

11 November 2008

I'm sure it must have been the Holy Spirit at work when, jumping off the coach that had transported bishops at the Lambeth Conference from Kent University to Canterbury Cathedral for the opening service, I fell into conversation with a young American bishop called Mary Gray-Reeves. As it happens, we had an hour and a half before the opening service began and so we had a very long first conversation that felt like the beginning of a friendship. That conversation was the beginning that has led to our companion diocesan partnership. Next day I went to my first Lambeth bible study and there, in my group, was Bishop Gerard Mpango from Tanzania. A second friendship was beginning, which has given us the third participant in the triangular partnership that begins on Advent Sunday.

My hope and prayer is that the friendship that Bishop Mary, Bishop Gerard and I are forming and the partnership to which the Dioceses of El Camino Real, Western Tanganyika and Gloucester are committing themselves will enable us to strengthen the Anglican Communion, which I believe is a real gift to the Church and to the nations, and to engage fruitfully in conversations that will help people in very different cultures to understand and respect one another.

Here in Gloucester we very much look forward to welcoming Bishop Mary here in May next year and I have dates firmly in my diary to visit El Camino Real in September. By then let's hope we have our partnership on a very firm footing.

Your bishop and your diocese are in my prayers each day - and they are joyful prayers for a partnership full of promise!

+Michael Gloucester

Bishop Michael's Homepage: <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/ministry/bishop/>