



ENCOMPASS

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Controversial Depositions Dominate HOB Meeting

BY ROBERT H. LUNDY, EDITOR



Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori presides over a service for the remaining Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin, CA. (Photo courtesy Dan Evans, Lodi-News Sentinel)

The Episcopal Church's House of Bishops (HOB) met March 7-12 at the Camp Allen Conference Center in Navasota, Texas with an agenda that included both reconciliation and deposition. The meeting's opening days focused on reconciliation in the church as well as planning for this decade's Lambeth Conference; however, most of the attention went to what happened on the final day of the conference. On March 12 the HOB consented to the deposition of retired Bishop Suffragan William Jackson Cox of Maryland and Bishop John-David Schofield of San Joaquin.

Schofield resigned from the HOB earlier this year, but the Presiding Bishop, according to an Episcopal News Service article, said "Schofield's resignation did not affect his status as a bishop with jurisdiction so it was still necessary to act to consider his abandonment of the communion." According to a Title IV Review Committee, Bishop Schofield was guilty of abandonment of the communion of TEC after his diocese, San Joaquin, approved a plan to realign with the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone. The December 8th vote saw 42 of 47 congregations in the diocese approve the realignment.

Like Bishop Schofield, Bishop Cox was deposed and found guilty of abandonment of communion. The HOB's resolution claimed the 88-year-old was "departing from the Episcopal Church and stating his intention to continue to perform episcopal acts solely under the oversight and jurisdiction of a bishop outside the Episcopal Church without conforming to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church."

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A Conversation with the Rev. Dr. J.I. Packer

BY RALINDA B. GREGOR, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

In February, 11 Anglican Church of Canada parishes voted to realign with the Anglican Network in Canada (ANIC) and come under the oversight of the Province of the Southern Cone. The first to vote was St. John's Shaughnessy, in Vancouver B.C., the largest parish in the Anglican Church of Canada and church home to noted evangelical theologian, the Rev. Dr. J.I. Packer. Packer serves as an executive editor of *Christianity Today* and as Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver in addition to serving on the staff at his parish.

Shortly after St. John's Shaughnessy cast its historic vote, the rector and clergy, including Packer, were notified by diocesan bishop Michael Ingham that they had 60 days to respond to his notice of presumption of abandonment of the exercise of ministry, the first step in deposing them. *Encompass* Executive Editor Ralinda Gregor spoke with Dr. Packer to get his reaction to the events in Canada.

Ralinda Gregor: How do you feel about being given notice of presumption of abandonment of the exercise of ministry?

Dr. Packer: It is so grotesque that I find it hard to take seriously. Grotesque is the word because I have not abandoned the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican Church of Canada. On the contrary, I am realigning with a parish church that I serve at, St. John's Shaughnessy in Vancouver, and I am realigning to the Southern Cone in order to maintain the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican

Church in Canada which is the doctrine and discipline of the provinces—all provinces—of the Anglican Communion. And the further accusation that I am leaving the Anglican Church of Canada for another church organization is quite inappropriate because I am moving to another jurisdiction within the Anglican Communion—that is the jurisdiction of the Southern Cone—and doing so on the basis of the assurance given some years ago by the Archbishop of Canterbury that he acknowledges the churches and clergy that are in irreconcilable dispute with the diocesan bishops. We remain in communion with the See of Canterbury and there is no question therefore about our status as Anglicans. Bishop Ingham is proceeding against me in terms of a canon, an Anglican Church of Canada canon which was not drawn up with anything like the present situation in view. What it had in view clearly was the move from the Anglican Church of Canada to another denomination. ... The notice with its threat that Michael Ingham has sent me seems grotesque, and I don't lose sleep over it, I must confess. However I shall respond to it.

RG: What are your hopes for the Anglican Network in Canada?

JP: Well I think that our shift, our realignment to the Southern Cone, can only be temporary. My hope personally is that the attempts being made by the Common Cause fellowship to design a non-geographical third province for North America including churches in Canada along with

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The Rev. Dr. J.I. Packer, noted evangelical theologian and author, could be deposed before the end of April.

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churches from the Network in the states—I hope that that venture will come to fruition, and that we who, at the moment, are realigning as a church of the Southern Cone will be able to become part of that province. That's what I would like to see in North America because it seems to me that both the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada are so firmly in the grip of liberal theology at leadership level and at ministrative level, it's idle to envisage reformation and change there for the foreseeable future. So in face of the moral certainty that you

have two provinces — both of which are deeply committed to liberal theology and the values and the adjustments in the concepts of sin and righteousness that go with it — the only viable option for maintaining revealed truth and biblical godliness—the only alternative option is to form a new province. So I hope and trust that the Common Cause project will come to fruition. The Common Cause folk, I know, are hoping that very soon they will be able to present a blueprint of a non-geographical third province that they're trying to design. And I look for that eagerly!

RG: You aren't the only one.

JP: I believe that.

RG: In those videotapes that you and David Short did for St. John's parish you talked about Jeremiah and staying in conversation with the erring church to show them the error of their ways. How do you think this can best be done, especially since so many orthodox leaders have become frustrated with the structures of the Anglican Communion and their ineffectiveness in settling disputes?

JP: Well this is a difficult question, and I'm not sure that I have anything that would count as a substantial answer. I'll tell you that in New Westminster ... what we were aiming at was to secure a review, revision and withdrawal of the move that the diocese had made. But that proved simply fanciful as distinct from realistic. We couldn't do it. We asked, since we were out of communion with our own bishop, for adequate episcopal oversight from another bishop. The bishop of New Westminster not only refused to take our request seriously, but when the bishop of the Yukon offered to give us Episcopal oversight—that is to perform confirmations for us and be the bishop through whom new appointments would be made and so on—the bishop of New Westminster in conjunction with the then-metropolitan of the diocese ganged up against us, well against the bishop of the Yukon, and threatened him with legal proceedings for what he declared himself willing, in response to our need, to do for us. That showed that the bishop of New Westminster was now playing power politics on the issue and intended to starve us out. That is, if we weren't going to have him as our bishop—which we said we weren't because we were out of communion with him—we were not going to have anyone else. He was going to use all

the resources of the law to ensure that we didn't get anyone else.

And well, the writing was on the wall really from that point onward. We could not stay as we were indefinitely, that is without a bishop, remaining in the diocese therefore without our candidates for confirmation being confirmed and without being able to choose our own clergy for the future. ... So gratefully receiving the invitation from the Southern Cone, we accepted it and are now moving to the Southern Cone jurisdiction, which of course breaches the principal of geographically exclusive jurisdiction which is one of the principals of practice historic Anglicans have stayed with. But there's nothing in scripture that obliges the principal of episcopal jurisdiction to be understood in a geographically exclusive way—I mean only one bishop having jurisdiction within a single geographical area — and I think that that principal needs to be breached in the present situation. ... So the point is that there's nothing sacrosanct about the principal of geographically exclusive jurisdiction. Jurisdiction in itself is necessary in some shape or form, and all churches have it, but it doesn't have to be geographically exclusive in the way it historically has been among Anglicans. Of course the irony here is that in principal it goes back to the fourth century when Christianity became the most favored religion of the Empire, and the rationale of the principal then was to keep out heresy. There were heretic bishops charging around and trying to gather groups of churches who would back their own eccentric views. Well the problem for us in New West is that it's the bishop who is effectively the heretic.

RG: Do you have any advice or encouragement for orthodox parishioners both in the U.S. and Canada who are still in the Episcopal Church or the Church of Canada? And perhaps you have advice or encouragement for those who have realigned like yourself?

JP: I would only say—and I'm being deliberately cautious here—everyone must do as their own conscience prods them to do. Those of us who have realigned have done so because in conscience we are convinced that the authority of scripture and the terms of the Gospel are directly involved in the particular eccentricity of accepting gay unions as a form of holiness and blessing them accordingly. ... We have in Canada, as I think you have too in the States, clergy and people who are of the same conviction as ourselves regarding the true pastoral care of homosexuals and nonetheless are staying with the existing church and are not realigning. It's important that those who do realign and those who don't should remain friends with each other and avoid censorious remarks about each other. It's important, in other words, that all of us do what our consciences require us to do, and the best advice I can give to anybody in this situation is to pray that you—and all of us in this situation—will discern very clearly what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do. And it's notorious, in fact, in church history that the Holy Spirit has not called all to do what He calls some to do, which surprises some people. But it does seem to me that it's very clear that that is the way things work. So that's the only advice I will give.

RG: Well that's pretty good advice.

JP: You can see that for me keeping the peace—keeping conversations going, being open to discussing this matter with people with views different from yourself—is a high priority value in this situation. I want everything to be done amicably. I would think that if things are done in a spirit of hostility and mutual criticism—well, whatever is done in the way of realignment will be spiritually a loss rather than a gain. How it's done is as important, I think, as what is done.†

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Many have raised questions as to why the HOB deposed Schofield and Cox, but the greater issue seems to be with how the HOB deposed Schofield and Cox. Commenting to reporters, Bishop Schofield said, "It is a shame that the disciplinary process of The Episcopal Church has been mis-used in this way."

A few days after the March 12 depositions, reports surfaced of a possible error in the HOB's procedures that would make the depositions null and void. According to Episcopal Church canons, 51 percent of those bishops entitled to vote must be present in order to depose a bishop. The Rev. George Conger of *The Living Church* claims there were approximately 294 bishops entitled to vote at the March 12 meeting; however, fewer than 131 of those bishops were present. Had all of those present voted in favor of the deposition, the HOB would have needed an additional 18 more votes in order to reach the required 51 percent.

TEC Chancellor David Booth Beers pronounced the deposition vote to be in order in response to the questions of procedural error. "In consultation with the House of Bishops' parliamentarian prior to the vote," Beers said, "we both agreed that the canon meant a majority of all those present and entitled to vote, because it is clear from the canon that the vote had to be taken at a meeting, unlike the situation where you poll the whole House of Bishops by mail."

Beers' interpretation of the canons has not satisfied many critics. Since then, more critics have spoken against the possible procedural error in the HOB's vote to depose Cox and Schofield. Some of those critics are actual members of the House of Bishops.

The recent HOB meeting was the first one for Bishop Mark Lawrence of the Diocese of South Carolina who was consecrated in January. On March 27, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina along with Bishop Lawrence sent a letter of protest to Presiding Bishop Schori. The letter noted the Presiding Bishop's failure to follow the canons of the church and called for Schori "and the House of Bishops [to] re-visit [their] decision and allow for a canonically correct vote on the depositions of Bishops Cox and Schofield." The letter also requested the Presiding Bishop not continue with the planned election of a replace-



Newly consecrated Bishop of South Carolina, Mark Lawrence.

ment bishop in the Diocese of San Joaquin. The Presiding Bishop has not responded to the March 27th letter, and, since then, she presided over the election of Bishop Jerry Lamb as provisional bishop of San Joaquin.

The Episcopal Church is familiar with controversy; however, according to Bishop Lawrence, this most recent one is proving to be especially challenging. "The Episcopal Church is in a quagmire. If indeed the faith of the church is up for grabs and we turn to the order of the church or the constitution and canons of the church to govern our common life, and we do not follow those constitutions or canons, then there is a great deal of anxiety abroad in the church, and we find ourselves waist deep in the big muddy. ...

"I think I can say this, if one recognizes that the body that one is connected with has waded into very muddy waters and some don't seem to perceive how deep and muddy the water is, though we do, we can begin to look around and say, 'ah, where does the future lie in this? Where is the path that we should be going?' If you're waist deep in the big muddy, then the one who climbs up the tree and sees the furthest can lead ... if they're willing to follow your lead." †



A Message from the President

THE RT. REV.
DAVID C. ANDERSON
AAC PRESIDENT & CEO

There are several events within the Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Communion that you should be aware of, beginning with the last meeting

of TEC's House of Bishops (HOB). In the exodus of leaders from TEC, retired Bishop William Cox transferred to the Province of the Southern Cone of South America under Archbishop Gregory Venables. Cox was charged by TEC with performing Episcopal services in another Episcopal bishop's diocese, and the charge was to be dealt with at the March HOB meeting.

In the same time frame, the Diocese of San Joaquin, led by Bishop John-David Schofield, voted to leave TEC as a diocese and join the Southern Cone as well. Bishop Schofield was charged with "abandonment of communion" by TEC and was to be dealt with at the same meeting.

The Living Church, an independent Episcopal publication, reported that in a press conference, "Bishop Schori

stated she had not followed rules governing the requirement that the 88-year old bishop (Cox) be granted a speedy trial, that he be informed of the charges against him in a timely fashion, and that the consent of the church's senior bishops be solicited by the Presiding Bishop to suspend him from office pending trial."

Compounding this failure of due process, there was an insufficient number of bishops in attendance to take canonical deposition against the two bishops. According to TEC canon law, a quorum to conduct business is a majority of all bishops in TEC excluding those who have resigned their jurisdiction or position (Article I.2, TEC Constitution).

The canonical standard to depose a bishop is even harder to attain than a quorum to conduct business, for it requires a majority vote of (all) the whole number (adding in the two categories excluded above) of the bishops entitled to vote (Canon 9: Sec. 2). This larger number, swelled by the inclusion of retired bishops and those in special assignments, creates a correspondingly larger number for a majority. In fact, it amounts in practical terms to requiring a "super majority."

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THE AMERICAN ANGLICAN COUNCIL
2296 Henderson Mill Road, NE
Suite 406
Atlanta, GA 30345-2739

(800) 914-2000
(770) 414-1515
info@americananglican.org
www.americananglican.org

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The Presiding Bishop and Chancellor David Booth Beers, ignoring the actual constitution and canons, assured everyone that a legal number were in attendance to depose these two fine bishops, and so they did. Part of the irony is that to deal with a possible violation of a canon, the Presiding Bishop and the Chancellor were willing to violate both the constitution and the canons of TEC to get the job done. Also, in the process, the charge against Bishop Cox changed from "diocesan boundary crossing," to "abandonment of communion" without any explanation. Would that not start the clock and the process over again?

Other sad news is that Bishop Samuel Howard of Florida has set a record for deposing 22 clergy at once, purging his diocese of the orthodox. This surpasses even the 2007 Diocese of Virginia ecclesial massacre by Bishop Peter Lee of 21 clerics.

These instances of TEC harassment are countered by two items of very good news. First, TEC's litigation against the Virginia parishes that departed for the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANAm) and for the Anglican Province of Uganda hit a stumbling block. Judge Bellows, who is trying the TEC and Virginia Diocese sponsored litigation, ruled on the first of three issues, finding in favor of the departed parishes and clergy. He ruled that for purposes of the 1867 "Division Statute," a division has occurred in the Diocese of Virginia, in TEC and in the Anglican Communion. The next issues to be ruled on will be the constitutionality of the 1867 statute and the validity of the vote that each parish took in following the statute.

Additional good news is about the Global Anglican Future Conference and Pilgrimage (GAFCON) in Jerusalem this June. Invited bishops and other clergy and lay attendees are registering and booking their rooms. This is a most important turning point in the future of global Anglicanism—a time to reshape the reality of Anglican polity. Some

of the overseas bishops still need assistance with travel and registration costs, and you can contribute to "Send a Bishop to GAFCON" at the AAC website with online giving (www.americananglican.org).

The AAC has been asked to assist with the planning and registration process, as well as to support fundraising for bishop invitees, and we have been hard at work. The AAC will need to take several of our staff to the conference site to work with registration and other areas, and we need help with the unexpected costs of serving the Communion in this way. You may support our GAFCON staffing costs online also, or by contacting us by phone or by mail. This is shaping up to be an historic Jerusalem meeting. Please continue to lift it up in prayer.†

The American Anglican Council is a network of individuals (laity, deacons, priests and bishops), parishes and specialized ministries who affirm biblical authority and Christian orthodoxy within the Anglican Communion. In response to the Lord's calling and by His grace, we commit ourselves to proclaim the Good News to every person and to reform and renew the Church of Jesus Christ. We are uniting in order to fulfill our apostolic mission and ministry, working to build a faithful Anglican witness in the Americas.

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