explored in this project by our investigation of how Anglicans around the world approach the Bible. This involved workshops in different parts of the Communion, a questionnaire survey, a literature survey of official Anglican statements and documents, and academic reflections by Anglican scholars.

A major finding of these investigations is that **how** Anglicans engage with the Bible turns out to be just as important as its content. This perhaps unnerving claim does not contest the unique place and authority which the scriptures have in Anglican life, but it does point up the significance, perhaps thus far overlooked, of the contexts in which and processes by which they are heard and read.

The Bible in the Life of the Church project, while finding some decline in biblical literacy, above all encountered the sense of excitement, discovery and challenge that comes from reading the scriptures together. This Report seeks to capture the work of the project and, through its narratives and the resources offered, invites us, as a Communion, to deepen our love of the Bible and the rich treasures its pages offer.

## With this in mind this Report:

is **NOT** a total picture of what happens across the Communion – but a series of snapshots, a collage. Its value is in the stories it offers, the examples it shows, and the resources it promotes.

is **NOT** a set of answers to the question, “How do Anglicans engage with and interpret the Bible?” – but a mirror or checklist, a set of questions and encouragements to challenge us, as Anglicans, to think further.

is **NOT** a prescribed programme or way forward – but a toolbox or collection of ideas, approaches and resources to dig deeper into the process of our engagement with Scripture.

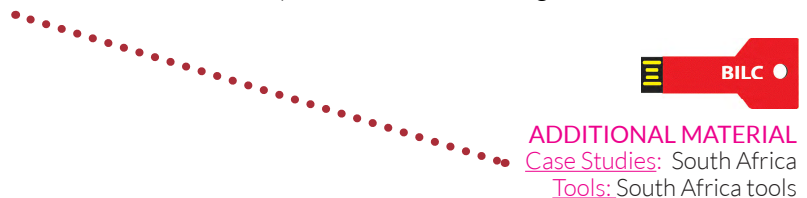




The Bible in the Life of the Church project has generated and collected various resources that add extra information or ideas to what is contained in the Report. These are grouped in a number of sections:

- [Anglican Communion documents](#)
- [Articles](#)
- [Bible Study outlines](#)
- [Bibliography](#)
- [Case Studies](#)
- [Regional Reports](#)
- [Tools](#)
- [Worship resources](#)
- [Other papers](#)

Each time you see the Memory Stick Icon in the Report it points to this **ADDITIONAL MATERIAL** which can be found by clicking on the link highlighted on the screen. Underneath the icon will be the name of the folder underlined in pink e.g. [Case Studies](#): followed by the name of the file e.g. "South Africa"



Making use of the **ADDITIONAL MATERIAL**

All the resources listed under this heading are available as PDF files and can be printed off, copied and used as they stand. Some of the resources are also available on Word files. We would be delighted if you want to draw on and adapt this material for use in worship or Christian education. If you do use the resources in this way could we ask you to include the following:

- o Where this appears at the end of the document: © and the name of the person who wrote the material.
- o Ensure that the Anglican Communion's "The Bible in the Life of the Church" project is also credited.



## Section 1:

Methodology and Broad Conclusions from the Regional Groups

## Section 1:

### Methodology and Broad Conclusions from the Regional Groups

The project was very clear in its expressed aims that it wished to try to build a series of pictures of how Anglicans across the Communion *actually* engage with and interpret Scripture. That is, to first be descriptive rather than prescriptive. To achieve this goal, rather than ask each Province to outline the way they would approach this question – which would elicit ‘statements of good intent’ – the Steering Group decided to encourage groups across the Communion to participate in a series of explorations and engagements with Scripture, observe what happened, report back on these experiences, and reflect on their significance for the Communion. To achieve this what was needed was:

- a regional mix of participants across the Communion;
- two issues that would focus these explorations and engagements;
- a core set of Scripture passages for participants to engage with;
- methods of observation and reporting; and
- a forum to reflect on the possible significance of these reports.

### Regional Groups

Time and resources limited how many regions of the Communion the project could work in. In the end the project set up eight Regional Groups<sup>4</sup> offering insights from East Africa, North America, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, South Sudan, Cuba and South East Asia (*Hong Kong and the Philippines*). Their reflections are the content of Section 2 of this report.

The first five Regional Groups had a coordinator who joined the Steering Group together with theological consultants who facilitated work in the other regions. The coordinators worked in their region in a variety of ways, using both established groups and those constituted especially for the project, and the approaches each took sought to be appropriate for each region. These differences can be seen in the Regional Reflections and the fuller [Regional Reports](#).

### Issues to be Explored

As outlined in the aims of the project, the Steering Group decided to identify ‘two major contemporary issues’. It wanted these to be such that they were likely to throw up a diversity of views, be issues that would be seen as central to our life together as God’s people involved in God’s mission, and be generally accepted as such by the wider Communion. After wide discussion of various possibilities the Steering Group focussed on the Fourth and Fifth of the Communion’s ‘Five Marks of Mission’.<sup>5</sup> These became the basis of the two [Case Studies](#)<sup>6</sup> for the project.

### Core Scripture Passages

For each Case Study the Scripture passages chosen spanned both Testaments and the Apocrypha and included different genres of Biblical literature – history, wisdom, prophecy, gospels, letters etc. The Steering Group also suggested a series of questions for groups to start their engagement and explorations.

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4. For full details of the location of these groups, their coordinators and others who made up the Steering Group see Section 6.

5. These ‘Five Marks of Mission’ are: [1] To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; [2] To teach, baptise and nurture new believers; [3] To respond to human need by loving service; [4] To seek to transform unjust structures of society; and [5] To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

6. While the choice of the Fifth Mark for the first Case Study was unanimous the choice of the issue for the second phase was less straightforward. The North American Group offered the project a ‘strong lead’ on this choice. Their discussion of this question in the first of their Regional Reports is of particular interest.

## Methods of Observation

These varied from region to region but some helpful [tools](#) emerged that are offered for wider use across the Communion. The intention was not to attempt a detailed empirical or evaluative study but to gather a series of snapshots and stories. The nature of the observations can be seen in the Regional Reflections. The tools and exercises some groups used can be found in the additional material sections throughout the report.

## Forum for Reflection

This was a major role assumed by the Steering Group which met three times during the project: to set up the whole project and plan the first Case Study (*London, England, November 2009*); to reflect on the outcomes from this and plan the second Case Study (*Durban, South Africa, November 2010*); and finally reflect on both the Case Studies and prepare the outline of this Report (*Woking, England, May 2012*). The Regional Reports, Regional Reflections, the report on the November 2010 meeting and this report are the fruits of those reflections.

## Postscript

*The approach and process that the Steering Group used with the Regional Groups was not without some fierce criticisms such as these questions reflect: If you decide beforehand on both the issue and the passages to be explored does this not seriously skew the data? If the specific issue chosen is not important to those being invited to participate will there be anything to report? Does this approach ignore or give insufficient weight to the way Scripture is used in other contexts in the life of the Church such as expository preaching and formal (i.e. led and guided) Bible Studies?*

*Such criticisms raise at least two issues. One concerns exactly what the project was attempting to achieve. More deeply, a second and underlying one reflects what should be the church's approach to Scripture and the processes used by those called to be teachers in the Church. As for the first criticism, the project was never intended to be a technically-valid piece of empirical research – see the Section 3 for the report on a small attempt which was made in this field – but as stated earlier, a way of providing a 'series of snapshots, a collage'. These may not disclose everything which could be said but the Steering Group believes that they have illuminating value in their own right. Meeting and talking together is a characteristically Anglican way of doing things!*

*Further, this criticism seems to have behind it the view that engagement with Scripture entails another kind of pre-judgement – that only some in the Church can undertake this task because they have the necessary wisdom and insight. This lies at the heart of discussion at various points in this Report: What is the role of the Biblical expert in our understanding of Scripture? How do our presuppositions – cultural, theological, personal – affect how we 'read' Scripture? How can the academy and church learn together? Where does wisdom in these matters lie?*

## Broad Conclusions Drawn from the Regional Groups

These conclusions may not be surprising simply as they are stated but the way they present themselves region by region does give us a window into worlds often very different from our own, thus adding colour to the general statements.

*From the Regional Groups' reporting the Steering Group concluded that:*

*1. Across the Communion there is clear evidence of the impact made on the lives of our communities and individuals by engaging with Scripture.*

The Regional Reflections in the next section of the Report offer snapshots of at least three kinds of impact:

- finding Scripture speaking about issues that participants had never explored in it previously;
- being directed to sections of Scripture which participants had never encountered before;
- simply being involved, with others, in an exercise that encouraged and helped participants to engage with Scripture at a deeper level.

*2. Across the Communion there is a wonderful diversity of ways of what "engaging with and interpreting Scripture" looks like.*

The Regional Reflections offer illustrations that 'the way we read Scripture' includes not only the meaning that comes from that reading but the very process of reading itself. For some, Scripture was seen to be 'read' in all the encounters of daily life - everyday exchanges in the street, in the house or the workplace are drawn on to interpret, explain and bring insight to whatever those conversing are facing. They know large sections of their Bible or had captured it in song; they 'read' it to one another in their own specific contexts. For others, the way Scripture is read is more formal - in the liturgy, in study groups or classes, in individual study. There are examples of approaches which mix these in the 'additional material' section below.

*3. Across the Communion it is clear that the context in which the engagement takes place generates further diversity in the approach to and application of Scripture.*

The Regional Reflections all offer insights from observations of an engagement that had as its starting point the same issue and core Scripture passages. Yet each set of reflections have strong contextual elements that mark them out as different from one another. Even where the main facilitation is being offered from someone outside the context of the participants - notably in Southern Sudan - the reflections that emerge are deeply rooted in the place of engagement.

*4. Across the Communion there is also evidence of 'gaps' between what might be called the 'received wisdom' of the Church in relation to our engagement with and interpretation of Scripture and what actually happens in practice.*

The Regional Reflections and more particularly the [Regional Reports](#) from which they are drawn show that the way Anglicans **actually** engage with and interpret the Bible might not always be the way we say we **should** or **aspire** to do so. Following the first Case Study, the Steering Group identified a number of these possible 'gaps' as captured in the November 2010 meeting notes. Further work was done on this subsequently, and some of the resources identified are listed below this section of the Report.

Three particular groups of 'gaps' were identified by the Steering Group:

- ~ Between the 'academy' and the 'pew', between the 'scholar' and the 'ordinary Christian'<sup>7</sup>. How do we draw on the insights of the academy or scholar in a way that those in the pew both understand and are enriched in their Christian living? (*Clergy who have academic training often find it very difficult to bridge this gap, and find themselves stuck uneasily in the middle.*)
- ~ Between seeking meaning from individual verses or passages of Scripture and how these speak to and are spoken to by other parts of Scripture. In a similar vein the 'gap' between the use we make of more 'popular' or accessible parts of Scripture (*e.g. the Gospels*) and those parts that are forgotten or ignored (*e.g. parts of the prophets or Revelation*).
- ~ Between the 'fruits' of our engagement – what we believe the passage is saying – and the 'process' of that engagement – the tools we might use to discern these fruits and be fed by them.

If you have ever travelled on the London Underground system in Great Britain you will have heard or read on the platform the phrase 'mind the gap'. To 'mind' something, in English, means both 'to take care' as in not falling between the train and the platform and 'to look after, to nurture' as in a 'child-minder' or 'minding the store'.

The Steering Group wishes to encourage greater discussion on what these 'gaps' might be saying to us. These 'gaps' need minding in both senses above; the resources listed below seek to help us do this in one way or another.



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**

- [Other papers:](#) November 2010
- [Articles:](#) Mind the Gap 1
- [Articles:](#) Mind the Gap 2

Also see: [h+ Course](#) in Section 4a

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<sup>7</sup> The term "ordinary Christian" is used in this Report to describe those who lay no claim to any formal theological education or training.





## Section 2: The Regional Reflections



## Section 2:

### The Regional Reflections

Each Regional Group coordinator offers a reflection from the work in their region. The approach of these groups differ in a number of ways, as summed up in the 'background' section at the beginning of each Reflection. What they seek to offer is a number of windows into what the Bible means, how it is used, and what it offers the life of the Church in these areas.

-  **The Bible: a Foundation for Community Transformation**  
*Reflections of the South Africa Regional Group*
-  **Pamoja Reading – in Community and in Context**  
*Reflections of the East Africa Regional Group*
-  **Gathering together to read the Bible matters!**  
*Reflections of the United Kingdom Regional Group*
-  **Transformed by the Bible - but by many routes**  
*Reflections of the North America Regional Group*
-  **Scripture in a Changing Society**  
*Reflections of the Australia Region*
-  **Moving towards a Genuinely Intercontinental Mode of Reading Scripture**  
*Reflections of the work in South Sudan*
-  **The Bible: Alive in Context and History**  
*Reflections of the work in Cuba*
-  **The Bible: Learning from Beyond Ourselves**  
*Reflections of the work in Hong Kong and the Philippines*

**Post Script** - Feedback from the 2012 Lent Course *“And it was good.....”*





## The Bible: A Foundation For Community Transformation

*Reflections of the South Africa Regional Group*

*(Background: The South Africa Regional Group sought to ensure their work engaged with the structures of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa and drew up tools to help make their observations more objective. From their work the project can offer not only these reflections but the tools they devised that could be helpfully used in other parts of the Communion.)*

The South Africa Regional Steering Committee of the BILC Project was deliberately constituted to be as representative as we could be of the diversity of our region in terms of gender, culture and churchpersonship. We made the decision from the beginning to engage the church structures of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) formally and obtain a range of information from across the spectrum.

Our fieldwork involved workshops with official representatives from the dioceses sent by their bishops. We recorded the process of producing an agreed set of “**instruments**” to measure the people who constituted Bible study groups, how they set about the process of reading the Bible in practice, and wrote a set of Bible studies which could be used to facilitate group readings. Although a number of the participants among the bishops and clergy had reservations at the beginning of the process, holding to an agreed process in which no step would be taken without agreement and no report made without checking with the participants first not only enabled us to overcome our initial suspicions but also to become a ‘community of readers’ of the Bible during the period that the project lasted.

This reflection is based on agreed processes and a common excitement in what we discovered in our common reading of the scriptures: 22 facilitators and 337 ordinary people from across 14 dioceses. Because those who participated in the different phases of the BILC project discovered that we held a love for reading the Bible in common, we were able to move beyond stereotypes we might have had of each other and listen together to the scriptures, exploring how we could read the text together without judging in advance what we would hear.

Our exploration revealed that people read the Bible in a variety of contexts and in a variety of English versions and vernacular languages, not all of which formed part of the specific form of Bible Studies for which we have statistics. Some groups do not normally meet in the ‘Bible Study Group’ format, but use the Bible in revival services, funeral vigils, women’s groups and youth groups without reservation or any sense of distance from the text.

However, for those who shared in this process we found for the overwhelming majority:

- that Bible reading took place in the context of worship and prayer, mostly non-liturgical
- that sharing of experiences, personal needs, crises and joys were a central part of the Bible reading process, whether before, after or integrated with the study
- that Bible study groups of the kind studied tended to have a long life span, varying from newly organized ones (*some for the purpose of the study*) to those which had been meeting for as long as 35 years
- that people expected to find meaning for today in the text and mostly moved fairly directly to questions arising from their context, personal or communal. As one of the Steering Committee observed: *"... the hermeneutical gap between the text and the reader is not experienced as a gaping chasm which can only be bridged by the methods of the academy. Rather, Scripture is intimately connected with past and present experiences, and through the sharing of the same is constantly brought into connection with the lived reality of those who have gathered together to study it"*
- that, unless there was a 'strict policing' of the Bible study by a facilitator with a particular agenda, there was a wide degree of acceptance of, or at least tolerance of, diversity of opinion in the Bible study groups in ACSA. Only 3 out of 26 Bible studies recorded showed a rejection of or intolerance of diversity. Disagreement was more likely to be expressed by shared glances and/or a respectful silence, which kept the divergent thinker feeling secure in the "safe space" of the group, than by confrontation
- that a non-directive and affirming role of the facilitator in leading the Bible study process is very significant in determining whether a study opens up new perspectives, whether people get excited by reading the Bible, and whether the reading is potentially transformative. Some groups tried to move from Bible study to action directly (*over the environment*) but for most it was more like a "transformation of consciousness" which might or might not lead to action in the longer term
- that there is a real desire for new methods and training for contextual and communal reading of the scriptures in ACSA, and a willingness to put aside differences of traditional church personship in working towards this, provided it does not come with a 'ready made agenda'.

Jonathan Draper



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**

[Case Studies:](#) South Africa

[Tools:](#) South Africa tools



## Pamoja Reading – In Community And In Context

*Reflections of the East Africa Regional Group*

*(Background: The members of the East African Regional Group hail from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. They came together twice over the period of the project to explore what the Bible had to say in relation to the Fifth and then Fourth Marks of Mission).*

What emerged was the impact that reading the Bible together in community and within our own contexts can have.

*Following the first study the group concluded that:*


“The Bible in the Life of the Church Project is earth-shaking. It has the potential to revitalize the way in which the Worldwide Anglican Church reads the Bible in engaging all its five marks of mission. In particular, the East African Regional Group engagement with the fifth mark of mission in the concluded contextual bible study proved beneficial to the understanding of the relationship that is needed between the Creator and the creation as well as between all the creatures. It was a wakeup call that raised several questions especially on the extent to which Christians have used the Bible to safeguard the creation and to renew the life of the earth and the extent to which theological institutions have integrated environmental and ecological issues in their curricula.”

The methodology used by the group was that of Contextual Bible Study [CBS] which is described in this way:

“CBS is an interactive study of biblical texts that brings the context of the reader and the context of the Bible into dialogue, for the sake of transformation. The participants were introduced to the 4Cs of CBS. These were enumerated as outlined below.

**1. Context:** This refers to the real life situation of the readers and their real life experiences. This becomes very prominent in choosing themes of the Bible study. For instance if the theme chosen is HIV and AIDs, the lead question is “*what does the Bible say on the same?*”

**2. Community:** The emphasis here is that the Bible is read in community rather than individually. This process requires that the voices of all are listened to and engaged with critically. This makes CBS a process of engagement rather than ‘teaching’. It is a process of sharing knowledge and resources from the side of the facilitator and the participants



**3. Criticality:** This is the ability to use tools of biblical studies to understand the text, despite the sacred nature of the Bible. This is because human beings wrote the Bible, translated it and interpreted it in times and contexts different from our own. The emphasis here is not just knowing the answers, but also asking the ‘right’ questions.

**4. Change:** The inevitable question that the above 3 Cs begs is, “so what?” This is a relevant question because CBS always has transformation as its end-goal. In other words, CBS challenges people to a point of wanting to make a difference in their churches and communities. A plan of action therefore is the culmination of CBS.

The influence on the way we read the Bible when we ensure that context is taken seriously led the group to recognise that *“insights from the East African primal religion and worldview were very instrumental in the task of understanding and interpreting the texts.”* The point that came out very strongly was that in primal societies, creation was approached and treated with awe and reverence, devoid of exploitation. Before cutting a tree, the spirits of a tree had to be appeased lest they could get angry and revenge. The same applied to hunting and fishing expeditions. The implication is that if one cuts a tree then there is need to plant more. If human beings eat animals, birds or fish, they must not put their existence to jeopardy since the future generation equally needs them.

This idea is widely held in other primal societies outside East Africa. Immediately after the first CBS workshop, the coordinator attended an international research seminar on Christian scholarship whose theme was *“primal religion as the substructure of Christianity”* in Samoa. In one of the outings to the great Island of Savai, we were informed that the Samoa people do not eat pigeons messily. According to a Samoan delegate, Samoans eat pigeons only between October and January, despite the pigeon being a delicacy. The reason for this is that they should not have the pigeons de-populated so that the future generation may not be at loss. This is a valuable tool from primal religion that could beneficially help the pursuit to safeguard the creation and to revive and sustain the life of the earth.

Having read the texts, the participants noted a longing to return to the primal days. This was especially enthused by Romans 8: 18-23 where setting the creation free from bondage was interpreted as returning creation to the former glory it enjoyed in Genesis 1 where the beauty of creation is eulogized. The general consensus was that there were ample tools in the primal religion and worldview that can give a better understanding of biblical texts, especially with regard to the relationship between the Creator and the creation and between different creations. This means therefore that insights from the primal worldview and religion may help us to focus on the work we are undertaking. As a result, it is critical that we begin to dialogue with primal religion and worldview, which has untapped resources that are radically helpful in engaging the Fifth Mark of Mission.

**At the end of the second workshop the group reflected on the way East African Anglicans handle the Bible bringing out the following points:**

- The participants appreciated the way they had done the work; the way the questions guided them in examining and looking at the texts and appreciated the need to introduce the CBS approach to their individual contexts.
- They also noted that the way the Bible in their individual local settings is contrary to how it was used in the CBS Workshop where they read and gained deeper meanings of the scriptures. They appreciated the ways in which they had spoken to the text rather than just having the Bible speak to them, reading and re-reading the text to see if the questions they were asking were the concerns the text was addressing.
- They also noted that critical questions helped them to give a close, careful, examination of the text, saying that they were able to challenge the text and also the text challenged them.
- They appreciated the fact that when everyone is an interpreter and when full participation occurs, they were able to hear the meanings being made by another.

- Those who always preach were challenged with regard to the view that that the interpretation of scripture is the way one sees it because from interactions of the CBS scripture means different things to different people. They recognized that the lens through which they read the Bible is their experience but the group participation made them hear the scriptures through the lens and experiences of others.
- They appreciated the nature and function of questions in the CBS since some moved them to more deeply explore the text while other questions led them to analyse the text or the personal and social contexts from which our voices come. Critical questions do have particular functions in the creation of meanings.

Kabiro wa Gatumu



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports:](#) East Africa  
[Articles:](#) Contextual Bible Study



## Gathering Together To Read The Bible Matters!

*Reflections of the United Kingdom Regional Group*

*(Background: The UK Regional Group has 'met' in a variety of ways – face to face, by E mail and other electronic forms. It observed different groups as they engaged with Scripture through the Case Studies that explored the Fifth and Fourth Marks of Mission. This Reflection comes from those observations.)*

There's something about reading the Bible together. That seems to be the experience of those UK Anglicans who gathered to engage with the Scriptural text – to attend to it, and to allow it to attend to them. As part of the BILC project, a number of groups (*some pre-existing, some formed specially for the process*) gathered to read the Scriptures together, to engage with them and to share their experiences in so doing. The experience was appreciated by almost everyone involved, with the groups generating a real excitement as they interacted with the suggested passages and pondered the given questions accordingly.

Participants were surprised by what they encountered; passages such as the Song of the Three Young Men or Numbers 27 - texts that their tradition or experience had never previously taken them to - were laid before them, to challenge and excite them. They found the Bible to be a source for mission, for evangelism, for pastoral work and for worship. But most significantly, they found that engaging with the Bible informed day-to-day living – it enabled connections to be made to their context and their life. Thus whether it was testing responses to matters of economic justice in the light of the Occupy London sit-ins or raising questions of responding to environmental matters in the knowledge that creation is **'good'**, readers found energizing and challenging connections to be made. Thus the consensus is that Anglicans want to read the Bible – and want to do so together. Gathering together to read the Bible matters – whether in small groups, whether in Sunday worship, whether rehearsed in song, or outworked in daily life.

Two particular incidences are perhaps worthy of further reflection to give a flavour of the findings. One group surmised that the Bible studies on the Fifth Mark of Mission had made them *"realise how little they knew about the Bible and about the world. They were surprised how much creation comes up in the Bible."*

The fact that this group expressed their lack of knowledge about the Bible is perhaps not unsurprising, and reflects, one might say, an on-going process that all of us wish to know the Scriptures more, and that we are on the journey together. But the reference to knowing more about the world is arguably more intriguing. The suggestion – and it comes from other sources too – is that Anglican readers were excited by the way the Bible opens up understanding of the world, the world around them which they inhabit. The group affirmed that they *"did not want an academic approach or any theological answers to their questions but they did want to read the Bible together ... and link it to their daily lives and experiences."*

In another instance, a mixed-gender group were enthused by the encouragement to consider the two contrasting female figures of Acts 16:11-24 – Lydia, the (*named*), free successful businesswoman and the unnamed slave girl exploited as a fortune-teller. Being encouraged to read the two (*successive*) narratives in tandem, but with particular attention to the female figures, opened the groups thinking as to how they engaged with the portrait. Lydia became the church-planter, an encouraging figure who modelled engagement with the business world alongside hosting a church in her household. The slave-girl became an encouragement to turn their attention to those presently exploited within society – and what happened to her (*and to those today*) when they are no longer useful/valuable as a moneymaking resource? Who was the slave-girl in their context? Whilst some may dissent from the interpretation the group offered of the text, and the shape that their conversation took, the interesting point remains – the text is a source for action, a source for discovery and excitement, enabling them to make connections for discipleship and mission. Hence it would be good to encourage people to gather more with those who might read differently from themselves; as one participant ventured: “engaging with ‘like-minded’ people means that we are not taken beyond our comfort zone into a place where we can experience new understandings.”

The project has shown that reading the Bible is not an easy task. Making connections to our own context can be relatively straightforward – we know our context and the issues that encompass it. But the world behind the text – the context of the text, so to speak – can remain a source of anxiety, with participants commonly hesitant as regards the text’s original worldview and location. Bridging the respective worlds of the text and contemporary life is thus problematic; readers either just jumped the gap (*and ‘fell’*), or recognized the gap but didn’t see the value in seeking to traverse it. As with other parts of the Communion, the ‘gaps’ involved in reading the Bible remain present and need to be ‘minded’ ...

David Allen



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports: United Kingdom](#)





## Transformed by the Bible - but by many routes

*Reflections of the North America Regional Group*

*(Background: The North America Group met twice residentially over the three years of the project. In addition to these meetings, the Regional Group members led and observed their respective local groups as they engaged with Scripture through the Case Studies that explored the Fifth and then Fourth Mark of Mission. At its second meeting, at the conclusion of the project, the Regional Group shared some final observations that are captured in this reflection.)*

North America is a vast continent with many climates, time zones, geographies, races, ethnic groups, languages, cultures, communities, and religions—including multiple Christian traditions. It is also the home of two different Provinces of the Anglican Communion: the Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church. The lives of these two provinces naturally reflect the diversity of their continent. We thus sought to capture and express at least some of this diversity in our engagement with this project. Our representatives included members of both provinces: Canadian and American, men and women, ordained and lay, academics and those more directly engaged in pastoral work (*parish ministry, university chaplaincy, and episcopal oversight*), working within various ethnic, racial, and social settings. We likewise represented the theological spectrum of North American Anglicanism, with some more conservative and others more liberal, some more Anglo-Catholic and others more evangelical.

Unsurprisingly, the members of this Regional Group also represented very different approaches to understanding and interpreting the Bible: we had practitioners of historical-critical, canonical, contextual, feminist, and liberationist interpretation, and perhaps other methods as well. However, despite these considerable differences, we could all testify to the transformative power of engagement with the Biblical text. We confess that we have experienced God speaking to us through this text. The text interrogates us. As a meaning-making artefact, the Bible is experientially deeper and more powerful than other alternatives.

The conversations ranged across North America and reflected its great diversity. For African-American and Afro-Caribbean women of a small, struggling parish in a poor and crime-ridden urban neighbourhood, the biblical narratives were seen with immediacy and prophetic accuracy as speaking directly to the reality of their lives. But in a major university chaplaincy, the students expressed fear that the scriptural texts would only confirm fundamentalist beliefs and thus undermine their deepest convictions. In a large seminary in California, Episcopal students met with Anglicans who had left the Episcopal Church, and yet found that their ecclesial location did not make much difference when it came to interpreting the Biblical texts on the Fourth and Fifth Marks of Mission. In a traditional middle-class

parish in the west of Canada, this project initiated its first-ever Bible study, whereas in another Canadian congregation the project simply took place during their regular weekly Bible study group. For some North American Anglicans, *'The Bible in the Life of the Church'* is just what happens in Sunday-morning liturgy (*hearing the lectionary texts read aloud and then a sermon possibly on them*), while for others the Bible is studied intentionally and intensively with various methods.

However, a bishop who works with indigenous / First Nations people suggested that Western education is itself a detriment to people's capacity to see sacred truth and feel divine presence in Scripture, as *"we have been educated out of believing that God is present and speaks to God's people."* He argued that the same thing that keeps contemporary North American and European people from seeing what's in the world (*i.e. the ecological crisis*) also keeps them from seeing what's in the Bible: the same cultural captivity and alienation blinds them to both of these realities. We thus need *"not a method but an attitude."* On the other hand, in direct response, a historical-critical biblical scholar argued that in order to understand a text like the one from 2 Peter 3<sup>8</sup> we needed more than just our personal experience or cultural tradition. We now understand the universe differently than the author of that text, and must thus recognize that *"contemporary cosmology has led to a new context for Christian eschatology."*

*In summary, these are some issues in biblical interpretation canvassed by the North American Regional Group:*<sup>9</sup>

- The contrast between academic and non-academic approaches to Scripture
- The possibility that the Bible is read properly in community, particularly in a liturgical setting
- The contested place of **'culture'**, both as a singular concept and its relation to Scripture: *i.e.* **'Scripture'** is also **'culture'**
- The contested place of received interpretations of biblical texts in Christian tradition.
- The implications of multiple levels of meaning in the biblical text, rather than simply one
- The need to read Scripture to challenge our perspectives, not just to affirm them
- The claim that we should not reduce the Bible to merely human words: the question, *'How are we addressed by God in Scripture?'* remains essential
- The reality of a functional canon within the canon (*whether we like it or not*)
- The claim that, properly understood, the Bible proclaims a liberating word to the poor and oppressed, and that God's liberating work is necessary and continuous in the reading of Scripture itself.

We concluded by asking ourselves: *'If you had the ear of the whole Anglican Communion, what would you want to say about the **"Bible in the life of the Church"**?'*

*The following responses were offered:*

One member said, *"If we have Scripture—that is, a sacred text—then interpretation is inevitable: we are in a fundamentally and inescapably hermeneutical situation as Christians."*

Another said, *"Scripture is God's Word and has transforming power in people's lives. We need to keep encouraging Anglicans to read and study the Bible."*

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<sup>8</sup>. 2 Peter 3:1-13, one of the passages used in Case Study 1 – see Bible Study outlines section in [ADDITIONAL MATERIAL](#)  
<sup>9</sup>. These issues are dealt with more fully in the North American Regional Reports

Another said, *"I am a feminist progressive hyper-educated woman in Holy Orders with post-modern leanings, and I cherish Scripture as the living and fully authoritative Word of God that leads me daily to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Please believe that both are true. And now please tell me who you are."*

Another said, quite simply and sincerely, speaking on behalf of all North American Anglicans: *"We love Jesus, and we seek to hear his voice in the Scriptures."*

Robert MacSwain



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports:](#) North America  
[Articles:](#) Biblical Interpretation



## Scripture in a Changing Society

*Reflections of the work in the Australia Region*

*(Background: The Australia group was based in Melbourne, since that city includes two theological colleges with Anglican links, Ridley and Trinity. The 'tyranny of distance' which shapes Australian life limited physical contact with other areas. The group met twice, and supported the Coordinator in researching Anglican media, gauging congregational use of the Bible through theological students' experience of field education, a weekend conference for science practitioners and hearing from bishops and diocesan educators. The BILC study book 'And it was Good' was used in several dioceses in Lent 2012, but time has prevented analysis of its impact on participants' awareness of how they use the Bible. This Reflection draws on the insights derived from the above inputs.)*

Major shifts have come about in Australian society since the mid-20th century: the Depression, successive wars – from WW1 to Afghanistan – the emergence of **'teenage'** sub-cultures, ongoing large-scale immigration, the revival of indigenous communities, colour TV, the internet, smart phones etc. The Catholic-Protestant sectarianism which scarred the nation until the 1960s has faded, partly as church and society have shifted steadily apart over the past half-century. Widespread biblical illiteracy, and a growing gap between **'thoughtful'** theology and 'popular-faith' Christianity, has been the outcome of these changes.

Australian Anglicans generally hear the scriptures in much the same way as other Anglicans, through the Sunday lectionary. But given the background traced above, much of this is heard as individual pieces rather than within an overall 'architecture' of the Bible story as a whole. The extent to which the public reading of the scriptures engages people's living as Christians is hard to assess, but interest levels appear to be high, and the standard of reading aloud is generally good. Since 1977 Sunday readings have been based on Vatican II's **'Three-Year'** system, and since 1995 on the Revised Common Lectionary. Educational materials which support these readings range from local authors' commentaries – especially on the Gospels – to special Lent and Advent studies produced by mission agencies. During Lent, in most parishes group Bible studies are offered, though this typically involves less than half the regular worshippers.

The exception to these patterns is most congregations in the Dioceses of Armidale and Sydney, and some elsewhere whose leaders identify the parish concerned as **'evangelical'**. Usual practice in these is **'Bible teaching'** from sequential reading of a biblical book. Done well, it has the clear benefit of congregations becoming more informed as to the content and application of these parts of the scriptures. Weaknesses include an overly didactic ethos, over-emphasis on the epistles, and setting aside the rhythm of the Christian year.

At the personal level, it must be acknowledged that many regular worshippers do not encounter the scriptures apart from hearing them in Sunday worship. Many Australian Anglican clergy and some lay people use the Daily Lectionary: this covers the New Testament each year in full, and the Old Testament and Apocrypha in large part over two years; the Psalter is read on a two-month cycle. Many Anglicans – especially laypeople of evangelical conviction – use daily reading notes such as from Scripture Union, Every Day with Jesus and the like. Family Bible reading, where experienced, is seen as helpful: but this tradition was largely left behind a generation back.

Australian Anglicans do not appear to be all that different from other parts of the English-speaking Communion in relation to their use of the Bible. Those who have experienced formal theological education – which today includes significant numbers of lay people – are more nuanced in their use of the scriptures than others, and well aware of the issues surrounding their interpretation. Those Anglicans who identify with the evangelical tradition – most notably with the Sydney diocese – are distinctive in giving **'Bible teaching'** the highest priority in both their ecclesial and personal practice.

Gender issues have led to a succession of high-level studies on how the Bible is to be used, which have found their way into parish life. In the 70s and 80s they focused on the ordination of women, discussions which in large part led to Sydney's distinctive position on how the Bible 'works'. More recently, gender discussion has turned to consider gay relationships.<sup>10</sup>

To what extent these reasonably accessible academic works reflect grass-roots Australian Anglican opinion and biblical usage it is hard to say. If Letters to the Editor and articles in the diocesan magazines are taken as evidence, then although the Anglican Church of Australia is a long way from resolution of the formal issues of same-sex blessing and ordination, while some dioceses are strongly **'conservative'** on the issues, significant numbers of congregations would appear to be 'gay-friendly' without becoming ideological.

Charles Sherlock



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports:](#) Australia  
[Worship:](#) Lectionary story 1 and 2

Also see: [Bible Challenge](#) in Section 4d

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<sup>10</sup>. Full details of four such studies can be found in the Regional Report for Australia.



## Moving Towards A Genuinely Intercontinental Mode Of Reading Scripture

*Reflections of the work in South Sudan*

*(Background: Ellen Davis was invited as a theological consultant to join the Steering Group. During the period of the BILC project Ellen, with others, visited South Sudan to facilitate workshops for leaders within the Episcopal Church of Sudan. She decided to use the focus and concerns of the project to determine the nature of these workshops and the following reflection comes out of her longer reports of this work. Unlike the other reflections this is the only one where an 'outsider' i.e. someone not resident in that region, contributes to the reflections.)*

Dr Ellen Davis and others participated in five intensive sessions of Bible study and discussion held at three different locations in South Sudan between May 2010 and July 2011. Ellen herself summed up the experience by reporting that, “when I lead workshops such as these, I often conclude by articulating my hope that our work is a step toward creating a genuinely intercontinental mode of reading Scripture, among Anglicans and more widely among Christians.”

The team Ellen was part of facilitated the exploration of, among other topics, the BILC project’s Case Studies of ‘Bible and the Environment’ (2010) and “[Transforming Unjust Social \[Economic and Gender\] Structures](#)” (2011). These topics had special pertinence in this time and place of acute social change, just as the newest nation in the world, the Republic of South Sudan, is emerging. Its significance is epitomized in the observation of the Rt Revd Hilary Garang Atem Awer, Bishop of Malakal, who commented: “Our society was destroyed through nearly fifty years of war; our traditional cultures are mostly lost. If we do not have Scripture as a moral guide, then we have no alternative to everyone doing the thing that seems to them good right now.” Compare the summary remark of the Deuteronomistic Historian: “And there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (*Judges 17:6. 21:25*).

The way these sessions were conducted is outlined fully in the report that is signposted at the end of this Reflection. The results were of “[fresh readings](#)” and “[surprising outcomes](#)”.

Each discussion focused on two or three kinds of inquiry: often tracing in detail the historical background, story line, and/or theological reasoning in the biblical text; sometimes practicing prayerful reading of the text (*the practice of lectio divina was introduced and used on several occasions*); and always asking how a given text might speak to and for the Sudanese church at this time.

Somewhat surprising to both the Sudanis and the Westerners was the extent to which these several ways of approaching the text yielded something that the Sudanese readers judged to be completely new, namely a slow probing reading that reveals multiple kinds of meaning.

One theological student in Renk pointed to the difference between receiving information about the Bible that is poured out by a lecturer “like water into empty cups” and “ruminating” on particular texts (*an image readily embraced by interpreters well versed in the ways of cattle!*).

Although all participants had previously considered the Bible to be the point of orientation for their faith, the Sudanis repeatedly exclaimed at their discoveries of precise points of connection between their experience and the experience of the biblical audience.

They appreciated an integrative mode of reading that drew together spiritual, economic, and social dimensions of meaning, so they could see for the first time that a social and economic statement such as Deuteronomy 15, Ezekiel 27 or the book of Revelation is at the same time a theological statement. Although they felt that they were just starting to learn how to read in this way, it became evident that the Sudanese readers have an interpretive advantage over Westerners, once they are encouraged to draw such connections, since their traditional social and economic structures resemble at many points those reflected in the biblical text.

From these workshops all those involved distilled from many statements, both explicit and implicit, eight interpretive practices and principles. All of these inter-related principles were repeatedly articulated by members of the workshops and checked for accuracy and agreement by the discussion leaders. In brief these are:

- ~ The quality of Christian life, both individual and corporate, is a major factor in reading the Bible well.
- ~ The danger of “**bad theology**” is real – and bad theology should be named as such!
- ~ The Bible is trustworthy and is given for guidance and encouragement, although it may condemn us.
- ~ The Bible should be read as a whole, with one part commenting on other parts.
- ~ The Bible is to be related to the contemporary contexts in which it is read.
- ~ Studying the biblical texts in Hebrew and Greek is very important and much desired. While that opportunity is not yet widely available in South Sudan, the Sudanis, as speakers of multiple languages, are sensitive to the connotations and semantic ranges of particular words, and the implication of words even in translation.
- ~ We read the Bible in personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and we seek him through Scripture, in both Testaments.
- ~ Some element of inspiration is at work in the interpretation of Scripture, which is not wholly different from the inspiration of the biblical writers themselves.

So what might a genuinely intercontinental mode of reading Scripture look like? The experience of these workshops in South Sudan suggests the following elements of an answer:

1. An approach grounded in prayer and seeking to foster friendship.
2. Study groups and leadership teams that include both men and women, although at times it may be beneficial for women in particular to have some meetings by themselves.
3. Where possible, including participants and/or leaders from more than one denomination.
4. Opening up the texts chiefly by asking questions, supplemented by brief explanatory remarks.
5. Keeping all discussion close to the biblical text, and explaining how interpreters can responsibly draw inferences from it, or perceive fruitful ambiguities.
6. Using application as a test of validity for our interpretations: Does the text guide and challenge the church toward faithful action that builds up the body in this place and time?

Ellen Davis



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports:](#) South Sudan  
[Case Studies:](#) South Sudan

Compare with [Anglican Communion documents:](#) Themes and Principles







## The Bible: Alive in Context and History

*Reflections of the work in Cuba*

*(Background: another member of the Steering Group, Clara Luz Ajo Lazaro, incorporated into her work in Cuba aspects of the BILC project Case Studies. This Reflection comes from the conclusions of her report to the Steering Group.)*

Through the study of the texts in each of the two Case Studies and the whole process of contact with the Bible we can summarise what we consider important in view of our interest in analysing how we Anglicans in Cuba read and use the Bible.

Studying the Bible as Anglicans from the Latin American perspective, and specifically the Cuban context, we have felt that all this time of study has constituted a dynamic process through which the Bible is converted into the Word of God for each of us as we discover its relevance in our lives and in the midst of the social, cultural and political problems that surround us in our particular context.

The Bible for Cuban Anglicans is a book that is laden with memories. They are memories which reflect the faith of a people, their journey in dialogue and relationship with God, their interpretation of the events of their life and history in the light of faith, and through their spirituality. Those memories of liberation, organisation, resistance and survival in the face of different situations and forms of domination, speak to us today in our own life situation, our problems and conflicts, our joys and sorrows, our struggles to transform our world into a world of love, brotherhood and sisterhood.

In the unfolding of this whole process of reading the Bible as Cuban Anglicans, our communities have carried out a contextual, ecumenical, corporate reading of the Bible, in keeping with the Anglican ethos, and springing from the current ecclesial and social Cuban perspective. It is precisely on the basis of the experiences, commitments and needs of the persons who participate in the dynamic interpretive process of the selected texts that we feel that the Bible becomes the Word of God for our TODAY, lighting our path and guiding us to develop visions of hope, liberty, justice, equity and love towards all human beings, our world, our Universe.

We try to establish the relationship between Bible and Life, or better yet, the Bible at the service of all that produces Life. And since the issue is not simply interpreting the Bible but rather interpreting Life with the help of the Bible, the biblical strength and vitality spring from the corporate reflection of the groups that carried out this exercise with the texts. These people, who belong to the

communities of the Episcopal Church throughout the whole Cuban territory, are committed to the affirmation of Life for which the Bible constitutes an important source of wisdom. During this process, thanks to that union between Bible and Life, the community rediscovered and affirmed itself in the certainty that, in the same way that God was with the people of the past, God is with us today in our present struggles for a more just and better world.

The texts related to the unjust gender structures challenge us to find paths of equity in the relationships between men and women; paths of equity in our social, cultural and ecclesial structures. Characters such as Tamar, Lydia, the Syrophenician woman and the slave prophetess challenge us. They all have a story which is repeated today in our communities, in many of our contexts. The Bible shows us paths to equity and justice through unconventional characters, irregular persons, women who show daring attitudes of defiance, who invite us to look at the margins of the official history, asking ourselves about the social gender relations, the circulation of power between men and women.

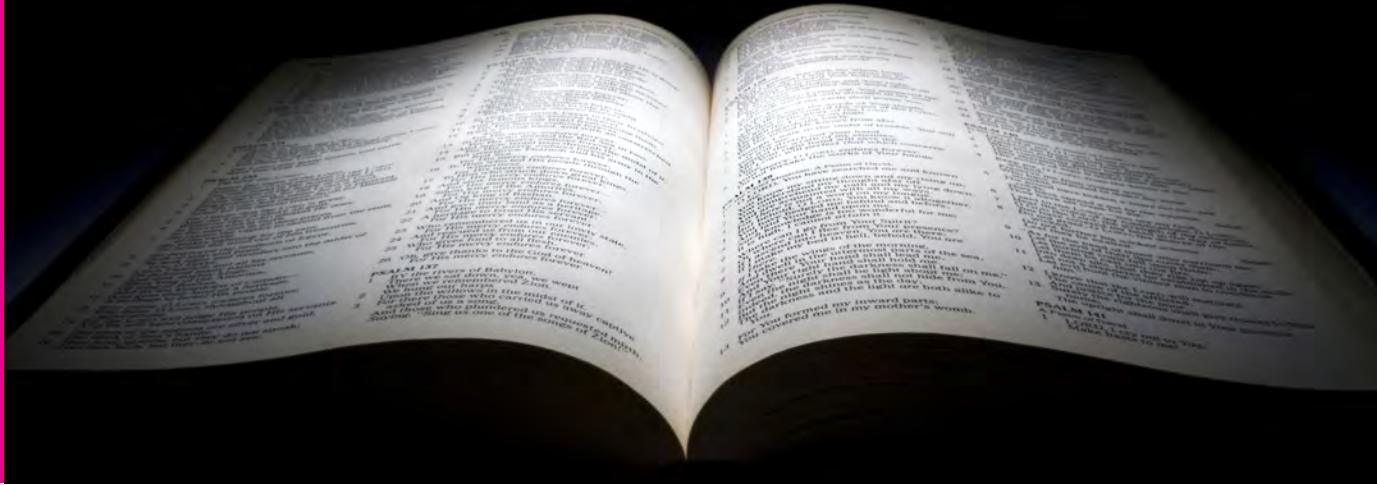
The texts related to unjust economic structures challenge us to find, in the way of Jesus Christ, the equilibrium between loving our neighbor and loving ourselves. They challenge us to share food with the hungry, shelter the poor homeless vagabond, clothe the naked, and not turn our backs on our brother or sister. They challenge us to celebrate life around the table, a table with a place for everyone.

As Anglicans, we believe that our God is a God who embraces everything, so “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female” (*Galatians 3:28*). The Spirit of Wisdom, who inhabited Jesus Christ, also inhabits our Universe, and the Spirit is Life, so the expression of spirituality is the dignity and defence of all life. Today this spirituality discovers the ecological dimensions of our responsibility with respect to peace, justice and the integrity of all created things.

Clara Luz Ajo Lazaro



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports: Cuba](#)



## The Bible: Learning from Beyond Ourselves

*Reflections of the work in Hong Kong and the Philippines*

*(Background: the BILC project did not have the financial resources to have Regional Groups in all areas of the Communion. South East Asia was one of the 'missing' areas so we decided to hold workshops in Hong Kong and the Philippines for clergy and lay leaders who would then facilitate groups themselves and report back on what they observed. This reflection comes out of that process. In the 'ADDITIONAL MATERIAL' section you can find the full reports and an outline of the original workshops as an example of how we might more deeply engage with Scripture in other contexts.)*

It was clear from the reports from parishes in Hong Kong that the Scriptures play a central part in the lives of participants. Also, that participants were enormously excited by the new vistas on what the Scriptures have to say about important public social issues opened by the project's methodology:

Despite the limitation of time and manpower, [the project provided] a good chance for whole province of Anglican Church in Hong Kong to have a reflection on how we .... interpret and use the Bible. It is also a valuable opportunity for the church members and the lay-leaders to grasp the ideas of the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion. Through the engagement with the whole project, we have broadened our horizons and opened our eyes with a much wider periscope. This may shift the focus of our primary concern of our faith from sole interest of oneself to the global interest of the creation and the social injustice.

However, the methodology of the project exposed challenges for the participants in their encounters with the Scriptures. Focusing initially on Hong Kong, these challenges were of three kinds: first, the challenge to a cultural tendency to listen passively to a leader expounding the Scriptures rather than to be engaged as equal participants with the leader:

The majority of lay people in the Province of Hong Kong expect the leader of the church to provide guidance for them for reading the meaning out from the Bible and for them to follow ...; throughout the project, we have discovered that the mindsets of the church members in Hong Kong Anglican Church are rather authoritative(ly) oriented.

Second, participants were challenged to explore how their contemporary worldview was supported or confronted by the Scriptures. Discussions of gender issues, based on the Fourth Mark of Mission revealed how many questions participants discovered about their own wrestling with gender issues in the workplace:

They tried to understand the passages of Galatians 3:23-29 and 1 Timothy 2:1-15 in terms of the historical and cultural understanding of the genders. Yet, there is no clear indication of the understanding of the social status of females in the 1st century Greco-Roman world. They tend to jump into the contemporary way of claiming the equality of male and female from the point of view of recent theological understanding of the biblical passages. At the same time, they try to compare the passages of 1 Timothy with that of Genesis 3 so that they may conclude that in the Bible even in the period of the Old Testament, male and female are created to be equal. To a certain extent, in our knowledge of some recent academic methods of biblical interpretation, this jump is a bit too big and there should be a huge gap to be filled up. Moreover, as most the members are in their 30s, they are working people and they tend to apply the equality of the genders into working places. It seems that they are still facing some kind of injustice derived from the unjust gender structure within our modern society of Hong Kong.

Third, participants were challenged by the Bible studies offered by the project to ask questions of their cultural tendency to listen respectfully to different opinions: on the one hand, they saw that this tendency fitted well with the project's intention of enabling readers of Scripture to explore different understandings of Scripture; but on the other hand, they realized that real engagement was often limited or even prevented by the prevailing cultural politeness:

The reports show that over 95% participants are willing to listen to the other with different opinions. Dialogue and discussion are shown and some groups can come up with a common conclusion. Generally the participants respect each other and are so polite that they do not criticize those with different opinions.

This theme of “[learning from beyond ourselves](#)” lay behind the fact that the Philippine participants took their involvement in the project very seriously. Their report explains their awareness of the Scriptures as a ‘sacred text’, used by God to address their lives through “encouragement, challenge, and reprimand”. It goes on to express the excitement of encountering the Scriptures together when they reported their own willingness “[to be surprised, given new insights and discover new passages](#)”. The report also noted the impact of the project in arousing a new interest in the Scriptures: “[some have indicated they want to study the Bible more, and spend more time on the Bible as they learn the valuable lessons that they can use in their lives](#)”. Action plans were reported to put this desire into effect and a final note of appreciation expressed: “[The Bible in the Life of the Church project has been a blessing to the Episcopal Church in the Philippines. It is a seed planted in the midst of a religious people who knew the authority and importance of the Bible, and now start to see the application of the Bible's truth in their lives](#)”.



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Regional Reports: S E Asia](#)

[Case Studies: Hong Kong and Philippines workshop](#)

Post-Script to the Regional Reflections





The two case studies that became the focus of the Regional Groups led to two courses being written for Lent 2012. The first, '**And it is was good...**' was taken up in a number of places across the Communion, the other 'Economic Justice' was written by and for the Church of Ireland. Both are available as five-session Bible study outlines as part of the project and are listed in the additional material below.

What '**And it was good ...**' offered was a unique combination of three elements:

- Scripture passages, study notes, visual material and questions that explored the Fifth Mark of Mission
- Stories and examples from across the Communion of how fellow Anglicans engaged with this issue
- The opportunity to share significant parts of their explorations with others through this project.

The comments that came from these groups further illustrate the rich diversity of approaches to and engagement with Scripture that exists across the Communion.

# “ Comments about....

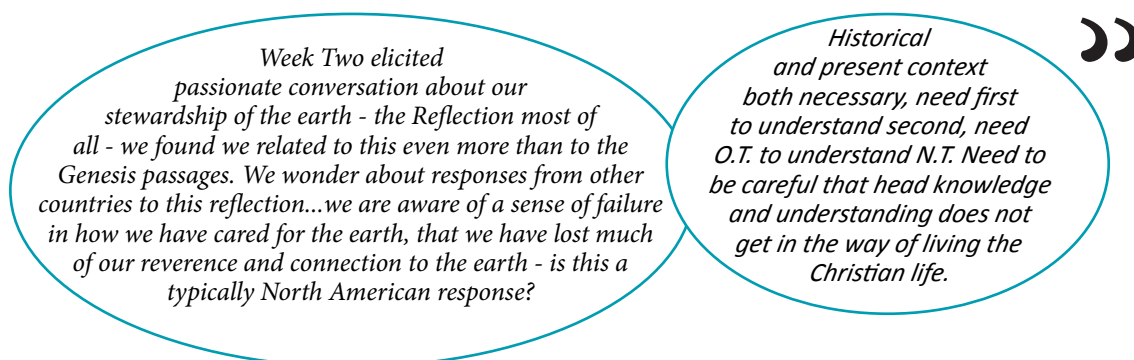
.....participating in a Communion wide course:



.....learning from and alongside fellow Anglicans



.....learning afresh as we bring Scripture to bear on contemporary issues:



*One of the passages included in the study is the Song of the Three Young Men included in many Prayer Books as the canticle the Benedictite. The questions that week suggested groups write their own song of praise for God's creation for their own context. Two groups tried and offered their efforts to the wider Communion:*

### *A New England Benedictite*

*Glorify the Lord*, all you works of the Lord, Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

*Glorify the Lord*, all you stars and seasons, Howling winds and warm breezes Ocean water and sandy beaches glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever

*Glorify the Lord*, all you places and spaces Mount Washington and Cape Cod Smuggler's Notch and Fountain Park, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever

*Glorify the Lord*, all you powers of weather Tornados and microbursts Blizzards and thunderstorms, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

*Glorify the Lord*, all you plants and trees, Maple and birch, Lady slippers and skunk cabbage, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever

*Glorify the Lord*, all you animals and birds Lobsters and turtles Mayflies and peepers, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

*Glorify the Lord*, all you springtime visions Daffodils by stone walls, Mud season and open windows, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

*Glorify the Lord*, all you teams and players Red Sox and Big Papi Celtics and Patriots, glorify the Lord Praise him and highly exalt him forever.

*Let us glorify the Lord, Father Son and Holy Spirit Praise him and highly exalt him forever.*





....*And from Richmond, Virginia, USA*

Oh, you living creatures of the river James; You majestic trees that renew our spirit with your vernal rebirth; Squirrels and bunnies that inhabit our yard and fields Give to our God your thanks and praise.

*All Creation Bless the Lord.*

The pollinating ministry of the multitudes of honeybees in the Fan; The red juiciness and pungency of Hanover tomatoes; The drama and beauty of the dogwood trees which give us flowers in the Spring, leaves in the Summer and red berries in the Fall Give to our God your thanks and praise.

*All Creation Bless the Lord.*

You glorious blossoms, Pear, Apple, Cherry, that foam on the trees; You birds who return with your joyous songs; You lengthening days with your sweet evening light Give to our God your thanks and praise.

*All Creation Bless the Lord.*

From the mountains to the seas and the rolling hills between, For fog and mist in the quiet of the dawn, Give thanks for the comfort of the four seasons. Give to our God your thanks and praise.

*All Creation Bless the Lord.*



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL**

[Bible Study Outlines:](#) And it was good

[Bible Study Outlines:](#) Economic Justice

[Other papers:](#) Full feedback from Lent 2012





## Section 3:

Other Work Undertaken by the Project

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### Other work undertaken by the Project

**Two other major pieces of work were undertaken by the project beyond the work of the Regional Groups.** The first was an analysis of all that the Anglican Communion had said in its official documents about the place of Scripture in its life; the second was to commission an empirical survey of how 'ordinary Anglicans' view the Bible. The summary reports of both these aspects of the project follow with fuller accounts and documentation either linked to this section or on the memory stick.

#### **A. What the Anglican Communion has said about the Bible**

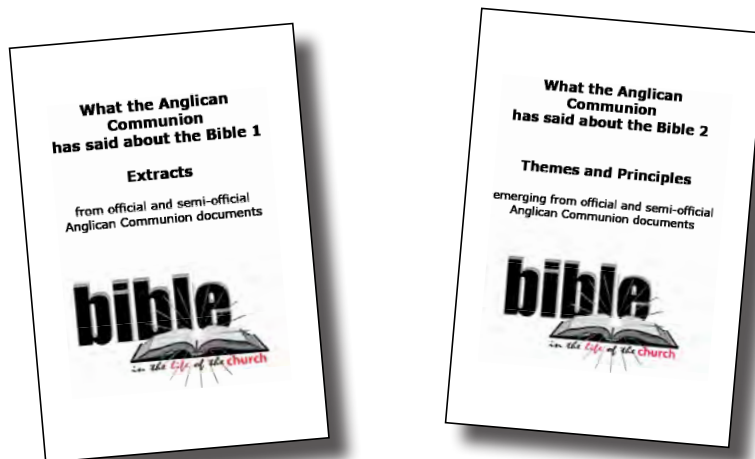
**The question,** "What does the Anglican Communion think or believe about this or that?" is not an easy one to answer. There is no 'fount of all wisdom' either in a person (not even the Archbishop of Canterbury) or a body (not even the Lambeth Conference). Perhaps the best way of answering the question is to look at what the Communion has said through its 'official documents' in the past. If you were to do this in relation to what place the Communion sees Scripture occupying in its life you will find a great deal has been said.

The BILC project has produced two documents:

- 1. What the Communion has said about the Bible 1 – extracts:**  
A series of extracts from certain foundational documents (e.g., the 39 Articles of Religion) and other 'official documents' of the Anglican Communion (e.g., Lambeth Conference resolutions, Anglican Communion reports, extracts from reports of ecumenical dialogues and other significant documents). Some are offered with a short commentary placing the extract in context, but generally without comment.
- 2. What the Communion has said about the Bible 2 – themes and principles:**  
This document seeks to achieve two things. First it asks what themes emerge when you look at the above documents as a whole. In other words, does the 'mind' of the Communion begin to emerge from a constancy of message that foundational and official documents offer? Secondly, from these themes can we distil principles that might guide us, as a Communion, as we seek to interpret the Bible? These themes and principles take us two steps beyond the documents themselves but possibly offer a way forward as Anglicans seek to guide our life, as a Communion, in the light of Scripture. This document thus marks a shift from the primarily descriptive concerns of the Regional Groups to a more prescriptive mode which is offered as a guide to our discussions.

The Steering Group identified 10 themes and in the longer document each is illustrated from several of the foundational and official documents.

1. Anglicans accord Scripture a central place in the life of the Church.
2. Anglicans value biblical scholarship while acknowledging that Scripture must also be read within the context of the Church's practice in order for us to hear its fullest meaning.
3. Anglicans experience the Word of the living God through the words of Scripture as we participate in liturgy and worship.
4. Anglicans recognise that the application of Scripture to complex issues requires serious study and prayer.
5. Anglicans recognise that there is a healthy and necessary diversity of views on the interpretation of Scripture but that such diversity exists within limits.
6. Anglicans recognise that both the original contexts in which biblical texts were written and the contemporary cultural contexts in which they are heard are important to the way we read Scripture.
7. Anglicans recognise that Scripture 'reads' us as we read the Bible.
8. Anglicans recognise that we hold a great deal in common on these issues with our ecumenical partners.
9. Anglicans recognise that the dynamic interplay between Scripture, reason and tradition constitutes a classic Anglican way of viewing and approaching Scripture.
10. Anglicans recognise that every generation has to approach anew the task of engaging with and interpreting Scripture.





So as we engage with Scripture, as Anglicans, mindful of all that the Church has learned and taught, are there principles we can follow in this process? How do we seek to listen to what Scripture says?

The BILC project offers the following principles, derived not only from the above themes but also from regional research of current Anglican practice and contemporary Anglican hermeneutical insights. These are:

**Principle 1:** Christ is the living Word of God.

**Principle 2:** The Old Testament is the foundation of Christian Scripture.

**Principle 3:** The Bible is to be taken as a whole and has within it great depths of spiritual meaning.

**Principle 4:** There are many different literary genres in the Bible, which are to be distinguished carefully and consistently.

**Principle 5:** An accurate reading of the Bible is informed, not threatened, by sound historical and scientific understanding: the God who inspires Scripture as a true witness is the same God who created the world.

**Principle 6:** The Bible must be seen in the contexts of the world in which it was written and also brought into conversation or confrontation with our worlds in order to discern God's will for us today.

**Principle 7:** We listen to the Scriptures with open hearts and attentive minds accepting their authority for our lives and expecting that we will be transformed and renewed by the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Anglican Communion Documents:](#) What the Anglican Communion has said about the Bible 1 – extracts  
[Anglican Communion Documents:](#) What the Anglican Communion has said about the Bible 2 – themes and principles

## B. Empirical research by means of a survey

### Why use a questionnaire survey?

The last few decades have seen a rapid growth in the use of empirical studies within the Anglican Communion. Such studies may use interviews, focus groups, or questionnaires to gather information about the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of different groups within its member churches. While for some this might seem an unwelcome intrusion, for many others it represents a welcome development in our ability to understand ourselves and our faith.

There are many different ways of recording and analysing our lived experience. One way is to identify the key aspects of a particular situation and then to find ways of measuring them so that they can be understood in terms of influences and consequences. For example, we might want to understand why some people go to church on a Sunday and others do not. Is this related to their social background, particular experiences, or their religious beliefs? Does going to church make a difference to people's lives? By measuring these sorts of factors, we can compare in a relatively objective way those who attend and those who do not, perhaps discovering how various factors can influence attendance for different people at different times in their lives, and how attendance affects what people do in society at large.

This kind of analysis always involves simplifying a complex situation into measurable components. While this may lose sight of the complexity, the analysis that is made possible by measurement opens up new possibilities of understanding and insight. Bible reading is a complex activity, and the group Bible studies used in this project have enabled us to observe and learn from this complexity. A survey approach begins by simplifying aspects of bible reading and measuring them so that they can be analysed in a more detailed way than is possible by reports from the regional groups. It is a method that has its strengths and weaknesses, and one that sits alongside the more qualitative appraisals of group Bible study that inform our conclusions.

### The BILC Survey

This is a brief report on the survey work done during 2011 and early 2012. The BILC project asked what Anglicans actually do when they read the Bible, so it seemed sensible to draw on the experience of those who had already been trying to answer this question for some years. It was clear that quantitative work would not be possible or appropriate at this stage in all Provinces, but that it might be worth trying to extend the previous studies on Anglicans in England to other parts of the Communion. To this end a questionnaire was designed that used some of the instruments developed and tested in the Church of England (*Village, 2007*). Although there were likely to be some compatibility issues with using this in other cultures, it was decided it would be more productive to build on tried and tested instruments rather than risk untested ones in an extensive survey of this kind. The aim, then, was to see if existing measures could be used more widely in the Anglican Communion.

### Procedure and Method

The questionnaire started with a test passage, from Mark 9:14-29 (the healing of a boy with an evil spirit), which was followed by around 70 questions that measured particular ways of interpreting the text or the Bible generally, and gathered background information about respondents.

**Measuring Beliefs about the Bible:** Page five of the paper questionnaire was the Bible scale – twelve items relating to the veracity, authority, inerrancy, and exclusivity of the Bible. Items were scored so that a high score (*maximum 60*) indicated a conservative attitude toward the Bible, while a low score (minimum 12) indicated a liberal attitude toward the Bible.

**Measuring Literalism:** This section, on page six, was perhaps the most controversial for some respondents because it asked if a range of biblical 'events' actually happened or were fictional stories. Some respondents felt this crude view of literalism was inappropriate, while others welcomed being asked. The items included ten used previously and a further six that were added to see if events that are linked with doctrinal orthodoxy (e.g. bodily resurrection, virgin birth, and ascension) were more likely to be believed to have actually happened than miracles with less doctrinal 'weight'. For comparability with previous work, the ten items in the original scale were used to create the literalism scale, with a lowest possible score of 10 and a highest score of 50.

**Measuring Horizon Separation:** The test passage was used mainly to examine issues of 'horizon': the different 'worlds' of the Author, Text, and contemporary Reader. The items on page three of the questionnaire were designed to see how far participants noticed the separation of their world from that of people in the biblical narrative: is this a strange, alien world that is being described, or is this something that contemporary readers could imagine happening in their lives?

**Measuring Horizon Preference:** Page four of the questionnaire had eight forced-choice questions with three choices in each. Respondents were prompted by 'This story shows us...', and then for each of the eight questions had to choose the one answer they preferred, where one item related to the author horizon, one to the text horizon and one to the contemporary reader horizon. Preference for a particular horizon was indicated by how many times a person chose items related to that horizon (minimum possible 0, maximum possible 8). A high score in one horizon implied a low score in at least one of the other two horizons.

**Background information:** This included country of residence, age, sex, ordination status, educational experience, theological educational experience, frequencies of church attendance, prayer, and Bible reading. There were three scales to measure Theological Stance (liberal versus conservative), Charismaticism and Church Tradition (Catholic versus Evangelical).

## The Sample and the results

The main take-up was online, with 1468 replies which, with the paper questionnaires, gave a sample of just over 1500.

Given the nature of the take-up of the survey (overwhelmingly online) the sample reflected a particular group on mainly 'western', educated, and religiously committed Anglicans. Around 48% were from the USA, 15% from New Zealand, 13% from the UK, 12% from Australia, 6% from Canada and 3% from South Africa. The remaining 3% were from 25 different countries including Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, and Germany.

The majority were men (54%) and 71% were lay people. The ordained respondents included 16 bishops. Age ranged from less than 30 to over 90, with the majority being in their 50s or 60s. Educational levels varied, but most had either a graduate (25%) or post-graduate degree (53%), with 31% having a degree in theology or biblical studies. Many of the respondents were thus highly educated and not necessarily 'ordinary' readers.

This was a religiously committed sample: 92% attending church at least weekly, 79% praying daily, and 46% reading Scripture daily. In terms of theological stance, most (but by no means all) respondents were towards the 'liberal' rather 'conservative' end of the scale, and a majority were closer to the 'not charismatic' and 'catholic' ends of the scales. These scales have been extensively and intensively studied in the UK, but it is not clear how they operate elsewhere. Nonetheless, most respondents completed them, and the indication is that in this sample they were broadly understood to mean the same as in the UK. Clearly this sample is not typical of the Anglican Communion as a whole. However, it is a reasonably large sample and includes a range of people with quite different backgrounds. If it fails to tap into some sections (perhaps large sections) of Anglican opinion, it may nonetheless reflect the sort of people who have engaged elsewhere with the BILC project.

## Summary of Results

The results have been collated and analysed, and a more detailed report can be found elsewhere. This is intended simply to highlight the key findings.

1. The levels of biblicism, literalism, and horizon scores were generally reflective of the kinds of levels expected from studies in the UK. Not so much the actual levels per se but the fact that the predictors of these levels were those shown to be important in other samples: education, theological stance, church tradition etc. In other words, given the nature of the people in the sample, the results were what might have been predicted from earlier work. In some cases the results were strikingly similar, with the same patterns emerging for different aspects of biblical engagement.
2. It seems that for this section of the Anglican Communion, which might be broadly classified as 'western', 'educated' and religiously committed, how they engage with the Bible (in terms of the measures used here) can be predicted from their particular theological location, church tradition, and general educational levels. In some cases, engagement is shaped by other factors such as country of residence, age, ordination or specifically theological education, but these effects are relatively small compared with the others. Education has a powerful influence, but this varies between traditions, with evangelicals tending to maintain conservative beliefs about the Bible and its literal truth despite their comparative level of general or theological education.
3. Education may make it harder for people to apply texts to their own context, but this is mitigated by particular experiences. For example, in the case of the test passage on an exorcism, Charismatics were more able to see the relevance of this text to their lives than non-Charismatics.

## Limitations of the study

Although the number of people in the sample was relatively high, the study did not achieve its aim of reaching people across a broad range of Anglican churches with a broad range of backgrounds. In particular we did not get enough whole-congregation responses to be able to relate individual responses with information about the churches they attend. This would have required committed 'on the ground' promotion and support that was difficult to achieve on a large scale.

The use of categories derived from work in England may not have been appropriate in other countries. For example, terms such as 'liberal' versus 'conservative', or 'catholic' versus 'evangelical', which are familiar in the Church of England, may not have the same meanings in other places. Ideally, questionnaires should have been tailored to each Province, but this was not possible in the scope of this project.

The constructs used to examine biblical engagement were of necessity simplified, and it is difficult to get this right all the time. For example, some people questioned whether the notion of literalism as being related to whether a biblical account 'definitely happened' or was a 'fictional story' was too simplistic. For some it certainly was, though examining the results in detail suggest that it is a more useful and relevant measure than some might think. Nonetheless, the simplification required to quantify engagement comes at a price and that always limits what can be said about the results.

## Future Work

There are two main avenues down which quantitative work needs to go:

1. Examining non-western cultures. This is a priority, but one that will not be easily achieved. It can build on the qualitative studies of groups that have been part of the BILC project programme, developing instruments that are appropriate and that tap into the key ways in which people from different sorts of reading cultures engage with the Bible.



2. Looking at more sophisticated reading strategies. The aspects of engagement used in the current survey are important to many Anglicans, and should not be lightly dismissed. Nonetheless, they are not the only ways in which the Scriptures have meaning. There are specifically Anglican ways of understanding texts, and these could be examined in more detail. Many Anglicans in western cultures may not understand erudite or sophisticated hermeneutical strategies, but it would be interesting and useful to find out if this is so. How do Anglicans handle tricky texts? How do they bring biblical moral insights to bear on complex moral issues?

The BILC survey has been an important stepping stone on the way to a better understanding of how Anglicans engage with the Bible. Limited as it has been, it has enabled some basic questions to be answered with more certainty and with wider validity beyond the Church of England.



**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:**  
[Other papers:](#) Survey report  
[Other papers:](#) Survey questionnaire  
[Case Studies:](#) Survey course



## Section 4:

Resources, exercises, study courses, case studies,  
and other ideas

## Section 4

### Resources, exercises, study courses, case studies, and other ideas

One of the aims of the “Bible in the Life of the Church” project was to provide resources that could be used by the churches of the Anglican Communion to deepen their engagement with Scripture. This section highlights what has emerged and provides links either to further information in addition to this Report or to other websites where fuller details are available. The resources fall into 8 sections in the following areas:

- a) Courses on ‘how?’ we engage with the Bible
- b) “The Bible in the Life of the Church” – the book from the project
- c) Two five-session Bible Study outlines based on the Fourth and Fifth Marks of Mission
- d) Case Studies and courses on how Provinces, dioceses or parishes might deepen their engagement with the Bible
- e) Worship resources to encourage the creative use of Scripture in Anglican liturgical life
- f) Tools and Exercises for exploring what might actually be happening as Anglicans engage with the Bible
- g) Collection of academic articles reflecting on themes in this Report
- h) Bibliography of literature on differing aspects of Biblical Studies

#### 4a Courses on ‘how?’ we engage with the Bible



h+ ... a course to help the Church to be more confident in the way we engage with and interpret the Bible.

##### The issue

*“The neglect of Scripture is one of the greatest evils in the world. Everything else, arts or literature, is pursued and practised day and night, and there is no end of labour and effort; but Holy Scripture is neglected as though there were no need of it.”*

*Martin Luther*

Luther’s five hundred-year-old lament could precede any contemporary British church research and is borne out as this project suggests in other parts of the Communion. It underlines the need for resources that will help ‘ordinary Christians’ to engage more deeply and skilfully with the Bible. To do this they deserve insights, better equipping and empowering and better resources, so they can rediscover the potency of the Bible in personal faith and public life.

The Bible Society in England and Wales has developed such a resource, working with academic scholars and trialling it with ‘ordinary Christians’ to ensure it works well. This new resource is called ‘h+ Making Good Sense of the Bible’. It offers handbooks and DVD resources, and involves training facilitators. There is also a website to support the course.

**The Course offers ten steps towards better and more effective engagement and interpretation of the Bible. Participants in h+ learn:**

- what to look out for in text interpretation;
- they are introduced to the world of the biblical writers and their audiences;
- they learn about genre, structure and basic techniques in textual analysis;
- they look at how their own cultural, spiritual and personal background shapes the way they engage with and interpret the Bible - the emphasis here is on how we read the Bible because of who we are.
- Finally, h+ does not stop short of tough issues, such as contextual, feminist or pacifist hermeneutics.

**Discipleship:** and then there's the '+' in h+, which stands for eight virtues that complement the interpretive techniques and skills. Participants reflect on core aspects of Bible engagement like humility, honesty or perseverance. h+ is as much about character formation and discipleship as it is about how we engage with the Bible.

Not everything is covered in ten sessions. But h+ is a start; a crucial start for the many churchgoers who, otherwise, might remain stuck. h+ means taking ten steps towards a deeper engagement with Scripture, towards opening doors and exploring new paths. People who've done h+ say how it's freed them up to ask questions, how it's given them the curiosity and confidence to dig deeper into the text, and re-engage passionately and intelligently with the Bible.

***So, in brief, what does h+ offer the Church?***

- It is course that lays a stress on Christian virtues in our engagement with the Bible
- It is a carefully constructed approach to the Bible that enables deep engagement with issues that are sometimes challenging
- It is a course that treats the 'ordinary reader' as a mature thinking being
- It has a variety of approaches to learning, engages with a wide range of Scripture and offers diverse illustrations
- It is a course with a clear stress on the process of Biblical engagement [i.e. how the Bible is being read] in contrast to just a concentration on the fruits of that engagement [i.e. what is being read].

The Facilitator's role - the role of the person or people facilitating the h+ course - is key to helping those participating to get the best from this course. To underline this, in Britain the Bible Society holds training days to enable would-be facilitators to experiment with the material in groups, raise questions and issues, and walk away confident that they can teach the ten 90-minute sessions. This may not be possible everywhere in the Communion but some kind of introduction to the ethos and approach of h+ is vital. So, the Bible Society in conjunction with the Bible in the Life of the Church project is inviting Anglicans across the world to join in the h+ programme.

If you are interested in discovering how you might make use of the course in your province, diocese, parish or area then either contact the Bible Society directly or contact the coordinator of the BILC project, Stephen Lyon, to explore how we might help you achieve this.

For further information on the course visit [www.hplus.org.uk](http://www.hplus.org.uk)

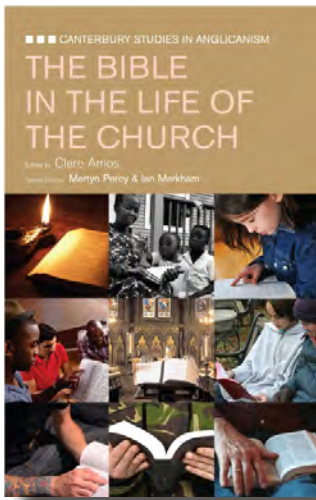
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Stephen Lyon: [stephenplyon@gmail.com](mailto:stephenplyon@gmail.com)

See also the Hong Kong and Philippines workshop course and the Four-Session course based on the Survey Questionnaire outlined in Section 4d

## 4b The Bible in the Life of the Church book



**The Bible in the Life of the Church** project was commissioned by the Anglican Consultative Council at its meeting in Jamaica in May 2009. Its aim is to explore how Anglicans use the Bible and to distil from and develop these explorations the principles of Anglican hermeneutics.

This new volume in the Canterbury Studies in Anglicanism series draws together contributions by scholars and church leaders from different parts of the Anglican Communion. In the first part of the book, writers from different regions of the world reflect on their experiences of using Scripture, while the second part offers reflections on a number of relevant themes such as: the Bible and homosexuality, an empirical study on the use of the Bible in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion and the Bible and the lectionary.

Publication date is scheduled for Spring 2013

For further details:

ISBN-13: 9781848252288

ISBN-10: 1848252285

Canterbury Press will be publishing the title in the UK with a worldwide distribution network:  
<http://www.canterburypress.co.uk/books/9781848252288/Bible-in-the-Life-of-the-Church>

Church Publishing Inc will be publishing the title in North America:  
<https://www.churchpublishing.org/>

## 4c Two 5-session Bible Study outlines based on the Fourth and Fifth Mark of Mission



'**And it was good**' and '**Economic Justice**' both arose out of the BILC project and began life as courses for use during Lent 2012. They offer help to explore biblically the Fourth and Fifth Marks of Mission. Each offers a range of Scripture passages, background notes to help a group dig deeper into their meaning and relevance together with questions for discussion. They also seek to ask questions that are not only about the message of Scripture but also about the way we **actually** engage with and interpret what we are reading. Both outlines can be downloaded and offer a 5-session, in-depth exploration of what Scripture says about these two aspects of God's Mission.

[Bible Study outlines](#): And it was good:  
[Bible Study outlines](#): Economic Justice

## 4d Case Studies of how Provinces, Dioceses or Parishes deepened their engagement with the Bible

The project either generated or came across a variety of approaches and processes used by provinces, dioceses or parishes to deepen their engagement with the Bible. In the 'ADDITIONAL MATERIAL' sections are links to documents that outline in greater detail these approaches. They are offered as examples of what could be undertaken in other contexts.

**Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia** – this Province-wide initiative was the forerunner to the BILC project. It represents a commitment by the whole Province to commit itself to three residential gatherings (hui) over a three year period to explore the way we approach the engagement with and interpretation of Scripture and then to apply these principles to the exploration of two current issues. At the end of the hui the Province summed up what it had achieved in the following way:

- o It brought about a recognition of the importance of Scripture for us all;
- o The Province began to build relationships among participants that enabled them to listen to people with whom they might not otherwise engage and in so doing provided a model for parishes and dioceses.
- o It confirmed many commonalities as well as identifying differences.
- o While it did not bring about dramatic changes in people's perspective, especially on issues of human sexuality, it did promote a better understanding of differing views and a respect for how they had been gained.
- o It underlined the need to continue conversations like these at every level of Church life. "Our unity is only as good as our ability to engage with our differences".



### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Case Studies:](#) Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

[Other papers:](#) Full Report (A, NZ & P)

**Sudan and South Sudan** – the Regional Reflection from South Sudan offers a fascinating insight into the possibilities that a "genuine intercontinental" reading of Scripture might offer the Anglican Communion. The Case Study based on this experience offers more background information and outlines the programme that was used in the 2010 seminar led by Dr Ellen Davis and the team she worked with.



### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Case Studies:](#) South Sudan

**South Africa** – As the Regional Reflection from this group said, "The South Africa Regional Group sought to ensure their work engaged with the structures of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa and drew up tools to help make their observations more objective. From their work the project can offer not only these reflections but the tools they devised that could be helpfully used in other parts of the Communion."

This Case Study outlines the processes this Regional Group went through and the tools they devised to support their work. Their objective was to ascertain just how Anglicans in the Province engaged with and interpreted Scripture. There may be other parts of the Anglican Communion where a helpful starting point might be to discover what is **actually** happening – the approach and tools devised by this Regional Group may be of assistance. The Group also explored, through Contextual Bible Study, how to build on what emerged from this work.



### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Case Studies:](#) South Africa  
[Articles:](#) Contextual Bible Study

**Hong Kong and the Philippines** – the Regional Reflection from these two Provinces in the Communion summarises the explorations of the second Case Study on the Fourth Mark of Mission. Prior to groups in both Provinces engaging with this work there was a 2 day workshop for clergy and lay-leaders who were to act as facilitators. The workshop modelled what would happen in the groups and offers another Case Study that could be used in other places within the Communion.



#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Case Studies:](#) Hong Kong and Philippine workshop

**Four-session course based on the Survey Questionnaire** – the second part of Section 3 of this Report (and the '[Additional material](#)') outlines the process and results of the survey the BILC project undertook. The Steering Group designed, alongside the survey, a course exploring the way we understand and engage with Scripture. This four-session course takes each section of the questionnaire and explains what it is attempting to measure and the significance of these issues for the way we approach Scripture. While the survey itself has now finished the questionnaire can be downloaded and offers an interesting way to engage with some key issues in our understanding of the Bible. The suggestion is to use the questionnaire as the starting point for a four session course as outlined in the leader's notes.



#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Case Studies:](#) Survey course

[Other papers:](#) Survey Report

[Other papers:](#) Survey questionnaire

## Bible Challenge

*“Central to the life of all Christian churches, is the Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments with the addition, in some traditions, of the Apocraphal/Deuterocanonical Books. In both liturgical and non-liturgical traditions portions of the Bible are selected for use in the course of public worship. As a result, the vast expanse of scripture is reduced to a series of selected texts. The Bible Challenge is an invitation to journey with fellow believers from across the world and across the Anglican Communion through the entire length and breadth of the Bible, and to experience the full sweep of the biblical record.”*

*Bishop Frank T Griswold, former Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church*

These words head the home page of the Center for Biblical Studies and their Bible Challenge. The Challenge started with an Episcopal (Anglican) congregation in the USA and has been taken up by many others. The Challenge is to read the Bible in its entirety or at least read longer sections e.g. the Gospels or Epistles in a systematic way over a year or during Advent or Lent. To help rise to the Challenge the Center's website offers a number of different tools and resources. Among the most helpful:

- o A scheme to “Read the Bible in a Year”
- o Short “Daily Meditations” for each group of readings

Further details of the Challenge can be found on the Center's website at: <http://thecenterforbiblicalstudies.org/> then click on “Bible Challenge” on the left-hand side.

**Contextual Bible Study** – the Regional Reports from East and South Africa both describe, as part of their work, involving participants in ‘Contextual Bible Study’ or CBS. This method (which might be known by other names) was the approach followed in the Bible Studies that took place at the 2008 Lambeth Conference on the ‘I am’ sayings in John's Gospel. There is a great deal of scholarly work that has been written about CBS and while the East Africa Regional Reflection offers a short summary this paper expands the approach and points to further available resources.



#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Case Studies:](#) Contextual Bible Study

**Education for Ministry (EfM)** - EfM offers a world-wide Anglican curriculum for ministerial training. The first two years explore the Old and New Testaments in considerable depth. The resources provided by EfM offer deep insights and practical guidance into reading, engaging with and interpreting Scripture.

Further details of EfM can be found at :  
<http://theology.sewanee.edu/academics/education-for-ministry/>

#### 4e Worship - resources to encourage creative use of Scripture in Anglican liturgical life

With the weekly Eucharist becoming the main Sunday service in many parts of the Anglican Communion 'Services of the Word' often do not play a prominent role in major worship occasions. The three times when this often does not apply are Christmas, Paschtide and Advent when the story of the events we celebrate are re-told through Scripture, hymns, prayers and liturgy. The project recognises that the use of Scripture in our worship - often following the daily and weekly lectionaries - is one of the marks of Anglicanism. Could we do more? Could we be more creative with the use of Scripture in our worship? Do we understand why certain readings are used and used alongside other readings?

*This section of the additional material collection offers a number of resources:*

- Two study outlines on the Lectionary story and its place in our worship life
- Suggestions for how a Eucharist might be designed around the themes and emphases that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John brings us in their Gospels.
- A 'Service of the Word' designed for a conference of scientists that sought to show the relevance of the Bible to their professional lives. This also includes an outline of the thought and planning processes that the person designing the service went through. This offers a model for such ventures in other areas.
- A creative and dramatic 'Pilgrimage to Jerusalem' is designed to encourage people to appreciate for themselves the original context and use of the biblical psalms.
- A short Service of the Word based around the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission.



#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Worship:](#) Lectionary story 1

[Worship:](#) Lectionary story 2

[Articles:](#) Reading the Scriptures decently - and in order

[Worship:](#) Matthew

[Worship:](#) Mark

[Worship:](#) Luke

[Worship:](#) John

[Worship:](#) Psalm Pilgrimage

[Worship:](#) Science Service

[Worship:](#) Marks of Mission

In addition to these resources The Royal School of Church Music in England provide services of word and music for different occasions throughout the Church Year. For further details go to: <http://www.rscmshop.com/festival-services.html>



## 4f Tools and Exercises for exploring what might actually be happening as Anglicans engage with the Bible

Throughout the project a number of exercises and instruments were designed to try and help (i) observe how groups were engaging with Scripture and (ii) bring to a conscious level some of the unconscious influences on how we undertake that engagement. We offer these as resources to the Communion.

- **The Brueggemann Exercise** – this is a questionnaire based on the introduction to *Redescribing Reality – What do we do when we read the Bible* where Professor Brueggemann describes the circumstances, events and people who have influenced him in his biblical studies. It is an exercise more geared to those with some theological education.
- **Personal Influences on reading the Bible** – this exercise came from the work of the South Africa Regional Group and might be described as a lay version of the Brueggemann Exercise.
- **South Africa's proformas** (see the Case Study – South Africa) for observing groups with examples of the kind of information these instruments might elicit. There is also a helpful check-list for observers.



### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Tools](#): Brueggemann Exercise

[Tools](#): Personal Influences on reading the Bible

[Tools](#): South Africa tools

[Case Studies](#): South Africa

## 4g Collection of academic articles reflecting on themes in this Report

These articles come from a variety of sources and theological standpoints. Most were previously published in other journals or delivered in other contexts and are considered by the Steering Group as relevant to and adding substance to issues raised in this Report. We offer them as stimulus to further discussion.

### [Biblical Studies for Ministry: Critical and Faithful Interpretation of Scripture in an Either/Or World](#) by Cynthia Kittredge

This article was first published in the Society of Biblical Literature journal 10 as one of a collection of essays under the title *Transforming Graduate Biblical Education: Ethos and Discipline*. In it Cynthia Briggs Kittredge (the Ernest J. Villavaso, Jr. Professor of New Testament and Academic Dean at Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas, USA) describes the “shift in perspective that the transition from graduate biblical studies to ministerial biblical studies required and the curriculum designed to integrate the historical and the hermeneutical with the practical arts of ministry, teaching and preaching”

[Articles](#): Biblical Studies for Ministry

### [Should We Be Teaching the Historical Critical Method?](#)

This manuscript is an edited transcript of a panel discussion held at a Society of Biblical Literature conference (November 2008. Published in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, Volume 12, Issue 2, April 2009, Blackwell Publishing Ltd). Alice Hunt begins the discussion by summarizing the content and significance of a book by Dale Martin, *The Pedagogy of The Bible* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2008) in which he argues that biblical studies in seminaries and divinity schools give too much emphasis to teaching the historical critical method and not enough to preparing students for ministry by teaching them to be self-reflective practitioners of the improvisational skills of

interpreting scripture. Then a panel of bible scholars, including the author, conduct a wide-ranging discussion that raises questions about how biblical studies might better prepare students for ministry, as well as the proper role and appropriate pedagogies for introducing biblical studies in the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum.

[Articles:](#) Should We Be Teaching?

### Mind the Gap! Reflections on the “Bible in the Life of the Church” project by Stephen Lyon

This paper first appeared in the summer 2011, Volume 93, Number 3 edition of the *Anglican Theological Review*. In it Stephen Lyon (Coordinator of the BILC project) explores the significance of the ‘gaps’ the project identified at its half way stage in 2010 between ‘received wisdom’ as to hermeneutical principles and what appeared to be happening in practice. He seeks to offer an answer to the question ‘Do we have a responsibility to look at whether what we do in relation to handling the Bible is in keeping with what we say we do?’ In one sense this Final Report is evidence that we need to accept that responsibility.

[Articles:](#) Mind the Gap 1

[Other papers:](#) November 2010

### Mind the Gap: With reference to the recent inquiry commissioned by the Anglican Consultative Council - “The Bible in the Life of the Church” – are ‘hermeneutical gaps’ in the use of the Bible necessarily detrimental to Anglican ‘communion’?

by Alexander Ross

Alexander is an ordinand of the Diocese of Melbourne in Australia undertaking postgraduate study at the University of Oxford and further ministerial formation at Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, England. As part of that work he explored the ‘gaps’ identified midway through the life of the BILC project. His aim was to see what the “implications of these hermeneutical gaps (were) for Anglicanism (and to analyse them) against Anglican self-identification as a ‘communion’, and particularly whether these gaps are necessarily detrimental to such a self-conception.”

[Articles:](#) Mind the Gap 2

### Reading the Bible in a Sea of Signs: a Postmodern Therapy by A.K.M Adam

This article was first published in a volume of *Reflections*, Yale Divinity School’s twice-yearly magazine of theological and ethical inquiry. In it The Revd Dr A K M Adams (now Lecturer in New Testament, University of Glasgow) explores a “baffling problem” he encountered as he discovered his fascination with biblical studies, that was “the more (he) learned in (his) biblical courses, the less (his) studies seemed to enhance (his) ministry and teaching”. His explorations add depth and value to his preaching.

[Articles:](#) Sea of Signs

### Can the Bible mean whatever we want it to mean?

by Canon Professor Anthony Thistleton

This is the text of the Inaugural Lecture given by Professor Thistleton as Research Professor of Christian Theology in University College, Chester, England. In a lecture in three parts, part one explores the “shift in debates about the Bible some forty or fifty years ago from more traditional questions to keen controversies about interpretation..... part 2 discuss(es) some criteria for textual meanings, with six illustrative examples or case studies. .... and part 3 addresses the impact of post-modern perspectives (that) affect biblical interpretation and Christian theology profoundly for good or ill.”

The Lecture is available in printed booklet form [ISBN 978-1-902275-50-5, £2.00] or from [sarah.griffiths@chester.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.griffiths@chester.ac.uk)

[Articles:](#) Can the Bible mean whatever?

### Biblical Interpretation: Some Afro-Anglican Perspectives

by Kortright Davis

Kortright Davis is an Anglican priest originally from the Island of Antigua in the Caribbean who trained for the priesthood at Codrington College, Barbados, where he also served as its first Afro-Anglican Principal. He is now Professor of Theology at Howard University School of Divinity, USA and was invited to contribute to the work of the BILC project as a member of the North American Regional Group. Unable to attend their final meeting he contributed this paper outlining some Afro-Anglican perspectives on Biblical interpretation.

[Articles:](#) Biblical Interpretation

### The Word of God in our World today

by Clare Amos

This is the text of a lecture given by Clare (formerly Director for Theological Studies at the Anglican Communion Office) at a conference organised by 'Christians Aware', an international and ecumenical movement aiming to develop multi-cultural understanding, raising awareness of the gifts and needs of God's people everywhere. In the year celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible Clare explores the role of translation on our understanding of Scripture and the significance of current approaches to biblical studies. Clare brings many familiar Bible passages to life as she illustrates her lecture.

[Articles:](#) The Word of God in our World

### The Vocation of Holiness in Today's Church: Anglican Interpretation of Scripture

by Professor David Ford

This article is the text of an address given at the 2000 Primates' Meeting held in Porto, Portugal. In his introduction Professor Ford (Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University, England) described his task as that of introducing "a discussion of the interpretation of Scripture, what is to be learnt about this from our Anglican tradition (which I take as being rooted in the Early Church and to embrace the Reformation and more recent history, including the 1998 Lambeth Conference) and how that is related to the vocation to holiness today". In the process of doing this Professor Ford offers as a case study or in his words "an example of Anglican wisdom in action, and as a sign of holy communication and hope" the biblical work undertaken at the 1998 Lambeth Conference by the sub-group on Human Sexuality.

[Articles:](#) Vocation of Holiness

### The Food for the Soul

by Charles Sherlock

This paper was first delivered at the Cranmer Conference held in Durham, England in July 1989 to mark the 500th Anniversary of the birth of Thomas Cranmer. In it Charles poses two questions: "Did Cranmer have a distinctive understanding of Holy Scripture? Does this show through in his liturgical work?" He goes on to say that the "thesis of this paper is that both questions should be answered in the affirmative - and that his perspectives can and should inform our tasks in ministry today."

[Articles:](#) The Food for the Soul

### Reading the Scriptures decently – and in order

by Charles Sherlock

"The pattern by which a church regularly reads the holy scriptures says a good deal about its view of their status and nature. It is one thing to accept that 'all scripture is inspired by God and useful for instruction' (2 Timothy 3.16), another to demonstrate this in the choice and arrangement of readings." This assertion by Charles Sherlock leads him, in this paper originally published in the *Australian Journal of Liturgy*, to explore our Anglican practices in reading the scriptures in public worship. The paper argues that the inherited customs of having at least two passages read in each service (so the scriptures are heard in stereo), and of giving special place to the gospels, represent significant expressions of principle which should be sustained and built on.

[Articles:](#) Reading the Scriptures decently

### An E-mail 'conversation' between three members of BILC project's Reference Group

At certain times during the BILC project the Steering Group asked a number of biblical scholars to act as a sounding board for their work. At one stage in November 2010 the Steering Group reviewed the observations made by the Regional Groups of the way Scripture was engaged with through the first Case Study. These observations suggested there might be 'gaps' between the way we actually engaged with Scripture and the 'received wisdom' of the way we say we engage. A report of these observations was sent to the Reference Group and this 'conversation' began its life from two specific observations that suggested [a] that there was a view expressed that once we had studied and understood what the Bible might be saying on a particular subject there was no more to do or say; and [b] that there was a gap between what the 'academy' taught in relation to the way we go about viewing and interpreting Scripture and how this was transmitted to those in the pew.

The conversation, while starting from these two observations, went on to touch other matters too. Like any on-going conversation – perhaps especially one conducted through E-mail - this one is open-ended, not written as an academic paper might be and undertaken so that others might join in.

The three participants in this conversation are The Revd Dr A K M Adam, Lecturer in New Testament, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow, Scotland, Professor Jesse N K Mugambi, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya and Professor Anthony Thistleton, Professor of Christian Theology, University of Nottingham, England.

[Articles:](#) E mail conversation  
[Other papers:](#) November 2010

## 4h Bibliography of literature on differing aspects of Biblical Studies

At an early stage in the BILC project Clare Amos, then Director for Theological Studies at the Anglican Communion Office, sought to compile a basic bibliography of literature on differing aspects of Biblical Studies. In consulting quite widely it became apparent that the range and volume of such literature was immense and so listing what constituted 'basic texts' or 'must-have volumes' was not going to be simple. However, the project still feels it is worth offering the work Clare started to the wider Communion.

We do so on the understanding that it is still (and perhaps always will be) provisional; it is still only a list of suggested texts and inviting you, the reader, to take from it what is helpful and fill any perceived gaps from your own knowledge and experience.

*The bibliography has the following sections:*

- Official Anglican Communion Documents [see also What the Anglican Communion has said about the Bible 2 – extracts]
- Books/articles written by Anglicans overtly seeking to give an Anglican view of Scripture
- Books/articles written by Anglicans (but not necessarily seeking to explore an overtly Anglican perspective)
- Books/articles written by non-Anglicans that are considered particularly classic and important texts in this area
- Books/articles/documents produced either by other churches or from an overt ecumenical or inter-faith perspective
  - o Key Roman Catholic documents
  - o WCC documents
  - o Scripture in world faiths

[Bibliography](#)





## **Section 5:**

Reflections on the project by an “Anglican Outsider”

## Section 5:

### Reflections on the project from an Anglican ‘outsider’

*Background to this section of the Report: At an early stage in the project the American Bible Society (ABS) approached the Anglican Communion Office to ask if they might partner us in our work. The reasons behind their approach are outlined in the final section of the Report. During the project they commented on the papers that emerged but also through Rev. Dr. Joseph V. Crockett, Director of Scholarly Projects of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship (part of ABS) attending two of the Regional Group gatherings. We are also grateful to Joseph for these reflections on the project, as an Anglican outsider.*

#### Introduction

##### Context

For nearly two hundred years, the mission of American Bible Society (ABS) has remained that of “making the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford so all people may experience its life-changing message.” Complementing that mission is the work of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship at American Bible Society. Domestically, the Institute is known for its research, scholarly writings, teaching and quality assurance services, which are carried out primarily through its New York City office in the USA. Internationally, the Institute is one of the charter members in the Italy-based San Pellegrino University Foundation. In both venues the Institute conducts and continues the work of its namesake, Eugene A. Nida (1914 - 2011), who directed ABS translations from 1946-1984 and is recognized as one of the leading linguists and translation theorists of the 20th century.

When ABS learned of the Anglican Communion’s proposal to investigate “The Bible in the Life of the Church” worldwide, it was only a matter of protocols and procedures before we readily joined in support of this work. It has been my honor and privilege to participate in two Regional Group meetings; one in East Africa in 2011, and a second gathering in North America in 2012.

##### Purpose of reflection

Lived religious faith that is authentic entails an alignment of understanding and action. This is true for individuals, for social groups and for religious communities. “The Bible in the Life of the Church” project (BILC), sought to understand what sources inform, shape and influence the shared beliefs and common actions of the Anglican Communion. The place and role of the Bible in the life of Anglicans, both individual adherents and as they gather together in various group arrangements, was the primary, but not sole issue examined. The teachings and traditions of the Anglican Communion as well as the life-setting and experiences of participants - directly or indirectly - were also considered. This reflection reviews some of the methods, findings and theoretical frames BILC leaders used to explore these concerns. Some future implications will also be discussed.

##### Strategies of Discovery: Methodology

BILC used a variety of strategies for discovering the ways and conditions under which the Bible is read, heard and used across the Anglican Communion. It appeared that the overall philosophy of the study was closely aligned to the tenets of “action research”. Action research is unapologetically agenda-driven. It has as its aim improving of social conditions by structured collaborations between participants and those designated to guide, facilitate, analyze and interpret the work.

BILC made use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to unveil, see and understand the ways and results of Bible use among members of the Anglican Communion worldwide. Qualitative methods included participant-observation, participatory research and the use of case-studies. Researchers who

use a participant-observation approach are involved as both investigators and participants in the study. In BILC, persons who helped to design, acquire data, analyze and interpret the work also engaged with the Regional Group members in the Bible study activities around the Fourth and Fifth Marks of Mission. One benefit of this approach is that the field notes, such as actions, reactions and interactions between and among participants, are captured and recorded in “real time,” at the point and place of occurrence.

Participatory research is distinguished from participant-observation research in that the former engages in bringing change to the situation in addition to understanding and explaining the situation and interactions of people in the setting. The participatory research approach invites those being studied to join investigators in generating different or new understandings and to make use of those insights to participants’ benefit.

For example, the participants in the East Africa Regional Group, engaged in contextual Bible study, were encouraged to include their experiences in dialogue with the Scriptures presented and the beliefs of the Anglican Communion. Participants found themselves critiquing assumptions, beliefs, practices and doctrines that oppressed them or that failed to validate their experiences. In the process, participants moved from an “object” of research, to a research peer.

Case studies were the third qualitative mechanism approach used to gain insights and understandings about Bible use and its influence on the beliefs and practices within the Anglican Communion. The case study method offers an in-depth examination of social phenomena and can be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory in its aim. Drawing on two of the five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, group participants were invited to use the Bible in study and reflection on three topics: (i) safeguarding creation; (ii) unjust gender structures; (iii) unjust economic structures. The Steering Group’s report that highlighted various “Gaps” in Bible use exemplifies the exploratory capacity of the case study approach.

BILC used a survey administered online or via the Internet, in print format, for the purpose of adding information on how Anglicans in different parts of the Communion engage with the Bible. Survey instruments for capturing data about churches and individuals were used. The survey for individuals was organized in four sections to collect demographic information (such as age, gender, location of respondents), questions about frequency of Bible use, the Bible’s perceived relevance to respondents and questions pertaining to interpretation and hermeneutics.

The questionnaire used for churches probed uses and views of Bible study and worship events in the life of the respondent’s parish. Data on a parish’s demographics and theological orientation were also captured. These surveys add to the knowledge base of the regional fieldwork. Unlike the qualitative approaches, data from the surveys can be examined for statistical significance.

## The Anglican Communion: A Glimpse from Outside

The Anglican Communion has nearly 80 million members worldwide distributed among over 165 countries. It is organized and carries out its mission and ministry through four instruments, namely: the Archbishop of Canterbury, Primates’ Meetings, Lambeth Conferences and Anglican Consultative Councils. The deep and rich theological heritage of the Anglican Communion informs adherents’ identity and discipleship - The Anglican Way. Four indicators - signposts - are used by Anglicans to characterize the nature of their Christian witness: “formed by and rooted in Scripture; shaped by its worship of the living God; ordered for communion; and directed in faithfulness to God’s mission in the world.”

It is the first of these four benchmarks - formed by and rooted in Scripture - that provides the motive for BILC and the occasion of this reflection. How does the Bible nurture and encourage unity and overcome divisions, in the midst of diversity to inform, shape and influence shared beliefs and common witness?

## A Constructivist Perspective

What is Bible engagement? Bible engagement - reading, hearing, studying, digesting, appropriating Scripture - as human activity is interpretive and hermeneutic. While Bible engagement may rely on objective practices, such as historical-social, critical and literary methods, its objective is to make the



Scriptures understandable thus achieving transforming and transformative human action. When conducted properly, I would argue, Bible engagement is incarnational, holistic and authentically linked to the lifestyles of people, groups, communities and cultures.

Bible engagement is situated, contextual activity. On an individual level, an aim of Bible engagement is the mediations and construction of “learned memories,” truths upon which people are willing to ground their lives and conduct. On a group or communal level, an aim of Bible engagement is the construction of shared meanings developed through authentic dialogue or “intersubjectivity.” Bible engagement brings God’s Word to life.

The Nida Institute’s research, teaching and writings on Bible engagement are organized around four questions: How is meaning made? How are texts read? How is meaning mediated? And, how are meaning and change nurtured and sustained? These are epistemological questions, concerned fundamentally with how we know and how we mediate what we know. We believe that explanations to these persistent and probing questions are best addressed from an interpretive or hermeneutic perspective.

*Such assertions warrant that I make visible key assumptions behind such claims. Five assumptions follow:*

1. Our experience of the present is significantly shaped by our knowledge of the past (*Connerton, 1989*).
2. Meanings of the words, signs, and symbols we use to describe our views of reality - and ultimate reality - are not inherent in the objects or subjects we seek to examine. Rather, meanings and interpretations of Scripture are the result of social interactions that inform our perceptions prior to reading texts and of social processes involved in the reading and reflections of the texts.
3. Terms, concepts, signs and symbols we use to communicate are socially constructed artifacts that have developed over time through interactions in particular cultures and contexts (*Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1994*). The Bible itself has a biography that spans time, geography, cultures and languages.
4. Our claims and accounts of the world are legitimated and sustained not by objectivity, but through social processes (*Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Foucault, 1972*). Many mechanisms and various processes, implicit and explicit, link together to form and validate some versions of “truth,” and to discount or discredit other truth claims.
5. A value commitment of the Christian community is an insistence that all humanity is created in the likeness of the Creator. This affirmation necessitates Christians to continuously push beyond all social constructs of human identity that devalue or dehumanize any “other” created being. Valuing “otherness” requires critiquing all forms of hegemony, including theological, biblical, political, economic, social, and cultural practices (*Allen, 2008*). These assumptions combined, provide the rationale for understanding Bible engagement as an interpretive social project.

As an interpretive enterprise, Bible engagement has several key features and processes. Important features include: an active involvement of participants; an awareness that Bible engagement is a culturally situated activity; recognition that it draws upon a variety of academic disciplines; and that it is practical.

**Processes matter.** They are important. Narrating our lives through stories is an important process for making and mediating meaning. We live by stories. Stories inform our identity, mediate our meanings, and shape shared understandings. Throughout history, overarching stories (meta-narratives) have been the lens through which societies organized, negotiated, and regulated individual behaviors and group activities. These stories, grand narratives, carried the cultural meanings of every society. Today, there is no one grand story, no meta-narrative that is definitive in informing the consciousness and guiding the actions of society. This contemporary situation makes it more vital now than ever for interpretive communities to create, maintain and sustain the best strategies available for guiding, embodying and passing on its truth to new and unreached populations.

While we live by stories that narrate the meaning of our lives, we also live on seas of paradox. We read, study, listen, learn, believe and pass on our beliefs as reality - as "truth" - to others. Yet, our experience informs us that no meaning exists outside of collaborative or social interactions with others. While we search for cause-effect explanations of our experience, such thinking must be enlarged to avoid reductionism and intellectual idolatry. There is truth - religious truth - that can be expressed only in metaphor and mystery. On matters of faith, the heart has insights that are also reliable. But for community, it is necessary to create and establish common stocks of knowledge.

**"Intersubjectivity"** is a psycho-social process that makes possible the sharing of individual meanings and insights. It is the space between subjectivities in which an overlap of beliefs, points of view, conceptual schemas, or frames of reference that result from a dialogical exchange of ideas, values, and/or experiences occurs.

Intersubjectivity is required for mediating the cultural and social worlds of the biblical narrative and readers and hearers of Scripture. Intersubjectivity is needed also for bridging interpretive and hermeneutical gaps between and among Anglican Communion members. Intersubjectivity is the bridge that blends and transforms the borderlines between subjective self-knowing and approximations of the objective other and its renderings of reality. Genuine dialogue, "the meeting of the souls," involves persons turning toward one another with intention of encountering a mutual relation (*Buber, 1947, 19*). Intersubjectivity is a form of mutual relations. In Bible engagement, intersubjectivity is the transition that facilitates and permits language meanings to cross boundaries and result in shared understandings. (*Drew, Raymond and Weinberg, 2006, 100-101*). By transporting meanings across time, situational contexts and cultural boundaries, intersubjectivity bridges gaps between the biblical narrative and the diverse life-worlds, experiences and perceptions of adherents.

Intersubjectivity can transform individual and community character in redemptive and reconciling ways. Bible engagement, at its best, fosters an intersubjectivity that shapes and changes the worldview of individuals and local communities and hence, transforms the world in which they live. It is individuals and communities, through the prisms of their context that make the words of Scripture meaningful (*Blount, 2005; Eisenstadt, 1992, 65*). A modest aim in a world of cultural and religious pluralism may be to orient listeners to God's love for creation and for all people of the world.

## From the Study - Three Salient Findings

**1. Value:** The value of the Bible as a source that shapes identity and informs purpose for individual members of the Anglican Communion may be of greater importance than its current profile might suggest. Across the hermeneutic gaps reported on during the research, the Bible, in several instances, works more like a wedge to diminish unity and increase divisiveness, rather than as an agent of reconciliation. Yet the vast majority of members believe the Bible to be trustworthy and reliable (*ABS, 2012*). How may current sentiments regarding the Bible's value be leveraged for increasing shared understandings among Anglican Communion adherents?

**2. Process:** In as much as Bible engagement is an interpretive enterprise -as BILC documents - the processes used to engage the Bible may be as important as its content. Processes, however, are heterogeneous. They can be normative, adaptive or developmental; external, extrinsic or mechanistic; internal, intrinsic or authentic. Processes can be instructive or destructive, sporadic, continuous, or cumulative, and so much more. Variation of processes is lodged in the individual and the situational context. Readers and hearers come in contact with the Bible's content - and whatever message one acquires from that engagement - only through some kind of process. What are the normative processes of Bible engagement for achieving the levels of intersubjectivity needed to enjoy a common witness among Anglican Communion adherents?

**3. Context:** Everyone agrees that "context" is important. However, religious professionals tend to use a variety of descriptions and definitions when referring to "context." Context may refer to the social, political, and/or cultural setting of a particular period in time. Context sometimes describes the religious tradition or theological heritage of a community. Context may be defined also in terms of social networks - family, friendships, formal and informal neighborhood links and institutional resources, such as schools, libraries, religious, medical and recreational centers. In all of these understandings, "context" is important as it introduces variability and shapes individuals,

groups and outcomes. Context is “a situational variable that alters the psychological significance and social demands of particular life events” (Gore and Eckenrode, 1996, 25). Context is a provoking agent - a mechanism - that shapes how texts are read and meanings are mediated (1996, 27). To what extent are Bible engagement processes dependent upon context to achieve the signposts of The Anglican Way?

## What Now?

The Anglican Communion is to be applauded for the courage to conduct such an undertaking and for the diligent manner in which the work was done, and the reliable results produced. This study is both noteworthy and unparalleled. The insights, reflections and resources that result from these efforts will make a difference not only to the Anglican Communion, but to “The Bible in the Life of the Church” universal.

BILC also raises concerns about what steps to take next and what questions need to pursue now. To build upon the generous and generative work and to encourage the Anglican Communion and the Church universal to continue moving forward, I present below six additional questions for future conversations and exploration:

- How does the Anglican Communion conceptualize, describe or define members’ individual and communal interactions with the Bible beyond the “gaps”?
- What are features and processes that can ensure the integrity of individual and regional authenticity while providing a platform for common understandings and witness?
- How do contemporary approaches to Scripture help members hear the multiple layers of voices and perspectives embedded in the biblical texts?
- What elements and processes are needed to facilitate authentic dialogue that makes possible the prospect of intersubjectivity?
- How will the Anglican Communion resource the various domains where meanings are made - personal and interpersonal, institutional (schools and learning systems), and the cultural systems of the Communion?
- Are the present signposts of “The Anglican Way” sufficient indicators for assessing outcomes related to the Bible’s role in the formation of identity and discipleship for the Anglican Communion?

## Conclusion

“The Bible in the Life of the Church” project is an important work as it contributes to understanding the processes by which variability in Bible interpretations come about. Making use of the Bible - God’s Word - to inform the identity and to shape the common purpose and ministry of the Church is a vital concern for its health and destiny with God as communities of faith. BILC illuminates possibilities for increasing shared knowledge for a common witness and discipleship. BILC and its findings are worthy of discussion and dissemination among Anglican Communion adherents and across the Church of Jesus Christ. The Nida Institute and American Bible Society are thankful for the work and the opportunity to observe and support this initiative in ways that we hope have been helpful.

The Rev Dr Joseph V. Crockett, Director of Scholarly Projects  
Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship

*Joseph Crockett has worked at ABS for the past 12 years and is currently conduct research and teaching under the title of Director of Scholarly Projects. He earned a doctorate degree in Counseling and Human Development from the University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (USA) and for 29 years has been an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church. Joseph has worked as a youth minister, pastor, curriculum and reference book editor and seminary professor. His research, product development, publications and teaching have always involved or focused on individual and congregational use of Scripture in everyday situations.*

*Thank  
you*



## **Section 6:**

### **Acknowledgements and Thanks**

# Section 6

## Acknowledgments and thanks

The Bible in the Life of the Church project would not have been possible without the contribution of a large number of people, groups and organisations across the Anglican Communion and beyond.

However, responsibility for this Report can only be attributed to the Steering Group who at their final meeting in May 2012 in Woking, Surrey, England planned its structure. Individual contributions are attributed and further resources drawing on the work of those beyond this group are included to amplify areas of exploration in the report. These are included on the understanding that they stand on their own integrity. Where we know that they have been first used or published elsewhere we have sought to acknowledge this and where they have arisen from the project itself we have attempted to offer a contextual background. If we have failed in either of these areas we apologise and promise to rectify the situation in any future publications.

## Steering Group

**The Most Revd David Moxon [Chair]** is Bishop of Waikato, the Senior Bishop of the New Zealand Dioceses, and an Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. He holds two Masters of Arts degrees: in Education with honours from Massey University, and in Theology from Oxford. He also has a Licenciante of Theology (Aotearoa) and a Certificate in Maori Studies from Waikato University. Amid numerous diocesan and provincial roles, he also co-chairs the Anglican Roman Catholic International (ARCIC III) and is the Chair of the Bible in the Life of the Church project on behalf of the Anglican Communion. He is an honorary fellow of St Peter's College, Oxford and a fellow of St Margaret's College, Dunedin.

**Clara Luz Ajo [Theological Consultant]** is Professor of Systematic Theology at Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas, Cuba where she heads the Systematic Theology programme. She holds a Master and PhD in theology in Ecumenical Faculty of Methodist University in San Paul, Brazil. She is adviser of CIAET (International Anglican Center of Theological Studies) leading of CETALC. A lay member of Episcopal Church in Cuba she works actively in theological education in the Diocese preparing groups of lay ministers and preparing episcopal students for to be ordained.

**Dr David Allen [United Kingdom Regional Coordinator]** is Director of Studies and Tutor in New Testament at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham, UK. He previously worked as a youth & community worker and a mainframe computer programmer before moving into the world of theological education. Much of his research concerns the way in which the New Testament uses the Hebrew Scriptures, and the intertextual and hermeneutical reading strategies this generates.

**Clare Amos**, an English Anglican, has recently become Programme Coordinator and Executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Until September 2011 she was Director for Theological Studies in the Anglican Communion Office, and in that capacity was involved in the work of the Bible in the Life of the Church project from its inception. Clare is a biblical scholar and theological educator by background and experience, and has taught biblical studies to clergy and laypeople in Jerusalem, Beirut, Cambridge, South London and Kent. She has a particular interest in the interface between biblical interpretation and issues connected with the Middle East, where she lived for 10 years. Her publications include a commentary on Genesis, a short book on the Gospel of Mark, and a number of reflections and prayers linked to biblical spirituality, especially the Psalms.

**Professor Ellen F Davis [Theological Consultant]** is the Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke University Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, USA. A lay member of The Episcopal Church, she is an active partner with the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS) in building up theological education, including community health and community agriculture. She has long worked in interfaith dialogue, including with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Building Bridges seminars.

**The Revd Dr Jonathan Draper [South Africa Regional Coordinator]** works in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He trained for the priesthood at Rhodes University and St. Paul's College, Grahamstown (now the College of the Transfiguration) and was ordained for Zululand Diocese, serving first in Holy Cross, Empangeni and St. John the Baptist, Mtubatuba before taking up a post in New Testament at the then University of Natal in 1986. He obtained his PhD in New Testament at St. John's College, Cambridge in 1984.

**The Revd Dr Kabiro Wa Gatumu [East Africa Regional Coordinator]** is the Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies and African Hermeneutics at St Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya. He is an ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Diocese of Kirinyaga. He is also the coordinator of the African Theological Fellowship, East African Sub-Region. His publications include, *The Pauline Concept of Supernatural Powers: A Reading from the African Worldview*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), several book chapters and articles in peer reviewed journals.

**The Revd Dr Tim Long** is a South African priest recently retired and now living in the UK. After fourteen years as a secondary school teacher of English and History he spent over twenty years in the Diocese of Pretoria where he was elected a Canon of the Cathedral of St Alban the Martyr and was Rector of one suburban and one township parish. In 2002 he moved to the Diocese of Johannesburg where he was Rector of a large parish in the Western region of Johannesburg and Archdeacon for three years. Throughout his ministry he has been involved in diocesan-based theological education planning and teaching.

**The Revd Dr Robert MacSwain [North America Regional Coordinator]** is Assistant Professor of Theology and Christian Ethics at The School of Theology of The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, USA. He previously served as Research Assistant to Archbishop George Carey at Lambeth Palace (UK), as a parish priest in the Diocese of East Carolina (USA), and as Ramsey Fellow and Chaplain at St Chad's College, Durham University (UK). He received his PhD from the University of St Andrews. His primary academic focus is on how theology, philosophy, ethics, literature, and spirituality all distinctively interact in the Anglican tradition.

**The Revd Dr Charles Sherlock [Australian Regional Coordinator]** is an Anglican deacon and priest in active retirement after four decades of teaching Theology and Liturgy, most notably at Ridley College, Melbourne and Trinity College Theological School (in the United Faculty of Theology). Other ministries have included being Editor of *Church Scene*, Registrar of the MCD University of Divinity, and manager of the Uncovering Theology project. Dr Sherlock played a major part in the preparation of A Prayer Book for Australia (1995). He is active in ecumenical dialogue, especially as a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission since 1991. All these ministries involve close engagement with the scriptures: in 2012 he gave the Moorhouse Lectures in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, on the theme 'The Word and words of God'. Dr Sherlock is currently Executive Officer of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools, and assistant curate to the Anglican Bishop of Bendigo.

**The Revd Dr Andrew Village** is Reader in Practical and Empirical Theology at York St John University, UK. He worked as an ecologist studying birds of prey before becoming an Anglican priest in 1993. After eleven years in parish ministry he became a theological educator and researcher, first at the University of Wales, Bangor and then at York St John University, where he heads the MA Theology and Religious Studies programme. His research mainly involves applying the quantitative methods of social science to issues that are of practical and theological interest to the Church. This has included a number of studies of how lay people and clergy use and interpret the Bible.

The work of the Steering Group also benefited at its first meeting from the input of **The Rt Revd Michael Fape, Bishop of Remo**, in Nigeria previously a lecturer at Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, and Dean of Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure. Bishop Fape was acting in his capacity as one of the Regional Associates of TEAC (Theological Education in the Anglican Communion).

It benefited at its final meeting from the presence of **Alexander Ross**, an ordinand from the Anglican Church in Australia. Alexander made valuable contributions to What the Anglican Communion has said about the Bible – themes and principles paper and has contributed an essay in Section 4g of this Report.

**Stephen Lyon [Project Coordinator]** has worked within the Anglican Church for 35 years at parish, diocesan and national levels. He was Principal of a diocesan non-residential ordination-training scheme before working in the national mission department of the Church of England. There he was responsible for coordinating its links with the wider Anglican Communion through the work of the mission agencies and diocesan Companion Links. After helping in the design of parts of the 2008 Lambeth Conference Stephen was invited to act as the Coordinator of the Bible in the Life of the Church project.

## Other thanks are due to the following individuals and groups:

### Regional and User Group members

#### Southern Africa

The Rt Revd Funginkosi N. Mbhele, Retired Suffragan Bishop of Natal.

The Venerable Bellina L. Mangena, Archdeacon of Msunduzi and Rector of St. Alpheges Church, Scottsville in the Diocese of Natal.

Professor Gerald West, Senior Professor of Old Testament at the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The Revd Canon Janet Trisk is a former lecturer at the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown, and currently Rector of St. David's Parish, Prestbury in the Diocese of Natal.

Dr Jonathan May, lecturing in Biblical Studies at the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown.

The Revd Dr Canon Peter Wyngaard, Director of the Anglican House of Studies attached to the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

#### East Africa

Staff at St Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya:

The Revd Canon Prof Joseph Galgalo, Vice-Chancellor.

The Revd Dr Zablon Bundi, Senior Lecturer and Director, St. Paul's Institute of Lifelong Learning.

The Revd Dr Chosefu Chemorion Senior Lecture and Director of Post-Graduate Studies.

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 The Revd Dr Jenni Williams, Tutor in Old Testament, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

#### North America

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 The Revd Joseph Taban Lasuba, Principal of Bishop Gwynne Theological College.  
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 The Revd Trevor Stubbs, Bishop Gwynne Theological College.

#### Cuba

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#### Institutions

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### American Bible Society [ABS]

At an early stage in the project the ABS approached the Anglican Communion Office to ask if they might partner us in our work. They had two underlying reasons. First, Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship (ABS) conducts ongoing theoretical and empirical research on the subject of Bible engagement. The aim is to understand and inform the academy and the church on matters of knowing, learning and change associated with individuals' and groups' use of scripture. Second, their passion for encouraging a deeper engagement with Scripture and seeing in this project 'fellow travellers' on this road. We not only thank them for their financial contribution but for their on-going involvement in the project through commenting on paper work and contributing, through The Rev. Dr. Joseph Crockett (Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship), at two of the Regional Group meetings – East Africa (2011) and North America (2012). We are also grateful to Joseph for his reflections, as an Anglican outsider, in this report [see Section 4]. We have not sought or been given any official endorsement of our work by ABS but have been grateful of the insights offered as we have journeyed together.

### Bible Society

We are grateful to the Bible Society in Britain for their encouragement for the project and the conversations that are taking place and will continue about the synergies between this project and their h+ Course. We are also grateful for their willingness to cooperate with the project by making this course available.

### Lent Groups

The project offered a Lent Course to the Anglican Communion in 2012. An aspect of the course was for groups to offer reflections on what arose from the study. There is a summary of these reflections in Section 2 of the Report. We are grateful for all those who engaged with this aspect of the project.

### The Biblical Association for the Church of Ireland [BACI]

have sought to implement aspects of the project in Ireland. They produced a Lent course based on the project in 2011 and 2012. The latter entitled Economic Justice has been re-edited as a five-session study course and is included among the resources from the project. We are grateful for the support and contribution of BACI towards the project.

### Reference Group

Throughout the project we have used a group of Biblical experts as a 'sounding board' for what was emerging. We are grateful for their support, insights offered, criticisms made and suggestions as to how to take the project forward. We wish to thank the following and underline again that the content and conclusions of the Report can only be attributed to the Steering Group.

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## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL



### Contents

#### 1 Full Report as pdf



#### Anglican Communion Documents

1. Extracts.doc
2. Extracts.pdf
3. Themes and Principles.doc
4. Themes and Principles.pdf



#### Articles

1. Biblical Interpretation.pdf
2. Biblical Studies for Ministry.pdf
3. Can the Bible mean Whatever.pdf
4. Contextual Bible Study.pdf
5. E-mail Conversation.pdf
6. Mind the Gap 1.pdf
7. Mind the Gap 2.pdf
8. Reading the Scriptures Decently.pdf
9. Sea of Signs.pdf
10. Should We be Teaching.pdf
11. The Food of the Soul.pdf
12. The Word of God in our World.pdf
13. Vocation of HolinessToday.pdf



#### Bible Study Outlines

1. And it Was Good.pdf
2. Case Study 1.pdf
3. Case Study 2.pdf
4. Economic Justice.pdf



#### Bibliography

1. Bibliography.pdf



#### Case Studies

1. Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.pdf
2. Contextual Bible Study.pdf
3. Hong Kong and Philippine Workshop.pdf
4. South Africa.pdf
5. South Sudan.pdf
6. Survey Course.pdf



#### Regional Reports

1. Australia.pdf
2. Cuba.pdf
3. East Africa.pdf
4. North America.pdf
5. S E Asia.pdf
6. South Sudan.pdf
7. United Kingdom.pdf



## Tools

1. Brueggemann Exercise.doc
2. Brueggemann Exercise.pdf
3. Personal Influences on Reading the Bible.doc
4. Personal Influences on Reading the Bible.pdf

### South Africa Tools

- a. Checklist for Observers.pdf
- b. Example of Observers Report.pdf
- c. Group Profile.doc
- d. Group Profile.pdf
- e. Observer's Report Form.doc
- f. Observer's Report Form.pdf



## Worship

1. Case Study - Engaging the Word.doc
2. Case Study - Engaging the Word.pdf
3. John.doc
4. John.pdf
5. Lectionary Story.doc
6. Lectionary Story.pdf
7. Luke.doc
8. Luke.pdf
9. Mark.doc
10. Mark.pdf
11. Marks of Mission.doc
12. Marks of Mission.pdf
13. Matthew.doc
14. Matthew.pdf
15. Psalm Pilgrimage.doc
16. Psalm Pilgrimage.pdf
17. Science Service.doc
18. Science Service.pdf



## Other Papers

1. Case Study 1.pdf
2. Case Study 2.pdf
3. Full report (A, NZ & P).pdf
  - a. Full Feedback from Lent 2012.pdf
  - b. South African Feedback.pdf
4. November 2010.pdf
5. Survey Questionnaire.pdf
6. Survey Report.pdf

“One of the things that I personally hope this project will help us develop in the Communion is a wider and fuller biblical literacy, in which the outlines of the one great story of creation and redemption will be clear. To be a biblical Church is surely to be a community that lives out this great story day by day and commends it to people everywhere as the most comprehensive truth possible about the nature of God and God’s world. May God use this work to further that end, in our Communion and in all communities of his people.”

+Rowan Cantuar

*From the Foreword of this report*



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