



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THE GENERAL CONVENTION

16 July 2009

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Rowan Williams
Lambeth Palace
London

Dear Archbishop Williams,

We are writing to you as the Presiding Officers of the two Houses of The General Convention of The Episcopal Church. As your friends in Christ, we remain deeply grateful to you for your gracious presence among us recently during our 76th General Convention in Anaheim.

As you know, The General Convention voted this week to adopt Resolution D025, “Commitment and Witness to the Anglican Communion”—a multilayered resolution that addresses a range of important issues in the life of The Episcopal Church that clearly have implications for our relationships within the Anglican Communion.

Because this action is already being variously interpreted by different individuals and groups, we want to offer our perspective to you with the hope that some background, context, and information will be helpful in understanding this action of our General Convention. If you have not already had an opportunity to read it, a copy of the resolution is attached.

We understand Resolution D025 to be more descriptive than prescriptive in nature—a statement that reaffirms commitments already made by The Episcopal Church and that acknowledges certain realities of our common life. Nothing in the Resolution goes beyond what has already been provided under our Constitution and Canons for many years. In reading the resolution, you will note its key points, that:

- Our Church is deeply and genuinely committed to our relationships in the Anglican Communion;
- We recognize the contributions gay and lesbian Christians, members of our Church both lay and ordained, have made and continue to make to our common life and ministry;
- Our Church can and does bear witness to the fact that many of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters live in faithful, monogamous, lifelong and life-giving committed relationships;
- While ordination is not a “right” guaranteed to any individual, access to our Church’s discernment and ordination process is open to all baptized members according to our Constitution and Canons; and
- Members of The Episcopal Church do, in fact, disagree faithfully and conscientiously about issues of human sexuality.

It is important to understand the process through which this Resolution came into being.

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In 2006, the 75th General Convention adopted Resolution B033 which “called 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.”

While adoption of that resolution was offered with a genuine desire “to embrace The Windsor Report’s invitation to engage in a process of healing and reconciliation” within the Anglican Communion, it has also been a source of strain within the life of our own Church.

This year at least sixteen resolutions were submitted asking the 76th General Convention to take further action regarding B033. These resolutions fell into three categories—those calling for the repeal of B033; those restating or seeking to strengthen our Church’s nondiscrimination Canons; and those stating where The Episcopal Church is today. From these options, our General Convention chose the third—along with reaffirming our commitments to the Anglican Communion—with the hope that such authenticity would contribute to deeper conversation in these matters.

The complex and deliberative nature of our legislative process involving bishops, lay deputies, and clerical deputies prevents the General Convention from acting rashly. However, it does lead eventually to a profound consensus. Sometimes this consensus takes years to achieve. As Resolution D025 itself states, we are still not all of one mind. Passage of this Resolution represents another step in a conversation that began with the 65th General Convention in 1976 which stated that homosexual persons are “children of God and have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church.” The discussion of these issues has continued consistently through every General Convention for the past thirty-three years, and we understand it to be an important contribution to the listening process invited by the successive Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988, and 1998.

Some are concerned that the adoption of Resolution D025 has effectively repealed Resolution B033. That is not the case. This General Convention has not repealed Resolution B033. It remains to be seen how Resolution B033 will be understood and interpreted in light of Resolution D025.

Some within our Church may understand Resolution D025 to give Standing Committees (made up of elected clergy and laity) and Bishops with jurisdiction more latitude in consenting to episcopal elections. Others, in light of Resolution B033, will not. In either case, we trust that the Bishops and Standing Committees of The Episcopal Church will continue to exercise prayerful discernment in making such decisions, mindful and appreciative of our relationships in the Anglican Communion.

In adopting this Resolution, it is not our desire to give offense. We remain keenly aware of the concerns and sensibilities of our brothers and sisters in other Churches across the Communion. We believe also that the honesty reflected in this resolution is essential if indeed we are to live into the deep communion that we all profess and earnestly desire.

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Please know that we continue to hold you in our prayers even as we invite yours for us.
We remain,

Faithfully,

Your sisters in Christ,

Bonnie Anderson

Bonnie Anderson, D.D.
President of The House of Deputies

Katharine Jefferts Schori

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate

Appendix 2

* FINAL VERSION - Concurred

Resolution: **D025**
Title: **Commitment and Witness to Anglican Communion**
Topic: **Anglican Communion**
Committee: **08 - World Mission**
House of Initial Action: **Deputies**
Proposer: **Ms. D. Rebecca Snow**

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm the continued participation of The Episcopal Church as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion; give thanks for the work of the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 2008; reaffirm the abiding commitment of The Episcopal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations, and members of The Episcopal Church to participate to the fullest extent possible in the many instruments, networks and relationships of the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm its financial commitment to the Anglican Communion and pledge to participate fully in the Inter-Anglican Budget; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm the value of "listening to the experience of homosexual persons," as called for by the Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988, and 1998, and acknowledge that through our own listening the General Convention has come to recognize that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships "characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God" (2000-D039); and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention recognize that gay and lesbian persons who are part of such relationships have responded to God's call and have exercised various ministries in and on behalf of God's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are currently doing so in our midst; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm that God has called and may call such individuals, to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church, and that God's call to the ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church is a mystery which the Church attempts to discern for all people through our discernment processes acting in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge that members of The Episcopal Church as of the Anglican Communion, based on careful study of the Holy Scriptures, and in light of tradition and reason, are not of one mind, and Christians of good conscience disagree about some of these matters.

EXPLANATION

This resolution provides clarification in light of the Windsor Report (2004) and subsequent discussions in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

The first resolve reaffirms resolution A159 adopted at the 75th General Convention General Convention, in 2006. While much attention has been focused on official statements and resolutions from the primates meetings, Lambeth Conference 2008, and Anglican Consultative Council meetings in 2005 and 2009, our participation in the Anglican Communion consists of a much richer tapestry of ministries and networks as well as personal relationships. Hence the second resolve encourages Episcopalians, individually and in dioceses and parishes, to build relationships with our sisters and brothers around the Anglican Communion by participation in these networks and ministries.

Another sign of the Episcopal Church's commitment to the Anglican Communion is financial. In 2007, The Episcopal Church budgeted \$661,000 for the Inter-Anglican budget, which sustains the work of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Anglican Communion offices in London. The 2007 financial report of the Anglican Consultative Council (the latest available on the Anglican Communion website) reports a total income from Inter Anglican Budget contributions as £1,134,745 (\$1,864,574.36, using 2009 currency rates). In other words, The Episcopal Church contributes a substantial portion of the Inter Anglican Budget. This resolution reaffirms our financial commitment.

Our relationships in the Anglican Communion have been tested by the question of the ordination to the episcopate of individuals living in a same-sex partnership. Resolution D-039 of the 73rd General Convention, in 2000, acknowledged that the membership of the Episcopal Church includes persons living in same-sex relationships; established an expectation that "such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God"; and further denounced "promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members." Three years later, the 74th General Convention reaffirmed this expectation. These standards thus provide guidance for access to the discernment process for ordination to the episcopate.

The acceptance of the ministry of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons is not settled in The Episcopal Church or in the Anglican Communion. While the church continues to discern God's will in these matters, it is important to remind ourselves that sacramental theology since the time of Augustine of Hippo has affirmed that the validity of sacraments does not depend on the character of the ordained person celebrating those sacraments.

Appendix 3

CURRENT VARIANT

Resolution: **C056**
Title: **Liturgies for Blessings**
Topic: **Liturgy**
Committee: **13 - Prayer Book, Liturgy and Church Music**
House of Initial Action: **Bishops**
Proposer: **Diocese of Missouri**

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge the changing circumstances in the United States and in other nations, as legislation authorizing or forbidding marriage, civil unions or domestic partnerships for gay and lesbian persons is passed in various civil jurisdictions that call forth a renewed pastoral response from this Church, and for an open process for the consideration of theological and liturgical resources for the blessing of same gender relationships; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, collect and develop theological and liturgical resources, and report to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, devise an open process for the conduct of its work inviting participation from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals who are engaged in such theological work, and inviting theological reflection from throughout the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of this Church be encouraged to engage in this effort.

Appendix 4

The Anaheim Statement, General Convention, 2009

At this convention, the House of Bishops has heard repeated calls for honesty and clarity. As the conversation has proceeded within the House of Bishops, repeated attempts to modify wording which would have been preferable to the minority in the vote were respectfully heard and discussed, but in the end most of these amendments were found unacceptable to the majority in the House. Many in the majority believed the amendments would make the stated position of this House less honest about where they believe we are as The Episcopal Church.

It is apparent that a substantial majority of this Convention believes that The Episcopal Church should move forward on matters of human sexuality. We recognize this reality and understand the clarity with which the majority has expressed itself. We are grateful for those who have reached out to the minority, affirming our place in the Church.

We seek to provide the same honesty and clarity. We invite all bishops who share the following commitments to join us in this statement as we seek to find a place in the Church we continue to serve.

- * We reaffirm our constituent membership in the Anglican Communion, our communion with the See of Canterbury and our commitment to preserving these relationships.
- * We reaffirm our commitment to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as this Church has received them (BCP 526, 538)
- * We reaffirm our commitment to the three moratoria requested of us by the Instruments of Communion.
- * We reaffirm our commitment to the Anglican Communion Covenant process currently underway, with the hope of working toward its implementation across the Communion once a Covenant is completed.
- * We reaffirm our commitment to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship” which is foundational to our baptismal covenant, and to be one with the apostles in “interpreting the Gospel” which is essential to our work as bishops of the Church of God.