

111014 The Alphen Institute Leadership Dinner at Spier

Introduction by Isaac Shongwe

We are all part of the world. I talked to Tom about how many countries are represented here, and Tom tells me that we have South Africans, Ugandans, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, USA, Canada, India and Mozambique, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe (applause),

My name is Isaac Shongwe.

I got here on Wednesday evening. I spent yesterday morning here, whilst you were at Robben Island, and today whilst some were in the township, I could not help but be tearful to see all of you being here and going through what you're going through, following these visitations.

I got involved with the Aspen Institute initially when Peter Reiling found me in 2000/2001.

I was busy with my own business trying to be a good person, when Reiling found and invited me for the Crown Fellowship Programme. He said he thinks he can nominate me and I might have a chance to be accepted except that they only accept exceptional people.

Little did I know that there was some plot behind all this. When I was invited to wear 'The Crown,' I felt special, with special people.

I went to Aspen, which took me about 40 hours. By the time I got back, I said 'no', who wants to come here, this is too far. By the end of the first four or five days of the first seminar, I was 'sold.' I felt a great privilege to have been given the opportunity. It wasn't too long after, that I got a call from Peter, saying that I also needed to have a community project. I believed South Africa would be the 'community Project'. (Applause)

South Africa became my community project (applause). Imagine then, I'm sitting in this room and listening to all of you, talking about religion; talking about business, having people from different experiences and challengers from all parts of the world. I was hearing the experiences from your own part of the world. There is some richness in what we are doing and something special about what we doing. Given the state the world is for us to find each other, and to be able to speak the same language it means we've gone through the same processes. It is thus my dream that one day through the HGLM, which represents all of us, that we will produce heads of States, 'Heads of Corporations' but with a difference. A difference that will be deeply steeped in values-based leadership and a huge dose of community spiritedness. I feel, as I stand here, increasingly tearful that there is no place that we are not touching I can go to any of those countries, mentioned above, it will give me great pleasure to know that there are fellows in those countries who have gone through the same process.

I'm here this afternoon and tomorrow. Alimo Faroukie, who are 'victims' of Peter Reiling, „from Tanzania, from Ghana are not here due to ill health and Romeo from Mozambique, is not well too.

Tomorrow, we are talking about Pan-African strategy. That is, about taking the South African initiative position to do our responsibility, to get the African continent to take its rightful place on the global stage.

[Derek is looking at me because he knows I can talk forever – applause]

It is my pleasure to welcome, this evening as our guest speaker, my Archbishop, my friend, the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, (applause), and it's appropriate

that the Archbishop is with us this evening, especially since we did the Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture this morning.

And he asked me: “what do you want me to talk about”, I said: ‘talk about leadership,’ we are here and wants to do good in the life of this generation and our role as leaders in the world,. We have a huge responsibility. I am hoping that the ‘Arch’ is going to give us some words of encouragement, if all else fails Arch, please pray for us.”

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba:

Will do. Prayer, that I can do! (laughter) Thank you very much my brother Isaac.

A story is told of a politician who is used to having speech writers. This time, the speech writer had become tired of writing too many speeches. His boss had taken too many appointments. He didn’t leave a gap for the speech writer to reflect and write a speech. The speech writer wrote all the protocol parts, and on page two he wrote: ‘from this page onwards, you are on your own.’ (applause)

The politician who is used to reading text read ‘from this page onwards, you are on your own.’ (more applause)

So Brother Isaac, thank you very much for the privilege “to be on my own” amongst these esteemed people.

I have read the resumes briefly. I have an idea of who is here. If I was in my church, I would be wearing a long purple dress, called a cassock. The aim of the cassock is to hide the archbishop’s knees when he is terrified of the audience.

But, my friends from South Carolina, said I must overcome this and say: ‘Hey-yar’,(applause).

Isaac has asked me to reflect on leadership. I said to him it is important to create space to write something down but i don’t have time. He said that fine. So I am going to take you on a journey. Some of you may say ‘it’s a subjective journey’ and not an academic treatise nor a theological exposition, nor anything in terms of leadership theories you may have learnt. Nevertheless, it is a journey. Well if you ask an Archbishop, you will hear ‘God’ at every punctuation. God has shaped me for the role of a leader, and a spiritual leader within the context of Southern Africa. I say Anglican Church of Southern Africa, because I preside over the Anglican Church in South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and we have 2 islands, Tristan da Cunha and St Helena Island. As a spiritual leader who is working with the things of God, in communities my context is broad. It is very difficult to say; ‘I cannot comment, or say anything about politics’, for politics is not party politics but it is about how power is exercised for the benefit of God’s people and exercised by those who are elected.

Thus I consider myself a leader who is a pastor in politics. A pastor who is informed by the biblical values, that each one of us is important in the eyes of God. In god’s eye where each of each us reflects a spark of the Divine because we are created with love and out of love. I’m not only speaking from a Christian perspective, from a faith perspective because I am also a leader in our country, on the National Leaders Forum, which is a forum that brings Jews, Christians, Muslims, the Baha’i, and a number of other religions. The faith perspective holds that all of us have hope and believe that we are created in love by God, and we reflect the spark of the Divine. If we believe that to be the case, it is our moral and ethical imperative to treat every person with the dignity that is akin to God himself.

Those from Rwanda, (sorry for making an example of your country, cannot allow our politicians to say: “You’re a cockroach, you’re a cockroach, to god’s people?” What do you do with a cockroach, you smack it! ###We try in our message; we try in our intervention to really hold ourselves accountable, and to hold our politicians accountable and the business people accountable to treating each human being as a child of God, with the dignity that is akin to God.

Let me take 1 or 2 examples in that area.

In Cape Town, where the Anglican Church head offices are, and where I live, I’m known as the ‘sanitation’ or toilet Archbishop. I have taken a number of religious leaders into the squatter areas, to Nyanga, to Khayelitsha, I’ve highlighted the fact that half a million of people who live in Cape Town in formal settlements do not have proper sanitation and water. If you don’t have proper sanitation and water, there is a welter of other things that accompany this. There is disease, diarrhoea. If your only toilet is a shed toilet a mile away, you may be mugged on your way there. As religious leaders, we have highlighted that, not because we want to be ‘ministers of human settlements’, or we want to meddle in politics. We, however, believe that the people in Khayelitsha deserve to be treated with dignity. But dignity does not only come from our sacred text. It is also a Constitutional value in South Africa. In the pre-amble to the constitution of South Africa, we say: ‘we have covenanted together as South Africans, so that no-one is ever wronged or hurt. We covenanted ourselves around 3 values, namely: Human dignity, equality and freedom: So, the Sacred text finds some convergence, with constitutional values. In this regard the sanitation matter is one example that I feel as a pastor in politics, as a leader in the things of God, as a moral and spiritual leader, I cannot keep quiet when I see this wrong done to God’s people.

The 2nd example I want to share with you is what I call the ‘dignity of difference’. For lack of a better term if you need, thrive for the first example, the sanctity of life. In biblical terms it is to lay my life down in order that I may be respected as others are respected, or I demand to be treated differently, the same demand must be metered by me to other people.

As I said the second example is about the dignity of difference. Let me share an example; Within the Episcopal Church, or the Anglican Church, we have had debates around the issue of human sexuality. It has ravaged the Anglican Communion. Other churches were joyful that the Anglicans or Episcopalians do not have anything else to talk about, because they are always talking about sex. But it is about sexuality.

The debates were sore and decisive.

But during that time, I proposed in the Chambers of the Anglican Communion a phrase from my own context called ‘Indaba’. We went to the Lambeth Conference (2008), which is a conference that takes place every 10 years, a decade, by all Anglican bishops in the world. At that conference we usually pass resolutions. There are those who are very skilful in mastering resolutions and were hoping to pass a resolution that the Anglican must split into 2 because we can’t agree on the dogmatics or the theological principles around the whole issue of sexuality. We then shared the concept of ‘Indaba’ with all at this conference.

The principle of ‘Indaba’ is firmly rooted in Ubuntu. In ‘Indaba’, we say no argument is too little to be considered, nor any argument more important than another. So we meet together not bound by the need to produce a resolution. We meet together in order to get a common understanding of how we perceive the problem before us. You can imagine in the Anglican Communion Chambers that are used to debating for or against, introducing that system.

We created a necessary frustration, but it held the Anglican Communion together. And even to this day, we are still having a continuing 'Indaba'.

The continuing indaba is no longer about the emotive issue of sexuality. Now people want to understand, 'is this isiZulu terminology that the Archbishop of Cape Town wants to introduce in Lambeth Palace taking us anywhere?' Now the energy has gone somewhere. I'm sharing that example for two reasons.

I'm saying: 'leadership can still be effective through you as individual persons.' (~~Like Kerry Lee said~~): 'if I throw a pebble into a stream, it sends concentric circles and those concentric circles can have great momentum that can effect the change we want. The 'Indaba' concept has sent ripples within the 38 Anglican Communion provinces with about 48 million Anglicans. All have seen the need to hold together, the need to go back to scripture and say; 'how do we read Scripture? What is the context of those who agree and what is the context of those who do not agree on this whole issue on sexuality?'

If I heard correctly that each one of you here are to head a community project. Don't tire, keep on keeping on and ensure that you leave a legacy of good. I will not tire to stamp my legacy as a pastor. A legacy of showing up, faithfulness in these communities, saying: 'I don't have the money but I want to leave this world a better place. So your individual efforts are important and when viewed as a collective, they will leave this world a better place. I must at the same time hasten to say, at the moment the world is led by people who are too tentative. They do not have the guts to make decisions, and are too scared to lead. Here is your opportunity to 'take the bull by its horns and lead'. I will not mention names, less I get into trouble. We cannot all be the same but we all have different parts to play. Do not be like Nero, playing the harp while Rome is burning. When you realise that Rome is burning, in your own context, make a difference, call for help, and extinguish the burning bush.

When you realise that your country is producing electricity, through coal and creating more carbon dioxide, you need to ask what is development and what is sustainability. Is sustainability excluding feeding the poorest of the poor in your country? If your country is buying land in Africa because the investors have seen it as something that makes business sense, or they buy huge tracks of African agricultural land and take bio-fuels to re-sell this land and make Africa more hungry, what is your moral and ethical stance? You cannot keep quiet because you making profits. It is not about making profits only, human dignity. What value do you want to leave for those children whom we've borrowed the earth from? Are we going to leave them a depleted world wherein we have assumed values of a limitless resources-filled world, as those with no care for others, and for the future generation. This is my last and third example which I call the "live in integrity of creation" which I call the "integrity of creation". Live in 'integrity' with God's world. Make profits but remember that we have a finite world and those profits cannot be just for a few. They need to be shared with the poorest of the poor, so that all of us can benefit in this. 'God's world'. Hopefully through these three values or examples I'm creating what we call in psychology cognitive dissonance. You may deeply reflect on emotional intelligence so that you could lead as a person with values, how you could be angered by some of the things you see, but not just be consumed by your anger, instead be moved into action and say: 'I just want to uphold the sanctity of life. I just to respect dignity of difference and honour this world which God has created, because I believe that this world is finite. I hope that as many of you will be interested in what is happening in Durban with the Conference of Parties, COP 17 when people will decide and perhaps to have a binding protocol, to help us to better care for the environment. Let me go back to myself as I conclude. How do I live some of these

principles and what are the biblical values that I try to inculcate with those that I meet and those that I address. Every morning, I wake up and I go to chapel, I do meditation and I read scripture and I have Eucharist or mass, and after the Eucharist or mass my own understanding is “you don’t have communion with yourself. You have communion with God and with and for Him. And after that God says: ‘go into the world to love and serve the world’.

And this is the principle I try to do every day, ‘go into the world to love and serve the world.’ I sometimes serve the world by speaking out against corruption. I sometimes serve the world by moving out of Bishops court where I live, and going to Khayelitsha and asking: ‘How are you doing?’ to a school teacher or administratively being impossible in demanding the highest quality of work from staff.

I shared with you about the sanitation problem. I go out, I call church leaders and say: “we may not as church leaders build those toilets, but if we go to Khayelitsha and highlight the plight of those who don’t have proper sanitation, we’ll get the attention of politicians and those will be angered and moved to action. I try when I see the street beggar not to be as when I lived in Johannesburg: i open my window and smile and drive through the red robot and forget that this is a child of God. I never used to believe in charity and welfare. I used to say it’s a waste of time. Recently, I shared an apple with a beggar. The street child took the apple to her mother. The mother took a bite and gave to another street beggar to bite. The four of them shared an apple. I might have otherwise had one bite of that apple and left it in the car to rot. These are some of the examples that I do in sharing myself with others. I try to co-operate with other church leaders. I try to respect my own life. I exercise. I take my dogs for a walk. I try to ask myself daily: ‘who is my neighbour and how can I be neighbourly to others? What is compassion and contextual compassion in God’s world? And what are the justice issues within me that I need to speak about. Have I spoken to those who have or have not to share? Join me in dealing with the ills of this world so that we may make this world a better place. I am a preacher and I can go on and on, but I will end my talk here.

Thank you my Brother Isaac!”