



ENCOMPASS

News and Events from the American Anglican Council • January 2007

The Road to Tanzania

Wide-ranging Diocesan Responses in U.S. Provide Context for Primates' Decisions

BY RALINDA B. GREGOR, EXEC. EDITOR

Next month, the Primates of the Anglican Communion will meet in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, to discuss, among other subjects, the response of The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Church of Canada to the specific requests of the Windsor Report and the Primates' Dromantine Communiqué of February 2005. The Primates have given TEC time and space to respond within the framework of its constitutional processes, but the decisions made this summer by General Convention do not fully address these requests, and, more recently, numerous individual diocesan conventions have even opposed General Convention's response on the grounds that it goes too far.

The Windsor Report and Dromantine Communiqué, taken together, ask TEC whether it wishes to remain part of the Anglican Communion, and requests a moratorium on both public rites for blessings of same-sex unions and the consecration of any bishop living in a sexual relationship outside of Christian marriage.

General Convention expressed its wish to be part of the Anglican Communion through Resolution A159, in which it reaffirmed "the abiding commitment of TEC to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion," and made a "commitment to the vision of interdependent life in Christ, characterized by forbearance, trust, and respect."

However, that resolution has proven itself window dressing, especially since the only resolution that dealt with Windsor and Dromantine compliance, B033, did not address the blessing of same-sex unions and merely called on standing committees and bishops with jurisdiction to "exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion." The resolution is not a moratorium, is not enforceable, and does not specifically identify the manner of life – same-sex activity – proscribed for bishops.

At the close of General Convention,



Bishop Jack Iker (Fort Worth) speaking at his diocese's convention in November 2006. (Photo by Suzanne Gill, Diocese of Fort Worth.)

Bishop John Chane of Washington, D.C., reportedly joined by at least 20 other bishops, issued a "Statement of Conscience" opposing B033 due to its restrictive, "discriminatory" nature toward homosexuals. Conversely, 24 bishops disassociated themselves from the acts of convention that did not fully comply with the Windsor Report, characterizing the response as a whole as "clearly and simply inadequate." TEC's response was examined by the Global South Primates and found to be lacking. In their September Kigali Communiqué, the Primates said: "We deeply regret that, at its most recent General Convention, The Episcopal Church gave no clear embrace of the

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Virginia Churches Discern Way Forward

"40 Days of Discernment" a model for Episcopal churches nation-wide

BY JENNIFER M. ABEL, EDITOR

When an Episcopal church can claim many of America's Founding Fathers as former members, history and tradition assume high importance. During this time of crisis and apostasy in the Church, many parishes wrestle with the question of how to retain their rich historical legacies while remaining true to Christ and Holy Scripture.

The Falls Church (Falls Church, Va.) and Truro Church (Fairfax, Va.) are two of the oldest Episcopal churches in the United States, tracing their roots back to the pre-Revolutionary War days of the early 1700s, with George Washington and other influential Americans numbering among each parish's early vestrymen and church members. Because of their heritage, it is unsurprising that both The Falls Church

(TFC) and Truro, along with a handful of other Virginia churches sharing similar bonds with America's past, have been carefully reconsidering their relationships with The Episcopal Church (TEC).

After a time of focused discernment and reflection this past fall, both churches' vestries announced in November their near-unanimous decisions to disaffiliate from TEC and the Diocese of Virginia. Congregational votes in mid-December overwhelmingly confirmed the vestries' recommendations to disaffiliate; to affiliate with the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), the U.S. missionary branch of the Anglican Church of Nigeria; and to retain their property. Nine other churches from the Diocese of Virginia also announced disaffiliation from the diocese during the last quarter of 2006, includ-

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A Message from the President

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

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24)

Let me begin by wishing you a blessed and safe New Year! We have concluded a dynamic year and are headed into, I pray, an even more pivotal one. Things are finally starting to happen. It is my hope that we will now see, year by year, a positive recapturing of orthodox Anglicanism. The work we are all doing for the sake of the historic Gospel, and the propagation of the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ alone, isn't just for ourselves—it is for our children, grandchildren and neighbors, near and far, and for the decades ahead.

This last year, several important events occurred, and as many as possible are highlighted in our "2006 in Review" insert page. Staffing The Episcopal Church (TEC) General Convention for two weeks in Columbus, Ohio, took an enormous amount of time, effort and finances for the American Anglican Council (AAC), but it was worth it. TEC clearly demonstrated its rejection of the Windsor Report, and Canterbury as well as the Global South Primates recognized the Church's failure to comply. Global South Primates meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, have addressed the issue by framing a process, now underway, to meet the needs of U.S. orthodox Episcopal dioceses and churches. Many parishes leaving TEC are finding refuge in the rapidly growing Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), a missionary district authorized by the Anglican

Church of Nigeria and headed by the Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns. CANA has the advantage of being canonical and structural as well as providing a bishop "on the ground."

As we transition to 2007, the AAC's ministry in three critical areas will continue. We are supporting those who are staying in TEC for the foreseeable future, helping them organize, prepare and build firewalls to protect themselves from hostile takeovers by revisionist bishops and dioceses. We also work with those leaving TEC, giving advice and counsel and providing legal networking with others who have successfully come through the process. No church should leave TEC without receiving AAC counsel (done in the strictest confidence) and taking three to six months for adequate preparation. Thirdly, we work with new Anglican church plants and parishes that have left TEC to assist them with their specific and unique needs.

Overarching these three areas is our work with the international Anglican community to continue strong Primatial support around the globe, and to work for a future orthodox Anglican province in the United States or all of North America. The AAC also works with the Common Cause Partners for common action and support among the major orthodox Anglican groups in North America.

As we look to the new year, the Primates' meeting in Tanzania will be tremendously important, not only in shaping a response to orthodox dioceses' requests for Alternative Primatial Oversight (APO), but also in deciding the fate of TEC as a member of the Anglican Communion, and dealing with the sticky issue of who will be invited to the once-a-decade Lambeth Conference of Bishops, to be held in 2008 in Canterbury.

We are greatly encouraged by the progress made in 2006 and intend to press forward in 2007 so that the cause of the Gospel, the work of ministry, and the realignment of orthodox Anglicanism can all advance. Please join with us in this historic work, and let us all be able to say, *"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."* †

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minimal recommendations of the Windsor Report. We observe that a number of the resolutions adopted by the Convention were actually contrary to the Windsor Report. We are further dismayed to note that their newly elected Presiding Bishop also holds to a position on human sexuality – not to mention other controversial views – in direct contradiction of Lambeth 1.10 and the historic teaching of the Church. The actions and decisions of the General Convention raise profound questions on the nature of Anglican identity across the entire Communion."

Individual Diocesan Responses

Since June's convention, 74 of TEC's 110 dioceses have had the opportunity to affirm or deny TEC's response through their internal constitutional processes carried out in diocesan conventions. Many have chosen to ignore the issue, focusing instead on furthering the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, while others have used the opportunity to distance themselves from TEC and reaffirm their commitment to the Anglican

Communion.

In response to TEC's lack of Windsor compliance and ongoing biblical unfaithfulness, the Diocese of San Joaquin took the first step in December in reaffirming its ties to the Anglican Communion through the overwhelming approval of a constitutional amendment that declares "the Diocese shall be a constituent member of the Anglican Communion and in full communion with the See of Canterbury." The amendment must be approved by a second vote with a two-thirds majority in 2007, though it is a major first step toward the diocese's break with TEC.

In addition to affirming their standing committees' requests for Alternative Primatial Oversight, the dioceses of Pittsburgh and Fort Worth also withdrew consent for membership in their respective TEC provinces.

Some revisionist dioceses, on the other hand, expressed their opposition to the requests made by the Windsor Report and Dromantine Communiqué. Nine dioceses (California, El Camino Real, Los Angeles, Michigan, New Hampshire, Northern Michigan, Olympia, Rochester and Utah) approved resolutions in support of the consecra-

tion of gay bishops. Similar resolutions narrowly failed in Connecticut, and one was withdrawn in Colorado (which held a resolution-free diocesan convention).

In the Diocese of New York, the two parts of a proposed anti-B033 resolution were considered separately, which essentially negated the resolution. The first part, which was approved, reiterated a 1978 decision that the Standing Committee and Commission on Ministry should not raise the issue of sexual preference in considering a candidate for ordination. The second part, which was narrowly defeated, called for the bishop and Standing Committee to ignore the sexual orientation of

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The Diocese of San Joaquin meeting in convention in December 2006. (Photo courtesy of the Diocese of San Joaquin.)

2006 in Review

The theological crisis facing Anglicans world-wide heightened in 2006 and reached a long-awaited climax. Would realignment of the Anglican Communion entail a new Anglican branch in the United States? Global South Primates answered “yes” at a September meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, and although it will take time to build the new structure, the move has given hope to U.S. Anglicans for future renewal and reform of Anglicanism in North America. The backing of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the formation of an Anglican Covenant to unite Anglicans has further levied the work of the Global South, and when Anglican Primates hold their annual meeting in Tanzania

this February, the specifics of these plans will assume an important place on the agenda.

Meanwhile, orthodox Anglicans remained under fire from the increasingly hostile leadership of The Episcopal Church (TEC), with the pressure to “conform or leave” rising daily. Nevertheless, the bold witness of Anglican Primates and other Christian leaders around the world, both present and past, have bolstered the courage of the U.S. faithful, helping them to make unprecedented moves in the history of the Church that seek faithfulness to the Lord and His Word above all else – no matter the consequences. †

Significant Events of 2006

U.S. News Highlights:

▶ *General Convention Walks Apart*

◆ General Convention 2006 failed to adequately respond to the Windsor Report, thereby choosing to walk apart from the rest of the Anglican Communion

◆ The convention elected a new Presiding Bishop who has already proven herself even more divisive and revisionist than her predecessor, Frank Griswold

◆ The convention also officially changed the Church's name from “Episcopal Church USA” (ECUSA) to “The Episcopal Church” (TEC)

◆ Resolutions and subsequent actions by Church leadership have essentially replaced the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the mission and heart of the Church with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals

▶ *New Presiding Bishop Further Divides Church*

◆ Katharine Jefferts Schori, formerly the bishop of Nevada, was inducted Nov. 4 at Washington National Cathedral as the first female Presiding Bishop in the Anglican Communion in a pompous ceremony that mixed pagan and other non-Christian religious symbols and rituals with traditional Anglican liturgy

◆ She espouses a theology that denies the basics of the Christian faith, embraces radical feminism, and focuses almost exclusively on social activism; her theology that Jesus is *a* way but not *the only* way to salvation has become well known through her interviews with *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and other news sources. In addition, she keeps no secret of her ongoing record of pro-homosexual activism.

◆ Less than a month after taking office, Jefferts Schori sent a threatening letter to Bishop John-David Schofield



The AAC's Wall of Honor now holds nearly 40 names of heroes of the faith - clergy and deacons who have been unjustly deposed or inhibited because of their commitment to the faith once delivered. (AAC Photo)

(San Joaquin) warning him to not withdraw his diocese from the Church – or else renounce his orders

▶ *U.S. Orthodox Dioceses Reject Revisionist TEC Leadership*

◆ Seven dioceses rejected TEC leadership and appealed to Canterbury for Alternative Primatial Oversight (APO) following General Convention 2006; the seven dioceses represent around 400 churches, or about 6% of Episcopal churches. (An eighth diocese, Dallas, also made the request but later withdrew it.)

◆ In December, San Joaquin's diocesan convention went a step further, voting to reaffirm its ties to the Anglican Communion and removing Episcopal Church loyalty from its canons; if the amendment is approved by the 2007 diocesan convention, it would effectively withdraw the diocese from TEC

◆ 21 TEC bishops met in September and issued the “Camp Allen Statement,” an expression of solidarity that affirmed the Windsor Report, the inadequacy of General Convention's response, and some dioceses' need for APO

◆ Talks among opposing U.S. bishops at a September summit in New York, called by the Archbishop of Canterbury, failed to produce an adequate solution for APO dioceses; orthodox bishops refused to attend a second summit in November

◆ The Presiding Bishop and other bishops produced a highly inadequate APO solution at the end of November, proposing a primatial vicar who, under the authority of the Presiding Bishop, would oversee APO dioceses

▶ *Revisionists Turn Up the Heat*

A few of the significant hostile and rebellious actions by TEC over the past year...

◆ Though no more openly gay bishops were elected, episcopal election ballots in two dioceses (California and Newark) contained partnered homosexuals as nominees, indicating open defiance of both Scripture and the worldwide Anglican Communion (the Newark nomination occurred just one week after General Convention ended)

◆ Same-sex blessings continue to occur with the bishop's knowledge and/or permission in at least 17 Episcopal dioceses. At diocesan convention in October, Bishop Smith announced his approval of the practice within the Diocese of Connecticut, and Bishop Maze (Arkansas) announced in July through a pastoral letter that he would permit clergy in his diocese to “experiment with pastoral responses to same-sex couples seeking affirmation and support.”

◆ TEC formed a House of Bishops' Task Force on Property Disputes to serve as a “national coordinated defense” against churches and dioceses that leave TEC to affiliate with other Anglican dioceses and try to retain their property; a report distributed in November by Chair Bishop Stacy Sauls (Lexington) announced the task force's focus on “problem dioceses” where “loyalty” to TEC is in question

◆ Four California bishops brought

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“abandonment of communion” charges – unsuccessfully – against Bishop Schofield of the Diocese of San Joaquin during the summer; attacks were also leveled against retired Bishop William Cox for ordinations performed in 2005 at Uganda-affiliated Christ Church, Overland Park, Kan.

◆ Bishop Peter Lee of Virginia issued threats against congregations in the Diocese of Virginia on the eve of votes on whether to leave the diocese, personally threatening individual vestry members, dismissing the agreed-upon protocol, and warning that the churches’ property could be retained for the diocese’s and national Church’s interests

◆ In December, Bishop John Howard (Florida) deposed six clergy who already left TEC for overseas Anglican oversight; at the same time, he announced the “renunciation of ministry” of several priests who have never renounced their orders, calling into question everything the bishop says

◆ Dioceses continue to pass pro-homosexuality resolutions and reject warnings against straining bonds with worldwide Anglicans

▶ **TEC Membership Decline Continues**

◆ Approximately 40 churches withdrew from TEC or split to form new Anglican churches in 2006, including one of the largest Episcopal churches – Christ Church, Plano (Diocese of Dallas) – and churches from the dioceses of Florida, Georgia, Los Angeles, Massachusetts, Ohio, Rhode Island, Rio Grande, San Diego and Virginia. Dozens of other churches have also indicated plans to leave. Approximately 250 Episcopal congregations have now withdrawn/split from the national Church since General Convention 2003.

◆ TEC membership and Average Sunday Attendance figures dipped again in 2005, making for three-year decreases of 115,000 members and about 60,000 average attendees (representing 5% and 7% declines, respectively); 2006 figures are expected to reflect further decline. Many in TEC blame membership decline on deaths – as if TEC were the only denomination that has to deal with that factor

International News Highlights:

▶ **Global South Primates issued the Kigali Communiqué** in September, calling for a three-pronged action plan to support biblically faithful Anglicans in North America: provision of Alternative Primatial Oversight; formation of a



Global South Primates and officials meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, in September 2006. (Photo courtesy of Global South Anglican.)

new ecclesiastical structure in the United States; and plans for the 2007 Primates’ meeting that include the presence of another U.S. Primate to represent (and be chosen by) biblically faithful Anglicans in America

▶ **Nigeria sent its first missionary bishop to America:**

The Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns was consecrated as a bishop in the Anglican Church of Nigeria in August, becoming the first bishop for the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANAm).

▶ **Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams backed leading Primates** by endorsing proposals for an Anglican Covenant to bring unity within the Anglican Communion; releasing a statement in March stating that the debate on sexuality would not be reopened at the next Lambeth Conference in 2008; and calling General Convention’s response to Windsor and the Primates incomplete

▶ **The Church of England**, like the U.S. Episcopal Church, remains embroiled in controversy over issues of Scriptural authority, including homosexuality and blessings of same-sex unions

▶ **The Panel of Reference** issued a communiqué in May as well as later statements responding to appeals made by the Connecticut Six, Florida Six, Diocese of Fort Worth, Diocese of New Westminster (Canada) and others; in each case, the panel either refused to consider the case or issued a response considered inadequate by the appealing party. The panel’s work (and lack thereof) has rendered it basically ineffective at resolving disputes in the Anglican Communion. †

AAC 2006 Ministry Highlights

In 2006, the AAC...

❖ Added numerous new individual and parish affiliate members, as well as a new affiliate ministry, making for a 12 percent increase in individual memberships for the year and the addition of 26 new parish affiliates

❖ Worked for clarity and defended biblical orthodoxy at General Convention 2006 with the help of six staff members and more than 40 volunteers

❖ Adopted and oversaw a new lay outreach program, *Episcopal Witness*, founded by Bill Boniface; six training sessions were held nation-wide to train coordinators for the program

❖ Distributed nearly 10,000 hard copies of the second edition of the AAC’s educational booklet “Equipping the Saints,” published in March; and distributed almost 1,000 copies of the AAC’s summary publication on General Convention 2006 (both publications are also available online)

❖ Continued working daily with numerous congregations

and individuals, providing advice and assistance in a variety of ways

❖ Assisted with publicity and other aspects of the Common Cause Mid-South conference in May

❖ Was represented by staff at the installation of the new Archbishop of South East Asia, the Most Rev. John Chew (February); Church of England Synod (July); consecration of Bishop Minns (and other Church of Nigeria bishops) in Abuja, Nigeria (August); Convention of the Diocese of Springfield (October); and several other events and meetings †



Daily AAC legislative briefings during General Convention kept bishops, delegates and media updated on convention events and votes. (AAC Photo by Dennis Egan.)

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ing: Christ Our Lord, Lake Ridge; All Saints', Dale City; Church of the Apostles, Fairfax; Church of the Word, Gainesville; St. Paul's, Haymarket; St. Stephen's, Heathsville; St. Margaret's, Woodbridge; Potomac Falls Episcopal, Sterling; and Christ the Redeemer, Centreville.

Combined, Truro and TFC will take over 5,000 members with them, and the 11 churches collectively represent nearly 10 percent of the Diocese of Virginia's membership.

The mood surrounding the two churches' vestry decisions was "prayerful and somber," according to Truro Senior Warden Jim Oakes. The vestries' votes were taken with "great sadness and yet firm conviction," TFC Senior Warden Tom Wilson echoed in a press release.

Questions regarding the future of the Virginia churches' property surfaced immediately, particularly since the disputes involve historic property worth more than \$25 million. TFC and Truro are two of the wealthiest Episcopal churches in the nation and both hope to retain their property; however, the guidebook used during their decision-making period indicates that neither church has entered their decision without realizing that the ownership of their historic property is at risk: "Decisions concerning the future direction of our congregations should not turn on whether there is a guaranteed outcome concerning the ownership of church property, but on the Lord's leading," the guidebook explains. "Property is a resource that should facilitate God's vision for your congregation, not hinder it."

The Process: 40 Days of Discernment

How did some of TEC's oldest and most influential churches reach their decisions? The process was dubbed "40 Days of Discernment" – a take-off on the 40 Days of Purpose program implemented by many churches of various denominations over the past several years. Forty Days stems from two years of regular conversation among a group of wardens and clergy in the Diocese of Virginia and is intended to be a "deliberate time of prayerful discernment." The process is facilitated by a 96-page "40 Days of Discernment Guidebook," which was "authored by many different people from several Virginia congregations and other experts during the summer of 2006."

Up to two dozen churches in the Diocese of Virginia have accompanied or considered accompanying TFC and Truro in undergoing this discernment period. All but one of the churches announcing their disaffiliation deci-

sions in December used the 40 Days model. Each church undergoing the process seeks to answer, through a six-week period of disciplined prayer, fasting and study, the question, "Can orthodox, biblically committed congregations continue to remain affiliated with The Episcopal Church in the U.S.; or has the time come to seek alternative affiliation with some other branch of Anglicanism?"

The 40 Days process has reached beyond the Virginia borders, even to some non-Episcopal churches. Copies of the guidebook have been distributed to, or downloaded online by, churches nation-wide whose leaders are now adapting the model for their own congregations, according to the Rev. Dr. Rick Wright, TFC's senior associate rector.

Urging congregations to face the current situation head-on with honesty and faithful stewardship, the 40 Days process is hallmarked by a desire to seek God's will above all else. The accompanying guidebook is therefore highly devotional in nature, with a majority of its pages consisting of daily devotional guides that walk participants through the book of First Corinthians. In addition, introductory articles give biblical guidance on prayer and fasting, returning participants to the "basics" of biblical discipline and practice. Participants are constantly encouraged to "seek Jesus Christ" and His will above all else, not allowing anything – whether emotional attachment, family heritage, or property concerns – to prevent them from following His desire for their church. The guidebook also offers frequent reminders of God's faithfulness and promises to those who trust and obey Him.

Small groups are a central component to 40 Days of Discernment, and additional prayer meetings are also recommended. Due to the goal of reaching a congregational agreement on "the way forward" in TEC and the Anglican Communion, the guidebook's weekly readings and small group discussion questions focus on topics directly relevant to the crisis in the church, including Anglican history, property issues, and what it means to be "Episcopalian."

"This study is an excellent tool for any Episcopal church wanting to involve the entire congregation in a process to prayerfully and humbly address its future with TEC and the Anglican Communion," said the Rev. Canon David C. Anderson, American Anglican Council President and CEO.

The 40 Days of Discernment Guidebook is available online in PDF format at www.40daysofdiscernment.org. †



*The historic Falls Church.
(Photo courtesy of The Falls Church.)*

The Rev. John Yates, Rector, The Falls Church:

"For years I have believed that renewal of the Episcopal Church was not only possible but worth working towards. That is the way we viewed our role within TEC. The Falls Church has hoped to be a lighthouse of renewal and a model of orthodox Anglican faith. Certainly renewal is always possible with God, but all the signs I see now lead me to believe that TEC is inevitably headed away from historic biblical faith. TEC is now basically a radically liberal, Unitarian-like church with tinges of ceremonial high-church flavor, and it is pathetically shrinking numerically week by week. Yes, there are still exceptions to this, but the exceptions are rarer and rarer..."

"I dream of an Anglican Church in North America that is truly biblically centered, mission-focused, evangelistically on fire, doctrinally sound, and led by wise, passionate, godly leaders – a church that will offer confused 21st century postmoderns a real faith, a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, and community in which the healing, powerful, and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is being celebrated in worship and fellowship day by day."

(Excerpt from 40 Days of Discernment Guidebook "Introduction")



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candidates “when considering consents to the ordination and consecration of Bishops-elect.”

The nine approved diocesan resolutions are similar to New York’s in their opposition to B033 by claiming it discriminates against individuals based on sexual orientation, thereby violating TEC canons.

Perhaps the most radical of these nine resolutions is the one passed in Olympia, which, like many of the others, restates Title III, Canon 1, Section 2, which allows access to the discernment process for ministry regardless of “race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age.” However, the resolution also affirms the “full inclusion in all areas of the life of the Episcopal Church” of those who are “single or partnered heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered persons, as well as those who are in non-celibate heterosexual relationships and those who are divorced.” The word “married” is never mentioned.

The Diocese of California asks its members to go a step further than Olympia’s embrace of “anything goes” sexuality by characterizing “heterosexism” as a *sin* that must be repented of. As part of the listening process in California, the resolution calls for a “truth and reconciliation” liturgy at Grace Cathedral to “repent of the sin of heterosexism” and renew baptismal promises.

Although General Convention did not address the requested moratorium on conducting rites of same-sex blessings, a handful of dioceses have made their intentions clear through their constitutional processes. Two dioceses, Northern Indiana and Rio Grande, have affirmed the Windsor Report recommendations and their intent to live by them. The Diocese of Fort Worth approved a resolution reaffirming Lambeth Resolution 1.10 as the standard for sexual behavior.

However, two dioceses, Connecticut and Massachusetts, affirmed same-sex blessings through their diocesan conventions. During his diocesan address, Connecticut Bishop Andrew Smith announced his intent “to offer Christ’s blessing for those same-sex committed partners among us who seek, in faith, the recognition, prayer and support of the Church for their lives as followers and servants of Christ.”

Smith was careful to say that he was not authorizing a new sacrament and that the same-sex blessings should not be “public ceremonies that look and sound like weddings,” but his carefully worded language does not disguise the intent to create rites for blessing same-sex unions. His proposal was affirmed and approved by a diocesan resolution.

The Diocese of Massachusetts also championed same-sex blessings, approving a resolution that requests the next General Convention to authorize use of Book of Common Prayer marriage rites for same-sex unions in U.S. states that allow same-sex marriage. It also calls for changes to the canons that would substitute “two adults” or “spouse” for “a man and a woman” and “husband and wife” when referring to holy matrimony in Title 1, Canons 18 and 19.

Decision Time

When the Primates meet next month, they will, no doubt, carefully examine these decisions and assess whether TEC has chosen to walk together with or apart from the Anglican Communion. The evidence reveals that TEC, however much it wants to remain part of the Communion, fails to comply with not only the Primates’ requests but also biblical standards upheld by Scripture. It remains to be seen whether the Primates will impose Christian discipline or whether some of the provinces will be allowed to continue on the same path as Israel in the time of Judges, when “everyone did as he saw fit.” †

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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