



July/August 2006

ENCOMPASS

News and Events from the American Anglican Council Mission and Ministry Network

General Convention Chooses to Walk Apart, Rejects Biblical Faith

BY JENNIFER M. ABEL, EDITOR

The 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) failed to uphold biblical Christianity and traditional Anglican doctrine and practice at its triennial meeting this past June in Columbus, Ohio. The decisions of the convention – which made national headlines – took few by surprise, though the reality of the broken, heterodox condition of the historic church is nevertheless heartbreaking for faithful Episcopalians who mourn the moral and theological decay of their beloved church. ECUSA's failure to adequately respond to the Anglican Communion's requests (embodied in the Windsor Report) has thrown the future of the communion into question, with the continued unity of the communion "impossible" in light of the current situation, according to Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

General Convention 2006: What Happened

The charge of the 75th General Convention was to respond to the 2004 Windsor Report, the work of a special Anglican Communion commission calling on the U.S. branch of the communion to repent of its past actions (including the 2003 consecration of Gene Robinson), and to enforce moratoria on both same-sex blessings and consecrations of homosexual bishops.



Above: AAC staff were present at General Convention along with a team of over 40 dedicated volunteers, urging a clear response to the Windsor Report and informing and encouraging deputies and bishops each day at a lunchtime legislative briefing. AAC Chief Operating Officer Canon Ellis Brust addresses the lunchtime briefing above. (Photo by Dennis Egan.)

The report has been criticized by some for being too soft, yet ECUSA still was not able to comply with any of these three conditions. Instead, a last-minute, tepid resolution was passed which calls for the exercise of "restraint by not consenting" to consecrations of individuals "whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church." The passage of Resolution B033 came as an eleventh-hour decision after several agonizing days of largely unproductive debate within legislative and committee sessions.

The resolution was viewed by many as a weak attempt to feign compliance with the Windsor Report, especially since a similarly-worded resolution (A161) was rejected a day before. Resolution B033 was considered on the last

day of convention only after a joint session plea by Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, who knew that if a Windsor response was not delivered, the church would likely face expulsion from the next Lambeth Conference and possibly from the entire Anglican Communion.

There is no enforcement method for B033, nor do all bishops plan on following it. Bishop Peter Beckwith of Springfield called the resolution "a mere smokescreen when placed in context with the overall tenor of convention's words and actions." Besides B033, a number of resolutions passed that advance the homosexual agenda; meanwhile, no

resolution passed expressing repentance for past un-Scriptural actions – only regret for the pain caused by those actions. Same-sex blessings were not even addressed, although Bishop Griswold himself admitted in a National Public Radio interview a week later that the "pastoral practice" within some dioceses is to allow the blessings. Perhaps even more telling was convention's refusal to even consider a resolution that would have upheld Jesus as the one and only path to salvation.

New Presiding Bishop Provides Further Controversy

During General Convention 2006, the

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Church of England Synod: A Window into Canterbury

BY CYNTHIA P. BRUST, EXEC. EDITOR

The Church of England's General Synod met July 7-11, 2006 at the University of York. Synod not only approved the principle of women bishops by a 228-119 vote but also passed a motion to form a legislative drafting group that will be responsible for "preparing the draft measure and amending canon necessary to remove the legal obstacles to the consecration of women as bishops." The motion also encouraged dioceses, deaneries and parishes "to continue serious debate and reflection on the theological, practical, ecumenical and missiological aspects of the issue" of women bishops. Those opposed to the measure noted

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Left: Mrs. Cynthia P. Brust, AAC Director of Communications, reported on General Convention 2006 to an Anglican Mainstream meeting, gathered during the Church of England's July General Synod. Participants included approximately 20 percent of Synod members present for sessions. An AAC

partner, Anglican Mainstream is an international advocacy group for biblical Anglicanism based in the UK. (Photo provided by Anglican Mainstream.)

Presiding Bishop-elect Katharine Jefferts Schori



Above: The presiding bishop-elect at a press conference following her election. (Photo by Andy Figueroa.)

On the mission of the church:

TIME Question: What will be your focus as head of the U.S. church?

Jefferts Schori: Our focus needs to be on feeding people who go to bed hungry, on providing primary education to girls and boys, on healing people with AIDS, on addressing tuberculosis and malaria, on sustainable development. That ought to be the primary focus.

On Jesus as the only path to salvation:

TIME Question: Is belief in Jesus the only way to get to heaven?

Jefferts Schori: We who practice the Christian tradition understand him as our vehicle to the divine. But for us to assume that God could not act in other ways is, I think, to put God in an awfully small box.

On the after-life:

CNN Question: So what happens after I die?

Jefferts Schori: What happens after you die? I would ask you that question. But what's important about your life? What is it that has made you a unique individual? What is the passion that has kept you getting up every morning and engaging the world? There are hints within that about what it is that continues after you die.

On homosexuality:

CNN Question: Is it a sin, is it against God's will, is it wrong to be gay?

Jefferts Schori: I don't believe so.

CNN Question: Tell me why.

Jefferts Schori: I believe that God creates us with different gifts. Each one of us comes into this world with a different collection of things that challenge us, and things that give us joy and allow us to bless the world around us. And some people come into this world with affections ordered toward other people of the same gender and some people come into this world with affections directed at people of the other gender. †

Sources: Top two quotes above from interview with Jeff Chu of TIME Magazine, published 7/10/06. Bottom two quotes from transcriptions from the Albert Mohler Program, which used portions of the CNN Live program of 6/19/06.

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House of Bishops also elected the Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Bishop of Nevada, as the next Presiding Bishop – an individual who will undoubtedly lead the church even further from biblical Christianity than the current presiding bishop has done. As the first ever woman primate among the 38 primates of the Anglican Communion, Presiding Bishop-elect Jefferts Schori provides unequivocal evidence of the Episcopal Church's intentional revisionist path.

A relatively inexperienced bishop of one of the smallest Episcopal dioceses, Jefferts Schori has not minced words since her election: She has declared an unwavering commitment to the homosexual agenda; says she does not be-

lieve homosexuality is a sin; has indicated that she does not believe Jesus is the unique path to salvation; called on "Mother Jesus" in her first homily at convention after her election; and has been unable to answer the question of what happens after people die. She is committed to a gospel of social action and justice that embraces diversity and relativism, rather than Christ's Gospel of transformation that declares Jesus as the "way, the truth and the life." Furthermore, she assured both Houses in separate addresses prior to the vote on B033 that she is "fully committed to the full inclusion of gays lesbians" and "[does] not understand this resolution as slamming the door." Her leadership, which begins in November 2006, also puts three dioceses in an "untenable situation" due to their opposition to

women's ordination, Bishop Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh said in a statement after her election.

Bishop Jack Iker (Fort Worth) summarized in a June 28 report to his diocese: "Our new Presiding Bishop-elect is an ardent feminist and gay rights activist. Her theology is thoroughly revisionist and liberal."

Immediate Responses from Within

Immediately following the passage of B033, a gathering of orthodox Episcopal bishops read a statement declaring the resolution inadequate, disassociating themselves from the action, and reaffirming their commitment to "embrace and live under the Windsor

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Above: Orthodox leaders speak during AAC legislative briefings held daily throughout General Convention. Left: The Rev. Canon David Anderson (AAC President and CEO); Center: The Rt. Rev. Peter Beckwith (Bishop of Springfield); and the Rev. Canon Ellis Brust (AAC Chief Operating Officer and Chaplain to the President). (Photos by Dennis Egan and Andy Figueroa.)

General Convention 2006 Legislation

Passed:

Resolution B033 “On Election of Bishops”

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 75th General Convention receive and embrace The Windsor Report's invitation to engage in a process of healing and reconciliation; and be it further *Resolved*, that this Convention therefore call upon 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.

Resolution A095 “Gay and Lesbian Affirmation”

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the Episcopal Church's historical support of gay and lesbian persons as children of God and entitled to full civil rights; and be it further *Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the 71st General Convention's action calling upon “municipal council, state legislatures and the United States Congress to approve measures giving gay and lesbian couples protection[s] such as: bereavement and family leave policies; health benefits; pension benefits; real-estate transfer tax benefits; and commitments to mutual support enjoyed by non-gay married couples”; and be it further *Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention oppose any state or federal constitutional amendment that prohibits same-sex civil marriage or civil unions.

Resolution A167 (partial text) “‘Full and Equal Claim’ for All the Baptized”

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirm that gay and lesbian persons are by Baptism full members of the Body of Christ and of The Episcopal Church as



Above: The House of Deputies in session on the last day of convention. (Photo by Andy Figueroa.)



Above: The Greater Columbus Convention Center, site of the 75th General Convention, June 13-21, 2006. (Photo by Dennis Egan.)

“children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church” (GC 1976-A069); and be it further *Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention reiterate its apology “on behalf of The Episcopal Church to its members who are gay or lesbian, and to lesbians and gay men outside the Church, for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church,” ... and be it further

Resolved, That, in evidence of that apology, The Episcopal Church pledge to include openly gay and lesbian persons on every committee, commission or task force developed for the specific purpose of discussing issues about sexuality and request the same of our sister churches in the Anglican Communion and Anglican Communion bodies...

Resolution D069 “Supreme Authority of Scripture”

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention acknowledges that the Bible has always been at the centre of Anglican belief and life, and declares its belief that Scripture is the Church's supreme authority, and as such ought to be seen as a focus and means of unity.

(Final wording:)

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention acknowledge the authority of the triune God, exercised through Scripture.

Discharged (would not consider):

Resolution D058 “Salvation Through Christ Alone”

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church declares its unchanging commitment to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the only name by which any person may be saved (Article XVIII); and be it further *Resolved*, That we acknowledge the solemn responsibility placed upon us to share Christ with all persons when we hear His words, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No-one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6); and be it further *Resolved*, That we affirm that in Christ there is both the substitutionary essence of the Cross and the manifestation of God's unlimited and unending love for all persons; and be it further *Resolved*, That we renew our dedication to be faithful witnesses to all persons of the saving love of God perfectly and uniquely revealed in Jesus and upheld by the full testimony of Holy Scripture. †

Official General Convention 2006 Legislation Webpage: <http://gc2006.org/legislation/>



The American Anglican Council wishes to thank all volunteers who gave of their time, resources and talents during General Convention. We could not have done it without you!

Above left: Keli Pryor (left) of the AAC greets visitors to the AAC booth in the General Convention exhibit hall. (Photo by Fr. Lance Giuffrida.)

Above right: The AAC's integral role in providing a "home base" for the orthodox attending convention was supplemented at this year's convention by the outstanding work of several die-hard orthodox live-bloggers (such as the Rev. Matt Kennedy, pictured above), who recorded the happenings at nearly every important meeting and briefing - even if it meant sitting on the floor in order to secure an electrical outlet. (Photo by Andy Figueroa.)

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Report without equivocation." To date, 24 bishops (active and retired) have signed the statement. (The statement is available online on the AAC General Convention website: www.americananglican.org/gc06/.)

Almost simultaneously, a handful of revisionist bishops - also dissatisfied with the resolution - issued a "Statement of Conscience" opposing B033 due to its restrictive, "discriminatory" nature toward homosexuals. The list of bishops who assented to this statement has not been officially confirmed but at the least includes the bishops of Chicago; Newark; Northern Michigan; Rochester; Vermont; Washington, D.C.; and Wyoming. Bishop John Chane of Washington, D.C., has stated that he fully intends to defy Resolution B033.

Two clashing worldviews have coexisted in the Episcopal Church for some time and have now reached the breaking point; a house divided cannot stand. Within a month following convention, seven orthodox dioceses (Central Florida, Dallas, Fort Worth, Pittsburgh, San Joaquin, South Carolina and Springfield) had rejected the leadership of Jefferts Schori; six of these appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury for "alternative primatial oversight," while the Diocese of Dallas asked for a "direct pastoral relationship" with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Additionally, the largest parish (based on average Sunday attendance) in the Episcopal Church, Christ Church (Plano, Texas), declared its plans to disassociate from ECUSA. Further actions by faithful dioceses and parishes are expected in the future.

On the other side, less than a week on the heels of convention, the Diocese of Newark nominated a non-celibate homosexual for bishop - a signal of revisionists' unapologetic defiance of biblical standards and total disregard for the rest of the Anglican Communion.

Global Response

Numerous Anglican leaders have issued responses to the Episcopal Church's General Convention, but most notably is that of the Archbishop of Canterbury on June 27. Rowan Williams' statement, entitled "The Challenge and Hope of Being Anglican Today," not only acknowledges the inadequacy of ECUSA's response but also the inability of the communion to continue unchanged. In the statement, the archbishop describes a proposal for a two-tiered communion, in which full constituent members composing the main tier would sign an Anglican Covenant of common

faith, while "associate members" would consist of those not wanting to sign the covenant, thus remaining only loosely connected to the rest of the communion. The system - though years from enactment - would effectively push ECUSA, and other provinces who do not subscribe to basic Christian tenets, out of the communion.

The American Anglican Council (AAC) has applauded the archbishop's "clear assessment and his call for necessary structural changes," though urged in a press release on June 27 for more immediate relief to be granted to those in the United States who have requested intervention and alternative oversight.

"Many laity departing ECUSA are leaving quietly, going to Rome, independent churches, or most sadly, no church at all," the release said. "We fear tens of thousands of individuals will be lost from Anglicanism forever unless immediate, though interim, intervention is provided."

The House of Bishops of Nigeria, in responding to the archbishop's statement, asked that he go further by seeking ECUSA's complete removal from the communion. Global South primates of the Anglican Communion, who have consistently upheld biblical faithfulness and boldly challenged the Episcopal Church's heterodox theology and practice, plan to address the issue at an upcoming meeting in September, and the issues will certainly dominate the agenda of the next full primates meeting in February 2007.

What Next?

General Convention 2006 clearly demonstrated that the Episcopal Church plans to pursue autonomy over communion, relativism over truth, their way over God's way. Few predicted that the church would reverse the rejection of Scriptural teaching which has characterized the past five decades of the church's history; but the clarity provided at this year's convention casts off any doubt as to whether the church might turn back, or whether ECUSA's exclusion from the worldwide Anglican Communion would be premature. In fact, to many, a change in the Episcopal Church's membership in the Anglican Communion is long overdue.

ECUSA's future remains unknown, but it has become obvious that the faithful cannot remain within this dying church; Anglicanism in America will assume, and is already assuming, a different form and structure. Answers - even temporary ones - are needed urgently for the growing segment of faithful Anglicans in the United States.

"Whether you are in ECUSA, are in the process of disaffiliating, or are under oversight of another Anglican province, we are committed to assisting you to go from strength to strength," said AAC President Canon David Anderson in a post-convention pastoral letter. "The war is over; it is time to build the church." †

Message from the President

The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson, AAC President & CEO

General Convention 2006, though not providing the repentance and change of direction we had prayed for, did provide the clarity we needed in the Anglican Communion. Tragically, the clear message was that the Episcopal Church intends to continue its revisionist, heterodox trajectory, thereby choosing to walk apart from the Anglican Communion. Convention did not comply even minimally with the Windsor Report, and deputies refused to even consider a resolution affirming Jesus as the sole means of salvation – the House of Deputies voted to discharge this most basic tenet of Christian faith.

It was also fascinating to note the way in which the church re-defined itself. Surrounded by 16 international flags, leaders declared that “Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA)” was too limiting given the “global” nature of the denomination, and that ECUSA would henceforth be “The Episcopal Church (TEC)”. This announcement was made in the opening hours of General Convention, but few recognized its implications. In the wake of convention and Archbishop Williams’ reflections in “The Challenge and Hope of Being Anglican Today,” the re-imagining of ECUSA takes on added significance. Given reactions to Archbishop Williams’ covenant and two-tiered system, with the possibility of ECUSA being relegated to “associate” status in the Communion, one wonders if TEC isn’t setting the stage for some sort of counter communion. Certainly revisionist leaders around the world have denounced the idea of a covenant-based membership, and blogs as well as listserv postings by such revisionists suggest that Scotland, Ireland, Wales, South Africa and Brazil might well join the Episcopal Church.

Fallout following General Convention has been rapid and intense. Dioceses have appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and other primates for alternative oversight;

the largest Episcopal church in the United States (based on attendance) has announced its intention to disassociate from

ECUSA. The Episcopal Church has responded by threatening to seize control of dioceses that attempt to disassociate from the denomination.

As the situation continues to unfold, the American Anglican Council (AAC) will focus its energies and resources in three ways, serving those who are stuck in ECUSA for the moment (whether congregations or dioceses), those who are in the process of disassociation, and those who have already withdrawn. We continue our work of advocacy, providing legal/canonical counsel, educating the laity, participating in diplomatic efforts, building bridges to safe havens, and building an orthodox presence of Anglicanism in North America. Although our mission to uphold and build biblical Anglicanism in the Americas will never waver, the AAC’s work will continue to develop and take new shape in response to ECUSA’s decision to walk apart and the Anglican Communion’s response to this decision. In addition to our threefold area of domestic ministry, we will continue working diplomatically with the international Anglican community to seek both a secure orthodox Anglican province in the United States and an orthodox Anglican Communion free from heresy and revisionism. Join with us as partners for the Gospel †

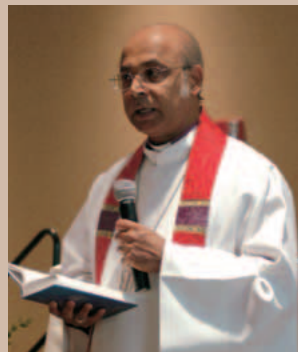


Above: Canon Anderson reading Scripture at the AAC-sponsored worship service held Friday, June 16, 2006 during General Convention. (Photo by Dennis Egan.)

The Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester (UK), on General Convention:

“...It became plain quite quickly that this was not a conflict merely of styles, attitudes or even opinions but of two quite different views of religion.

“One tendency that was informing the culture of the convention, in a major way, was to do with the diffuse religiosity of the present-day West. Such religiosity, in my view, has much in common with New Age ideas, vague as these often are, such as nature mysticism, or a sense of oneness with the world around, and pantheism, the belief that everything is divine: God is identified with Mother Nature and also with our own souls. Jesus then becomes just a special example of a god-self. Such a world-view is likely to be optimistic,



Above: Bishop of Rochester (UK) Michael Nazir-Ali preaching at the AAC-sponsored worship service held during General Convention. (Photo by Dennis Egan.)

inclusive and non-judgmental. It regards the world and the people in it as more or less as God intended them to be. Such people should be accepted as they are and, if they wish to be, fully included in the life of the Church without further question.

“My natural friends in ECUSA, however, are those who want to hold on to the historic, Biblical and catholic faith as it has been received through the ages and in every part of the world. Such a view sees the value of God’s creation and regards human beings as made in God’s image but it also takes seriously what is wrong with the world and ourselves. We need to be saved from the consequences of our own thoughts and deeds as well as from the “wrongness” of the world. People need not just acceptance and inclusion but conversion and transformation. The work of the Spirit is not formless, vague and without direction, as some “progressives” would have us believe. It is, rather, that of witnessing to Christ, making plain the words and works of Jesus to us and glorifying both Christ and the Father who sent him. The Spirit is continually forming us so that we attain to the fullness of life in Christ.” †

-The Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester (UK), writing on General Convention for the London Telegraph, 6/25/06.



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that such discussions following a decision deeming the concept of women bishops as "theologically justified" seemed a moot point.

In their addresses to Synod, the Archbishop of York and the Archbishop of Canterbury raised the issue of the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) and its General Convention. Both leaders clearly consider the decisions of General Convention inadequate.

In his presidential address, the Archbishop of York generally praised the work of General Convention as being "full of life, fun and joy in the Lord, with uplifting worship and Bible studies. A Convention which clearly demonstrated that the Episcopal Church is committed to mission, to the Anglican Communion, and to the Archbishop of Canterbury. A Church that takes the Millennium Development Goals seriously. Poverty, world peace, HIV/AIDS, the living wage, young people, equality for all, are at the top of the agenda."

With regard to Windsor compliance, however, Archbishop Sentamu said that "the Convention failed to meet the precise request of Windsor. It left too much room for doubt and didn't stop the rumour and impression of doing 'our own thing'."

Referring to "a number of unanswered questions" arising from General Convention and the need for "some careful disentangling of what they say and what they don't say," Archbishop Williams reported that the issue will be referred to a small group of advisors appointed by the Joint Standing Committee of the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council. He has also requested "preliminary reactions" from each province and indicated that the primates will "digest what emerges from all this" during their meeting in February 2007. In addition, Archbishop Williams announced that a "working party is also being established in consultation with the Anglican Communion Office and others to look more fully at the question of what sort of 'Covenant' could be constructed."

Archbishop Williams also noted significant actions following General Convention 2006: "You will be aware of a number of developments in the public arena in the last couple of weeks, notably the request from several U.S. dioceses for some sort of direct primatial oversight from outside the U.S., preferably from Canterbury. This raises very large questions indeed; various consultations are going forward to clarify what is being asked and to reflect on possible implications. There has also been an announcement from Nigeria of the election by the Nigerian House of Bishops of an American cleric as a bishop to serve the Convocation of Nigerian Anglican congregations in the U.S. I have publicly stated my concern about this and some other cross-provincial activities."

The challenge before the Archbishop of Canterbury is how to effectively balance the limits of his office with the urgent need for significant temporary intervention as well as timely long-term resolution of the theological crisis dividing the communion. Global South primates, meeting in September, are expected to address ECUSA's failure to comply with the Windsor Report, as will the primates gathering in February 2007. In the meantime, the situation in the United States becomes more complicated by the day, and the need for immediate action remains critical. †

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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