



**World Council of Churches 9th General Assembly
Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14 - 23 February 2006
'God, in your grace, transform the world'**

Baté-Papo: 'Being Church in a Globalised World'.

Informal lunchtime conversation between

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury,

and Youth Delegate Peggy Michel, Professor of Economics from Indonesia

(from brief notes taken at the meeting)

Peggy started by saying that there seem to be two worlds: one where you go to church on Sunday, another during the rest of the week where people do their eco-thinking and ask God to bless their profits, and think that when they are rich, they will be ready to share those profits with others and the church. It is a conundrum that in countries where there are riches there are still people who haven't enough to eat or go to school. Is economics too self-contained?

Archbishop Rowan said that Christianity is against slavery, and this includes economic slavery. God make us creative in our environment, and we need freedom to do this. The global economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of our environment. What environmental issues arise because of greater globalisation of the economy?

Peggy reported the effects of a large gold-mining company in her country, which had had to begin to consider environmental issues. She asked: if you can't change everything, what can you change? What can the churches do? The challenge is different in different parts of the world. How is the Church of England considering the ethics of its investments, for example? It should persuade church financial bodies to invest positively, to encourage responsible investment. Economists are learning to factor in environmental and social costs.

Archbishop Rowan said that Christians should challenge acquisition for its own sake and encourage the creative use of money. The Church is very engaged with micro-credit, where local churches have an important role. He had seen that work very well in Wales, for example, and of course it was working all round the world. The results were slow but encouraging. This was co-operative economics.

Peggy said that micro-credit in Indonesia was not always delivered through churches. And its regulation was not always very good. Archbishop Rowan said that strategies were needed for grass roots management, and also for investment policies from the top. The Chancellor in Great Britain encourages this work.

Peggy asked about the involvement of young people in the UK. For example, there was no youth delegate from England at the Assembly, although there were some from Wales. Archbishop Rowan said that young people were certainly not as visible in the churches as they might be! Churches miss opportunities to engage with young people, who are interested in these questions, but not in the church. What should be their role within the Church? Young people want transformation and change, so can be disappointed in the Church. He didn't think that this was merely because churches were not more entertaining, however! Young people need stretching, challenging. He

commended local coalitions which draw people together across generations. The Make Poverty History campaign, for example, was simple and you could see the results. Tolerance and solidarity is needed across the generations.

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Yet again, time was short, but this was a constructive and enjoyable discussion.