



St. Martin's,

The Episcopal Church

and the Anglican Communion

Dear Members of St. Martin's:

This reflection on our current “state of affairs” in The greater Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church in the United States, our own Diocese of Texas and how these relate to St. Martin's and our life together begins and will continue to be soaked in prayer. As you will see, I have put a great deal of thought and time into the words and pages that follow. This is not a “knee jerk” reaction, but your new Rector's take on the current situation.

Before I begin, I think it is important to acknowledge how very blessed we are at St. Martin's. We continue to be a vibrant, dynamic, Spirit-filled Parish that faithfully proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ in thought and word and deed. We have been “entrusted” with the care of this marvelous place not only by our previous rectors, but by thousands of forbears who both love our Lord, our Parish and have had a consistent commitment to faithful churchmanship, Christian living and service, and holistic spiritual growth. I believe this pattern of living and serving is the primary reason that some of the divisions that are plaguing other parts of our denomination do not, at the present time, divert our attention from doing the work we are called to do. We need to consciously work hard together to continue to hold ourselves together and be a hopeful and hope-filled example of Christian charity and faithfulness to our brothers and sisters in other parts of the Christian family.

With that caveat, let me begin.

What I hope to offer is five succinct pieces under these headings:

- I. What has been unfolding in the last decade, bringing us up to the present situation. *(page 1)*
- II. The general and specific responses of your Parish leadership, (Rector, vestry, etc.) and concrete steps we are taking as we step into the future. *(page 11)*
- III. How this affects (or does not) affect our life as a Parish family. *(page 13)*
- IV. A set of five brief reflections on the whole matter of human sexuality from my perspective that I believe are grounded in the historic faith, the authority of Scripture and the greater mind of the Church. *(page 15)*
- V. A general “glossary” of sorts that may be of help to you if you are not, at this point, up to speed on the current language of the moment. **It may be helpful for you to read this glossary of terms before you begin this paper.** *(page 23)*

Let me say that this paper, for lack of a better term, is not meant to be the “last word,” but it is clear to me that one thing members of St. Martin's and those who may be considering membership at St. Martin's “need” is clarity about the values we hold precious at St. Martin's. Christians come in all shapes and sizes, with a variety of theological and spiritual proclivities. The same is true of the St. Martin's family. However, as we know we have several “core values” to which we, as a Parish, not only subscribe, but commit. These are lived out in our “Seven Christian Habits,”

so eloquently crafted and proclaimed by my predecessor, the Rev. Laurence A. Gipson, D.D.¹ So while we may be a “diverse” community, it is important to your Rector and leadership team that we not sacrifice our core values on the altar of diversity.

Some would say this is not an “easy time” to be an Episcopalian. I would take it another step and say, it is not an “easy time” for Christians in general who walk in a world (and sometimes even an institutional church) that can be increasingly hostile to basic, orthodox Christians who value the authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture, the evangelical faith, and the call to serve Christ in thought, word and deed. Too often, Christians are being asked to “mirror” the world's values, rather than those of what my mentor John Stott would call “Basic Christianity.”

Some years ago, I read these words and have kept them in my “sermon file.” They come from theologian Owen Thomas who writes, “If the church tries too hard to make its message relevant, it may lose its message altogether and simply become a sanctification of the world around it.”² I do believe it is possible for the modern church to do that just today. I believe much of the divisiveness and pain that exists in the Church is birthed by those scrambling to meet the world's expectations, rather than calling on the world to be molded by the transforming power of the Gospel. ***We will not, under the leadership of your rector, work to become a sanctification of the culture around us.*** I am encouraged that our vestry and senior council support this imperative and that this is also the position of our Diocesan Bishops as well.

With that introduction, let me turn to what has been unfolding over the last decade in the Episcopal Church.

— The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

1. These can be found on page 27.

2. Owen Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, p. 1.

I. Some General Reflections on the Last Decade

It may be somewhat helpful to acknowledge that division in the Church is nothing new. I offer that not as an attempt to deflate the current state of affairs, but to be clear that division is as old as the apostles themselves. You will remember, that even among Jesus' first "Twelve," there was a tremendous spectrum of personalities and positions and it was not uncommon to find them squabbling amongst themselves! Nonetheless, Jesus called His followers to faithfulness, unity and holiness – that call has not changed.

I think it is safe to write, that what we see now unfolding in the Episcopal Church, did not essentially begin with the actions taken at General Convention 2003; when, by a very slim majority, the House of Bishops approved the consecration of a non-celibate homosexual as the Bishop of New Hampshire.

What happened at that Convention was simply the fruit of many years of careful planning and, in my mind, strategic effort, on behalf of those who would like to see a significant shift in sexual ethics as normative in the Episcopal Church (and eventually Anglicanism, and Christendom as a whole). Some would say this shift began in 1979 with the Advent of the (then!) "new" *Book of Common Prayer*. Some necessarily link it to the ordination of women (I do not). Whatever the case, it is clear that the more liberal groups within the Church were, somewhat "off the radar screen," preparing openly and active homosexual persons for ordination to the priesthood, ordaining others and they were also opening further and further the door for an embrace of a liturgical service that would in some way bless same-sex unions.

A mere fifteen years ago, when I attended Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS), I was asked to sign only one "document" as it related to my behavior

on campus. It was a pledge to live out the traditional/biblical understanding of human sexuality. I was asked to embrace that, as one preparing for the priesthood, I pledged myself to only live out my sexuality in one of two paths – heterosexual marriage or chastity. The seminary was clear, that if I stepped out of that pledge, it would be grounds for immediate dismissal.

As we began our courses on ethics and morality and delved into the gift of human sexuality, we were taught that the "norm" for the Church was this traditional understanding; but there was a move afoot to shift that norm to embrace sacraments that would allow for ordination of persons who lived out their sexuality outside of the traditional understanding (regardless of orientation) as well as those who would like to move forward on same sex unions. Those who were pushing for this shift were called "revisionists."³

Since that time, the seminary has seen a virtual overhaul of the faculty and is now in its second Dean since my graduation. In that short decade and a half, VTS has left its roots and fully "embraced" the new sexual ethic. At this writing, they have a lesbian faculty member who lives with her partner on campus. I share this as a simple vignette of how quickly, and how fully, the winds of change have blown in the Episcopal Church, and as an example of the reality that all of our current woes and issues do not flow exclusively from the election of the sitting Bishop of New Hampshire.

That noted, perhaps one of the first major leaks in the dam, took place in the spring of 2003, when the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire elected V. Gene Robinson to be their Diocesan

Bishop. At the time, Robinson was already an ordained priest, but his election would have to be "approved" by both the House of Bishops and House of Deputies at the upcoming General Convention. There was a great deal of "posturing" between Robinson's election and the Convention. Proclamations were made that moving forward on his ultimate consecration would violate the Anglican Church's stated position on human sexuality as summed up in the *Lambeth 1.10 Resolution*.⁴ Even the Presiding Bishop at that time, Frank Griswold, proclaimed that it would be best to not move forward and pledged, even if Robinson were approved, he would not participate in the consecration, (he did participate and served as chief consecrator).

The rest is history of course. As noted, Robinson was approved, by a slim majority in the House of Bishops and a slightly greater majority in the House of Deputies. I still remember to this day watching a clergy delegate from Convention racing out to the news cameras almost giddy with excitement. He went on to express his approval quoting the oft cited "Gamaliel Principle" from Acts 5:34-39 when a Pharisee suggested the following regarding the work of the Apostles; *"Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."*

The fruit that was (and continues) to be borne not only of Robinson's consecration, but the continued pressing from the revisionists on other matters of human sexuality has been disastrous.

3. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to those seeking a shift away from traditional and biblical understandings/interpretations of sexuality as "revisionists." This is not intended to be a derogatory term, only simplifying the particular position of those seeking to "revise" the traditional teaching on human sexuality.

4. See Glossary (page 25) for a full text of *Lambeth 1.10*.

I. SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE
LAST DECADE, CONTINUED

In the two years that followed General Convention, over 50,000 people left the Episcopal Church and attendance plummeted – that trend has continued. Last year, alone (2006) another 50,000 left. Financial giving to the national church fell initially by roughly 12% in the two years that followed General Convention, 2003 and continues to fall. The Episcopal Church has seen no measurable increase in membership since its all time high of about 3.5 million members in the mid-1970's and current membership hovers at barely 2 million members. There are, of course, exceptions to this trend, (St. Martin's is one of them) but St. Martin's, and Parishes like this, are the exception, not the rule.

Since General Convention 2003, virtually every single clergy gathering or Diocesan Convention I have attended has been dominated by issues of human sexuality. The most significant effort to “deal with” the decisions of General Convention 2003 was the *Windsor Report*. This was presented as the “best way forward” for Anglicanism as a whole.⁵

However, the protestations continued from both the revisionists (many of whom suggested they would press full steam ahead), but also orthodox/traditional/evangelical elements in the Church who began to explore (and in some cases move ahead) with formal schism.

Thus, a real effort was put forward to gather the “mind” of the Anglican Communion on all of these matters prior to General Convention, 2006. The first substantive statement of the Anglican Primates grew out of what is known as the *Primates' Dromantine Communiqué of 2005*. Several requests were made

in the *Communiqué*, and allow me to quote from a few of the more salient points made by the Primates; among them;⁶

6. “We then proceeded to our own reflections on these responses. There are a number of things which are quite clear. Many primates have been deeply alarmed that the standard of Christian teaching on matters of human sexuality expressed in the 1998 **Lambeth Resolution 1.10**, which should command respect as the position overwhelmingly adopted by the bishops of the Anglican Communion, has been seriously undermined by the recent developments in North America. At the same time, it is acknowledged that these developments within the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada have proceeded entirely in accordance with their constitutional processes and requirements... We also wish to make it quite clear that in our discussion and assessment of the moral appropriateness of specific human behaviours, we continue unreservedly to be committed to the pastoral support and care of homosexual people. The victimisation or diminishment of human beings whose affections happen to be ordered towards people of the same sex is anathema to us. We assure homosexual people that they are children of God, loved and valued by him, and deserving of the best we can give of pastoral care and friendship...

7. “We welcome the general thrust of the Windsor Report as offering a way forward for the mutual life of our Communion, and commend the following conclusions for dealing with the differences of opinion which have opened up amongst us.

8. “We believe that the Windsor Report offers ... an authentic description of the life of the Anglican Communion, and the principles by which its life is governed and sustained. While we believe that many elements of this account offer a picture of what is ideal, rather than what is currently actually experienced, we accept the description offered in Sections A & B of the Windsor Report as the way in which we would like to see the life of the Anglican Communion developed, as we respond in faithful discipleship to Christ. These sections speak of the central place Anglicans accord to the authority of scripture, and of “autonomy-in-communion” as the balanced exercise of the inter-dependence between the thirty-eight Provinces and their legitimate provincial autonomy. We therefore request all provinces to consider whether they are willing to be committed to the inter-dependent life of the Anglican Communion understood in the terms set out in these sections of the report.

9. “We welcome the proposals in Section C for the future development of the Instruments of Unity although we recognise that serious questions about the content of the proposal for an Anglican Covenant and the practicalities of its implementation mean that this is a longer term process. We were glad to be reminded of the extensive precedents for covenants that many Anglican churches have established with ecumenical partners, and that even within our Communion the Chicago/Lambeth Quadrilateral has already been effectively operating as a form of covenant that secures our basic commitment to scripture, the Nicene Creed, the two Sacraments of the Gospel and the Historic Episcopate. We therefore commend this proposal as a project that should be given further consideration in the Provinces of the Communion between now and the Lambeth Conference 2008. In addition, we ask the Archbishop of Canterbury to explore ways of implementing this...

5. See Glossary on page 23. A full copy of *The Windsor Report* can be ordered online from the National Church or through your local bookstore.

6. You will note the “English” spelling of many of the words included in this *Communiqué*.

I. SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE
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11. “We accept the principle articulated in ... the Windsor Report concerning the universal nature of the ministry of a bishop within Anglican polity. Although formidable practical problems would attend any formal process of wider consultation in the election and confirmation of bishops, we request that Provinces should themselves find an appropriate place for the proper consideration of the principle of inter-dependence in any process of election or confirmation.

12. “We as a body continue to address the situations which have arisen in North America with the utmost seriousness. Whilst there remains a very real question about whether the North American churches are willing to accept the same teaching on matters of sexual morality as is generally accepted elsewhere in the Communion, the underlying reality of our communion in God the Holy Trinity is obscured, and the effectiveness of our common mission severely hindered.

13. “We are persuaded however that in order for the recommendations of the Windsor Report to be properly addressed, time needs to be given to the Episcopal Church (USA) and to the Anglican Church of Canada for consideration of these recommendations according to their constitutional processes.

14. “Within the ambit of the issues discussed in the Windsor Report and in order to recognise the integrity of all parties, we request that the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada voluntarily withdraw their members from the Anglican Consultative Council

for the period leading up to the next Lambeth Conference. During that same period we request that both churches respond through their relevant constitutional bodies to the questions specifically addressed to them in the Windsor Report as they consider their place within the Anglican Communion. (cf. paragraph 8)

15. “In order to protect the integrity and legitimate needs of groups in serious theological dispute with their diocesan bishop, or dioceses in dispute with their Provinces, we recommend that the Archbishop of Canterbury appoint, as a matter of urgency, a panel of reference to supervise the adequacy of pastoral provisions made by any churches for such members ... Equally, during this period we commit ourselves neither to encourage nor to initiate cross-boundary interventions....

18. “In the meantime, we ask our fellow primates to use their best influence to persuade their brothers and sisters to exercise a moratorium on public Rites of Blessing for Same-sex unions and on the consecration of any bishop living in a sexual relationship outside Christian marriage.

19. “These strategies are intended to restore the full trust of our bonds of affection across the Communion.”⁷

With the issuance of the *Communiqué*, the stage was literally being set for TEC to specifically respond as to how they would “play ball” with the greater Communion. Much occurred between this *Communiqué* and the gathering of TEC at its General Convention in 2006, (GC '06).

While other matters were addressed by this Convention, by far, the General Convention was dominated by the discussions and decisions made in response to the Windsor Report and the election of our new Presiding Bishop, Katharine Jefferts-Schori.

As noted here, *Windsor* was timed, as was the *Communiqué*, with the intent that GC'06 would make affirmative and positive responses to its recommendations. The watchful eye of the Anglican Communion as a whole targeted in on several specific recommendations. Some of those were approved, some were not and some certainly fell short of the full recommendations as put forth in *Windsor*.

GC '06 did affirm its commitment to “seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible...reaffirm that *The Episcopal Church is in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer...[and] commend the Windsor Report and process as a means of deepening our understanding of that commitment...*”⁸

The Convention approved what has come to be known as “DEPO,” (Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight).⁹ The substance of this response allows Parishes that do not “...feel able to receive appropriate pastoral care from their own bishops” to be able, through a process, to seek oversight from a Bishop under whom they feel they can more faithfully and fully carry out their ministry.⁹ Oddly enough, on October 16th, 2003, then Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold signed a statement, along with all the other Primates of the Anglican Communion, that stated he “... deeply regretted the decisions of General Convention, and if the consecration of Gene Robinson proceeds it will tear the Anglican Communion at its deepest level” Many took that to mean that the PB would not participate in the consecration, but he not only participated, he served as chief consecrator — an action which many of his fellow Bishops, and arguably most of the Anglican Communion, viewed as a breach of trust and blatantly hypocritical.

7. *Primates' Dromantine Communiqué* of 2005, 24 February, 2005. From the Dromantine Retreat and Conference Center; Newry, Northern Ireland.

8. Resolution A159.

9. Resolution A163.

I. SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE
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The Convention responded in accord with Windsor in declaring, that “...efforts to criminalize homosexual behavior are incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ...” and affirmed the principal of *Lambeth 1.10* that “...victimization or diminishment of human beings whose affections happen to be ordered towards people of the same sex is anathema to us...” assuring that “...homosexual people that they are children of God, loved and valued by him, and deserving of the best we can give of pastoral care and friendship...”¹⁰

An important response to *Windsor* was the approval of a Resolution which would “support the process of the development of an Anglican Covenant that underscores our unity in faith...”¹¹

Let me spend just a bit of space on this idea of a “Covenant.” You will see this language increasingly from *Windsor* forward. A “covenant,” as you know is a “promise,” (think marriage, friendship, business agreements made on a handshake). Usually, the substance of a covenant is based not so much upon laws or guidelines, but agreements and pledges. I think it is clear that despite resolutions passed at Conventions (albeit *Lambeth*, General Convention, or on Diocesan or Parish levels), such resolutions continue to have no real “force,” and while many of these resolutions are directed upon speaking the “mind” of those gathered at such a convention, there is no real recourse for those who choose to step outside of that “mind.”

Thus, *Windsor* reintroduced the idea of an “Anglican Covenant,” (yet to be developed). I think this is where we see the real responses to our current crisis coming together. In short, (read more below), the Covenant will allow the Church to say “...*this is what it means to be an Anglican...*”

Where did responses at General Convention 2006 fall short?

Windsor specifically asked that TEC express regret *and* repentance for its actions of GC’03 in the approval of the consecration of the Bishop of New Hampshire and for allowing a kind of “local option” on same-sex unions. Most believe the response was inadequate. The key resolution that addressed this request states that the PECUSA;

*“express its regret for straining the bonds of affection in the events surrounding General Convention of 2003 and the consequences which followed; offer its sincerest apology to those within our Anglican Communion who are offended by our failure to accord sufficient importance to the impact of our actions on our church and other parts of the Communion; and ask forgiveness as we seek to live into deeper levels of communion with one another...”*¹²

Why did this fall short?

Because *Windsor* did not simply ask for an expression of regret, but specifically for “*repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation enjoined on us by Christ.*”¹³ It is difficult to enter into a process of forgiveness and reconciliation, when there is no “repentance.” Repentance would indicate, not only an acknowledgement of pain inflicted, but a desire to reverse the direction of that pain. GC’06 did not express a desire to repent.

Another area where GC ’06 fell short

of the *Windsor* recommendations was to expressively and explicitly agree to prohibit the allowance of same-sex blessings or unions. While GC’06 did not “approve” any movement toward same-sex blessings or unions; (and in fact a proposal to allow for a same-sex unions was defeated in committee and did not even make it to the floor of Convention); it did not make any statement to reverse its actions at GC’03 which basically allowed for Dioceses to make their own decisions about same-sex liturgies.

One more, perhaps the greatest, area of contention

as to whether or not GC responded adequately to *Windsor*, was regarding *Windsor*’s request for a “*moratorium*” on the election to the office of Bishop of a person who is in a non-celibate same gender relationship. Prior to the last day of Convention, any response to this specific resolution failed. On the last day of Convention, with the plea of the new PB elect; the following Resolution “BO33” was passed;

*“...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.”*¹⁴

Some have argued that this resolution is even more stringent than the one requested by *Windsor*. For instance, a candidate for Bishop who may be living in a committed (but not marital) heterosexual relationship; a candidate for Bishop who may be in a second or third marriage; etc., may present a challenge to the “wider church.” However, it is clear that *Windsor* wanted an expressed moratorium on elections/consecrations like that of the Bishop of

10. Resolution D005

11. Resolution A166

12. Resolution A160.

13. *Windsor Report*, p. 131.

14. From The Archbishop of Canterbury, *Challenge and Hope for The Anglican Communion*, Anglican News Service, 27 June, 2006.

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New Hampshire. Such a resolution did not make it to the floor of Convention and thus did not pass. Shortly after the passage of the above cited resolution, nearly two dozen Bishops, under the leadership of the Bishop of Washington, D.C. made it clear that they had no intention of living into the parameters of this resolution. Days after General Convention, the Diocese of Newark announced that one of its candidates for the forthcoming election of its new Bishop was a non-celibate gay man; and so it goes.

In the months that followed, it was clear that The Episcopal Church needed to clarify these areas where clarity was lacking. Once again, the reactions were intense. More revisionist elements in the Church were incensed that The Episcopal Church appeared to some to be “moving backwards” on the revisionist agenda; whereas more conservative elements (both within the US, but also around the globe) believed the Episcopal Church’s lack of clarity was merely a stall technique for a brief season until yet further steps were taken.

Thus, the next significant moment was a gathering of the Primates in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in February of 2007. At that gathering, all thirty-eight Primates, including our newly elected Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, signed an agreement that requested the Episcopal Church bring clarity to its position on both the ordination of openly/active homosexual persons living in partnered relationship and the blessing of same-sex unions.

There were several key pieces that grew out of this particular meeting which concluded with the release of yet another *Communiqué*. This particular *Coummuniqué* reaffirmed the 1998

Lambeth 1.10 Resolution; stated that TEC departed from the standard of teaching on human sexuality accepted by the Communion with *Lambeth 1.10* by consenting to the election of Robinson as well as permitting for same sex blessings. Furthermore, the Primates declared that TEC had yet to declare a moratorium on authorizing same sex blessings. Though the Presiding Bishop noted that she had, at this particular meeting, now heard and come to understand better the pain that TEC’s actions had caused many parts of the worldwide Communion, she returned to the US and stated that she only sensed that any moratorium that might affect the election of candidates for Bishop or regarding same-sex unions was merely temporary. Thus, her comments, and those of Bishops in the American Church who stood with her, brought to the surface the continued tensions felt by American Bishops who did not agree with this position as well as the majority of the Anglican Communion. In a sense, statements made by the leadership of TEC continued to beg the question as to whether or not they really wished to participate in a healing process, or forge ahead with the divisive path they began and apparently, wanted to continue.

In September of 2007, the House of Bishops met in New Orleans and made the following response to these two issues. Specifically, they responded by saying that:

(a) *Resolution BO33 of the General Convention, 2006 that calls upon Bishops and Standing Committees ‘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,’ that specifically homosexual persons living in a partnered relationship are to be included as those “whose manner of life presents a challenge....”*

(b) *We pledge as a body not to authorize public rites for the blessing of same-sex unions.*¹⁵

Unfortunately, there were (and are) still members of the wider communion who felt the responses in New Orleans continued to fall short of the requests of the wider communion. One would have to agree. No sooner was the meeting in New Orleans over than the Diocese of California voted to move forward on the development of liturgies for same-sex unions; and the Diocese of Chicago included (though did not elect) a candidate for its episcopate who was an openly/partnered lesbian.

What continues to emerge is an increasingly fractured Episcopal Church. Statements are made; agreements reached and no sooner does consensus arise then pronouncements are made that counteract the consensus.

In light of all the banter from both ends of the Church and everyone in between, eyes still turned to the “spiritual head” of the Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Once the Archbishop put out the response of the House of Bishops, about one third of the primates felt that the responses to the requests of the *Windsor Report* and *The Deomantine Communiqué*, as well as the requests from Dar es Sallam, were adequate; another third disagreed and felt more clarification was needed; and the remaining third either had mixed feelings or were undecided. The Archbishop remained rather quiet and suggested that he would offer a “preview of coming attractions” in his forthcoming Advent letter, 2007.

The letter itself could not have been any clearer about the future hope of the Communion. Because of the importance and content of the letter, let me offer a lengthy quote from it (omitting only parts that do not take away from its significance).¹⁶

His letter begins on page 6.

15. House of Bishops Meeting, September 25-26, 2007.

16. Again, you will note the “English” spelling of certain words.



To: Primates of the Anglican Communion & Moderators of the United Churches

Greetings in the name of the One 'who is and was and is to come, the Almighty', as we prepare in this Advent season to celebrate once more his first coming and pray for the grace to greet him when he comes in glory.

You will by now, I hope, have received my earlier letter summarising the responses from Primates to the Joint Standing Committee's analysis of the New Orleans statement from the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church. In that letter, I promised to write with some further reflections and proposals, and this is the purpose of the present communication. Although I am writing in the first instance to my fellow-primates, I hope you will share this letter widely with your bishops and people.

As I said in that earlier letter, the responses received from primates differed in their assessment of the situation. Slightly more than half of the replies received signalled a willingness to accept the Joint Standing Committee's analysis of the New Orleans statement, but the rest regarded both the statement and the Standing Committee's comments as an inadequate response to what had been requested by the primates in Dar-es-Salaam.

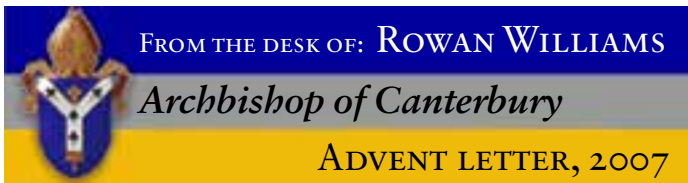
So we have no consensus about the New Orleans statement. It is also the case that some of the more negative assessments from primates were clearly influenced by the reported remarks of individual bishops in The Episcopal Church who either declared their unwillingness to abide by the terms of the statement or argued that it did not imply any change in current policies. It should be noted too that some of the positive responses reflected a deep desire to put the question decisively behind us as a Communion; some of these also expressed dissatisfaction with our present channels of discussion and communication.

2. Where does this leave us as a Communion? Because we have no single central executive authority, the answer to this is not a simple one. However, it is important to try and state what common ground there is before we attempt to move forward; and it is historically an aspect of the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury to 'articulate the mind of the Communion' in moments of tension and controversy, as the Windsor Report puts it (para. 109). I do so out of the profound conviction that the existence of our Communion is truly a gift of God to the wholeness of Christ's Church and that all of us will be seriously wounded and diminished if our Communion fractures any further; but also out of the no less profound conviction that our identity as Anglicans is not something without boundaries. What I am writing here is an attempt to set out where some of those boundaries lie and why they matter for our witness to the world as well as for our own integrity and mutual respect.

The Communion is a voluntary association of provinces and dioceses; and so its unity depends not on a canon law that can be enforced but on the ability of each part of the family to recognise that other local churches have received the same faith from the apostles and are faithfully holding to it in loyalty to the One Lord incarnate who speaks in Scripture and bestows his grace in the sacraments. To put it in slightly different terms, local churches acknowledge the same 'constitutive elements' in one another. This means in turn that each local church receives from others and recognises in others the same good news and the same structure of ministry, and seeks to engage in mutual service for the sake of our common mission.

So a full relationship of communion will mean:

- i. *The common acknowledgment that we stand under the authority of Scripture as 'the rule and ultimate standard of faith', in the words of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral; as the gift shaped by the Holy Spirit which decisively interprets God to the community of believers and the community of believers to itself and opens our hearts to the living and eternal Word that is Christ. Our obedience to the call of Christ the Word Incarnate is drawn out first and foremost by our listening to the Bible and conforming our lives to what God both offers and requires of us through the words and narratives of the Bible. We recognise each other in one fellowship when we see one another 'standing under' the word of Scripture. Because of this recognition, we are able to consult and reflect together on the interpretation of Scripture and to learn in that process. Understanding the Bible is not a private process or something to be undertaken in isolation by one part of the family. Radical change in the way we read cannot be determined by one group or tradition alone.*
- ii. *The common acknowledgement of an authentic ministry of Word and Sacrament. We remain in communion because we trust that the Lord who has called us by his Word also calls men and women in other contexts and raises up for them as for us a ministry which can be recognised as performing the same tasks – of teaching and pastoral care and admonition, of assembling God's people for worship, above all at the Holy Communion. The principle that one local church should not intervene in the life of another is simply a way of expressing this trust that the form of ministry is something we share and that God provides what is needed for each local community.*
- iii. *The common acknowledgement that the first and great priority of each local Christian community is to communicate the Good News. When we are able to recognise biblical faithfulness and authentic ministry in one another, the relation of communion pledges us to support each other's efforts to win people for Christ and to serve the world in his Name. Communion thus means the sharing of resources and skills in order to enable one another to proclaim and serve in this way.*



It is in this context that we must think about the present crisis, which is in significant part a crisis about whether we can fully, honestly and gratefully recognise these gifts in each other.

The debates about sexuality, significant as they may be, are symptoms of our confusion about these basic principles of recognition. It is too easy to make the debate a standoff between those who are 'for' and those who are 'against' the welcoming of homosexual people in the Church. The Instruments of Communion have consistently and very strongly repeated that it is part of our Christian and Anglican discipleship to condemn homophobic prejudice and violence, to defend the human rights and civil liberties of homosexual people and to offer them the same pastoral care and loving service that we owe to all in Christ's name. But the deeper question is about what we believe we are free to do, if we seek to be recognisably faithful to Scripture and the moral tradition of the wider Church, with respect to blessing and sanctioning in the name of the Church certain personal decisions about what constitutes an acceptable Christian lifestyle. Insofar as there is currently any consensus in the Communion about this, it is not in favour of change in our discipline or our interpretation of the Bible.

This is why the episcopal ordination of a person in a same-sex union or a claim to the freedom to make liturgical declarations about the character of same-sex unions inevitably raises the question of whether a local church is still fully recognisable within the one family of practice and reflection. Where one part of the family makes a decisive move that plainly implies a new understanding of Scripture that has not been received and agreed by the wider Church, it is not surprising that others find a problem in knowing how far they are still speaking the same language. And because what one local church says is naturally taken as representative of what others might say, we have the painful situation of some communities being associated with views and actions which they deplore or which they simply have not considered.

Where such a situation arises, it becomes important to clarify that the Communion as a whole is not committed to receiving the new interpretation and that there must be ways in which others can appropriately distance themselves from decisions and policies which they have not agreed. This is important in our relations with our own local contexts and equally in our ecumenical (and interfaith) encounters, to avoid confusion and deep misunderstanding.

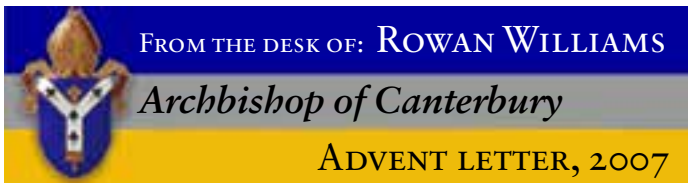
The desire to establish this distance has led some to conclude that, since the first condition of recognisability (a common reading and understanding of Scripture) is not met, the whole structure of mission and ministry has failed in a local church that commits itself to a new reading of the Bible. Hence the willingness of some to provide supplementary ministerial care

through the adoption of Parishes in distant provinces or the ordination of ministers for distant provinces.

Successive Lambeth Conferences and Primates' Meetings have, however, cautioned very strongly against such provision. It creates a seriously anomalous position. It does not appeal to a clear or universal principle by which it may be decided that a local church's ministry is completely defective. On the ground, it creates rivalry and confusion. It opens the door to complex and unedifying legal wrangles in civil courts. It creates a situation in which pastoral care and oversight have to be exercised at a great distance. The view that has been expressed by all the Instruments of Communion in recent years is that interventions are not to be sanctioned. It would seem reasonable to say that this principle should only be overridden when the Communion together had in some way concluded, not only that a province was behaving anomalously, but that this was so serious as to compromise the entire ministry and mission the province was undertaking. Without such a condition, the risk is magnified of smaller and smaller groups taking to themselves the authority to decide on the adequacy of a neighbour's ministerial life or spiritual authenticity. The gospels and the epistles of Paul alike warn us against a hasty final judgement on the spiritual state of our neighbours.

3. *While argument continues about exactly how much force is possessed by a Resolution of the Lambeth Conference such as the 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution on sexuality, it is true, as I have repeatedly said, that the 1998 Resolution is the only point of reference clearly agreed by the overwhelming majority of the Communion. This is the point where our common reading of Scripture stands, along with the common reading of the majority within the Christian churches worldwide and through the centuries.*

Thus it is not surprising if some have concluded that the official organs of The Episcopal Church, in confirming the election of Gene Robinson and in giving what many regard as implicit sanction to same-sex blessings of a public nature have put in question the degree to which it can be recognised as belonging to the same family by deciding to act against the strong, reiterated and consistent advice of the Instruments of Communion. The repeated requests for clarification to The Episcopal Church, difficult and frustrating as they have proved for that province, have been an attempt by the Communion at large to deal with the many anxieties expressed in this regard. The matter is further complicated by the fact that several within The Episcopal Church, including a significant number of bishops and some diocesan conventions, have clearly distanced themselves from the prevailing view in their province as expressed in its public policies and declarations. This includes the bishops who have committed themselves to the proposals of the Windsor Report in their Camp Allen conference, as well as others who have looked for more radical solutions. Without elaborating on the practical implications of this or the complicated and diverse politics of the situation, it is obvious that such dioceses and bishops cannot be regarded as deficient in recognisable faithfulness to the common deposit



and the common language and practice of the Communion. If their faith and practice are recognised by other churches in the Communion as representing the common mind of the Anglican Church, they are clearly in fellowship with the Communion. The practical challenge then becomes to find ways of working out a fruitful, sustainable and honest relation for them both with their own province and with the wider Communion.

That challenge is not best addressed by a series of *ad hoc* arrangements with individual provinces elsewhere, as the Dar-es-Salaam communiqué made plain. The New Orleans statement, along with many individual statements by bishops in TEC, expresses the anger felt by many in the US – as also in Canada – about uncontrolled intervention, and it is evident that this is not doing anything to advance or assist local solutions that will have some theological and canonical solidity.

I believe that we as a Communion must recognise two things in respect of the current position in TEC. First: most if not all of the bishops present in New Orleans were seeking in all honesty to find a way of meeting the requests of the primates and to express a sense of responsibility towards the Communion and their concern for and loyalty to it. It is of enormous importance that the Communion overall does not forget its responsibility to and for that large body of prayerful opinion in The Episcopal Church which sincerely desires to work in full harmony with others, particularly those bishops who have clearly expressed their desire to work within the framework both of the Windsor Report and the Lambeth Resolutions, and that it does not give way to the temptation to view The Episcopal Church as a monochrome body. Second: it is practically impossible to imagine any further elucidation or elaboration coming from TEC after the successive statements and resolutions from last year's General Convention onwards. A good deal of time and effort has gone into the responses they have already produced, and it is extremely unlikely that further meetings will produce any more substantial consensus than that which is now before us.

The exact interpretation of the New Orleans statements, as the responses from around the Communion indicate, is disputable. I do not see how the commitment not to confirm any election to the episcopate of a partnered gay or lesbian person can mean anything other than what it says. But the declaration on same-sex blessings is in effect a reiteration of the position taken in previous statements from TEC, and has clearly not satisfied many in the Communion any more than these earlier statements. There is obviously a significant and serious gap between what TEC understands and what others assume as to what constitutes a liturgical provision in the name of the Church at large.

A scheme has been outlined for the pastoral care of those who do not accept the majority view in TEC, but the detail of any

consultation or involvement with other provinces as to how this might best work remains to be filled out and what has been proposed does not so far seem to have commanded the full confidence of those most affected. Furthermore, serious concerns remain about the risks of spiralling disputes before the secular courts, although the Dar-es-Salaam communiqué expressed profound disquiet on this matter, addressed to all parties.

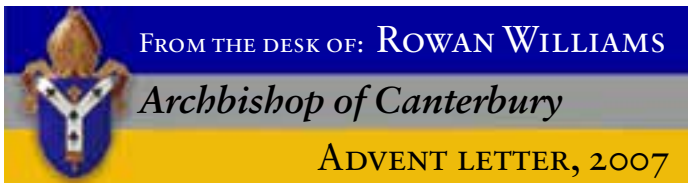
A somewhat complicating factor in the New Orleans statement has been the provision that any kind of moratorium is in place until General Convention provides otherwise. Since the matters at issue are those in which the bishops have a decisive voice as a House of Bishops in General Convention, puzzlement has been expressed as to why the House should apparently bind itself to future direction from the Convention. If that is indeed what this means, it is in itself a decision of some significance. It raises a major ecclesiological issue, not about some sort of autocratic episcopal privilege but about the understanding in The Episcopal Church of the distinctive charism of bishops as an order and their responsibility for sustaining doctrinal standards. Once again, there seems to be a gap between what some in The Episcopal Church understand about the ministry of bishops and what is held elsewhere in the Communion, and this needs to be addressed.

The exchange between TEC and the wider Communion has now been continuing for some four years, and it would be unrealistic and ungrateful to expect more from TEC in terms of clarification. Whatever our individual perspectives, I think we need to honour the intentions and the hard work done by the bishops of TEC. For many of them, this has been a very costly and demanding experience, testing both heart and conscience. But now we need to determine a way forward.

4. The whole of this discussion is naturally affected by what people are thinking about the character and scope of the Lambeth Conference, and I need to say a word about this here. Thus far, invitations have been issued with two considerations in mind.

First: I have not felt able to invite those whose episcopal ordination was carried through against the counsel of the Instruments of Communion, and I have not seen any reason to revisit this (the reference in the New Orleans statement to the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'expressed *desiré* to invite the Bishop of New Hampshire misunderstands what was said earlier this year, when the question was left open as to whether the Bishop, as a non-participant, could conceivably be present as a guest at some point or at some optional event). And while (as I have said above) I understand and respect the good faith of those who have felt called to provide additional episcopal oversight in the USA, there can be no doubt that these ordinations have not been encouraged or legitimised by the Communion overall.

I acknowledge that this limitation on invitations will pose problems for some in its outworking. But I would strongly urge those whose strong commitments create such problems to ask what



they are prepared to offer for the sake of a Conference that will have some general credibility in and for the Communion overall.

Second: I have underlined in my letter of invitation that acceptance of the invitation must be taken as implying willingness to work with those aspects of the Conferencés agenda that relate to implementing the recommendations of Windsor, including the development of a Covenant. The Conference needs of course to be a place where diversity of opinion can be expressed, and there is no intention to foreclose the discussion – for example – of what sort of Covenant document is needed. But I believe we need to be able to take for granted a certain level of willingness to follow through the question of how we avoid the present degree of damaging and draining tension arising again. I intend to be in direct contact with those who have expressed unease about this, so as to try and clarify how deep their difficulties go with accepting or adopting the Conferencés agenda.

How then should the Lambeth Conference be viewed? It is not a canonical tribunal, but neither is it merely a general consultation. It is a meeting of the chief pastors and teachers of the Communion, seeking an authoritative common voice. It is also a meeting designed to strengthen and deepen the sense of what the episcopal vocation is.

Some reactions to my original invitation have implied that meeting for prayer, mutual spiritual enrichment and development of ministry is somehow a way of avoiding difficult issues. On the contrary: I would insist that only in such a context can we usefully address divisive issues. If, as the opening section of this letter claimed, our difficulties have their root in whether or how far we can recognise the same gospel and ministry in diverse places and policies, we need to engage more not less directly with each other. This is why I have repeatedly said that an invitation to Lambeth does not constitute a certificate of orthodoxy but simply a challenge to pray seriously together and to seek a resolution that will be as widely owned as may be.

And this is also why I have said that the refusal to meet can be a refusal of the cross – and so of the resurrection. We are being asked to see our handling of conflict and potential division as part of our maturing both as pastors and as disciples. I do not think this is either an incidental matter or an evasion of more basic questions.

This means some hard reflective work in preparation for the Conference - including pursuing conversations with each other across the current divisions. There will also be a number of documents circulating which will feed into the Conferencés discussions, in particular the work of the Covenant Design Group...

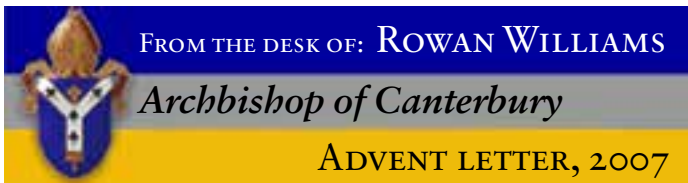
But direct contact and open exchange of convictions will be crucial. Whatever happens, we are bound to seek for fruitful ways of carrying forward liaison with provinces whose policies cause scandal or difficulty to others. Whatever happens, certain aspects of our 'relational' communion will continue independently of the debates and decisions at the level of canons and hierarchies.

Given the differences in response to The Episcopal Church revealed in the responses of the primates, we simply cannot pretend that there is now a ready-made consensus on the future of relationships between TEC and other provinces. Much work remains to be done. But – once again, I refer back to my introductory thoughts – that work is about some basic questions of fidelity to Scripture and identity in ministry and mission, not only about the one issue of sexuality. It is about what it means for the Anglican Communion to behave with a consistency that allows us to face, both honestly and charitably, the deeply painful question of who we can and cannot recognise as sharing the same calling and task.

5. Finally, what specific recommendations emerge from these thoughts?

I propose two different but related courses of action during the months ahead. I wish to pursue some professionally facilitated conversations between the leadership of The Episcopal Church and those with whom they are most in dispute, internally and externally, to see if we can generate any better level of mutual understanding. Such meetings will not seek any predetermined outcome but will attempt to ease tensions and clarify options. They may also clarify ideas about the future pattern of liaison between TEC and other parts of the Communion. I have already identified resources and people who will assist in this.

I also intend to convene a small group of primates and others, whose task will be, in close collaboration with the primates, the Joint Standing Committee, the Covenant Design Group and the Lambeth Conference Design Group, to work on the unanswered questions arising from the inconclusive evaluation of the primates to New Orleans and to take certain issues forward to Lambeth. This will feed in to the discussions at Lambeth about Anglican identity and the Covenant process; I suggest that it will also have to consider whether in the present circumstances it is possible for provinces or individual bishops at odds with the expressed mind of the Communion to participate fully in representative Communion agencies, including ecumenical bodies. Its responsibility will be to weigh current developments in the light of the clear recommendations of Windsor and of the subsequent statements from the ACC and the Primates' Meeting; it will thus also be bound to consider the exact status of bishops ordained by one province for ministry in another. At the moment, the question of 'who speaks for the Communion?' is surrounded by much unclarity and urgently needs resolution; the people of the Communion need to be sure that they are not placed in unsustainable and damaging positions by any vagueness as to what the Communion as a whole believes and endorses, and so the issue of who represents



the Communion cannot be evaded. The principles set out at the beginning of this letter will, I hope, assist in clarifying what needs to be said about this. Not everyone carrying the name of Anglican can claim to speak authentically for the identity we share as a global fellowship. I continue to hope that the discussion of the Covenant before, during and beyond Lambeth will give us a positive rallying-point.

6. *A great deal of the language that is around in the Communion at present seems to presuppose that any change from our current deadlock is impossible, that division is unavoidable and that any such division represents so radical a difference in fundamental faith that no recognition and future co-operation can be imagined. I cannot accept these*

assumptions, and I do not believe that as Christians we should see them as beyond challenge, least of all as we think and pray our way through Advent.

The coming of Christ in the flesh and the declaration of the good news of his saving purpose was not a matter of human planning and ingenuity, nor was it frustrated by human resistance and sin. It was a gift whose reception was made possible by the prayerful obedience of Mary and whose effect was to create a new community of God's sons and daughters. As we look forward, what is there for us to do but pray, obey and be ready for God's re-creating work through the eternal and unchanging Saviour, Jesus Christ?

'The Spirit and the bride say, "Come" ... Amen. Come Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen' (Rev.22.17, 20-21).

+Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury¹⁷

17. Issued 14 December, 2007, Archbishop of Canterbury.

So noted, this is a rather long, but I feel, important letter. There are several salient points, but among them are:

- (i) *The Windsor Report* and its recommendations continue to be the best way forward for the Communion as a whole. The "mind" of the Communion has not made any significant shift away from the principles set forth in *Lambeth 1.10*.
- (ii) The primary authority for Christians within the Anglican Communion is not culture, or an organized body of religionists, but Holy Scripture as *"the rule and ultimate standard of faith."* Furthermore, *"Understanding the Bible is not a private process or something to be undertaken in isolation by one part of the family. Radical change in the way we read cannot be determined by one group or tradition alone."*
- (iii) The next major "moment" for the Communion will be the forthcoming Lambeth Conference, (to be held in London this coming summer). Invitations will be sent to all legitimately consecrated Bishops around the Communion, but, as the Archbishop has said, *"...that acceptance of the invitation must be taken as implying willingness to work with those*

aspects of the Conferencés agenda that relate to implementing the recommendations of Windsor, including the development of a Covenant..."

In short, it appears that what is emerging is the "authentic" definition of what it means to be part of the Anglican Communion. We all know the old saying to be "part of the house means to live by the house rules." The house rules are being put together, and how one is ultimately included in, or asked to step outside of, the house is being put together in the yet to be clarified "Anglican Covenant."

There is another small moment around the corner. The House of Bishops are set to meet again in March at our own Camp Allen, but I would suspect the much more significant pieces of the puzzle will begin to come together at Lambeth, 2008.

I think perhaps one more thing ought to be added at this point. As I stated in the introduction to this paper, simply because I (or any group, publication, etc. for that matter) has noted that TEC has taken "actions" or made a "statement," does not by any stretch of the imagination mean that these have been unanimous steps. The divisive actions or statements made by either a Bishop in authority (Presiding or otherwise), a Diocese, General Convention or even

the House of Bishops *have rarely, if ever, been unanimous*; and more often than not the "win" (or loss if you will) has occurred by a slim majority.

That is why it is important that much time and effort needs to be poured into this idea of an "Anglican Covenant." That is also why it is important to continue to uphold the basic authority of Holy Scripture as well as the historical creeds and teachings of the Church as a basis for moral, ethical and theological positions – rather than simply a "majority vote," which has the propensity to bespeak more the spirit of the moment rather than the rock solid foundations we can find when we stand on the traditional legs of the Church.

One aspect of this lack of unanimity has been the development of what has come to be known as *The Windsor Bishops*. Our own Bishop, Don Wimberly is one of the conveners of this group of Bishops who have been meeting on a regular basis since the publication of *The Windsor Report*. By their very nature, they have come to define themselves as Bishops committed to the basic principles of *Windsor* and thus you see them referred to not only in the Archbishop's letter, but also as a reference point of for many of the decisions we have made as a Parish family, which leads me to the next portion of this paper.

II. Decisions of the Leadership of St. Martin's

Given the turmoil in TEC, the typical strong leadership of St. Martin's, not only in its history of rectors, but also vestry and senior council members, closely followed and studied the unfolding developments in TEC and the greater Communion and felt it important to make a clear statement regarding its own position on these matters. Thus, prior to my arrival, under the clear leadership of my predecessor, The Reverend Dr. Larry Gipson, the vestry unanimously passed the following resolution:

A Resolution Establishing St. Martin's as a Windsor Parish

WHEREAS, in 1998 the bishops of the world-wide Anglican Communion, assembled in England at the Lambeth Conference and, by an overwhelming majority, passed Resolution 1.10.

WHEREAS, Lambeth Resolution 1.10 affirms to all Anglicans:

- *That Holy Scripture upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union*
- *That Holy Scripture reveals that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage*
- *That homosexual practice is rejected as incompatible with Scripture*
- *That the Bishops, therefore,*
 - *Do not advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions*
 - *Do not advise the ordination of those involved in same gender unions*
- *Yet, the Bishops recognize that persons of homosexual orientation seek and are entitled to the pastoral care and moral direction of the*

Church and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships and assure them they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ; and, the Bishops therefore call on all Anglicans to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals.

WHEREAS, in 2003, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church gave consent to the election of V. Gene Robinson, a gay man living in a same sex relationship, to be consecrated the Bishop of New Hampshire and refused to forbid the blessing of same sex unions. Such actions created division in the Anglican Communion around the world,

WHEREAS, despite subsequent prayerful requests in the Windsor Report, and the Dromantine Communique, and a subsequent pronouncement by the Archbishop of Canterbury that *Lambeth 1.10* represents the accepted teaching of the Anglican Communion, in 2006 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church failed to enact a moratorium upon the blessing of same sex unions or the ordination of those involved in same gender unions (*See Appendix A on page 28 for An Historical Background to this Resolution*).

WHEREAS, in September 2006, our Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Don A. Wimberly and other bishops assembled at Camp Allen in Navasota and agreed, among other things: *that Lambeth 1.10 now constitutes the teaching of the Anglican Communion; that the Windsor Report marks the way ahead for the Communion, as does acceptance of its recommendations in respect to blessing same-sex unions and the ordination of persons engaged in sexual relations*

outside the bonds of Holy Matrimony; acceptance of the Communique from Dromantine; that the response of ECUSA's General Convention to the Windsor Report does not go far enough; and that these assembled "Windsor Bishops" intend to find a way to be related to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Communion in a way that is not impaired, AND,

WHEREAS, St. Martin's Parish wishes to fully express our support for our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Don A. Wimberly and the other Windsor Bishops and to differentiate this Parish from those Parishes, dioceses and spokespersons of the Episcopal Church who reject or are unwilling to clearly affirm, accept and adhere to *Lambeth 1.10* and the Windsor Report;

WHEREAS, St. Martin's Parish also wishes to clearly state where we stand on the critically important issues involved in these developments, including the issue of Scripture as the primary authority for determining God's will — as defined and followed by two thousand years of Christian Tradition and moral sexual behavior;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Houston, acting under the authority of its Vestry and its Rector, the Reverend Laurence A. Gipson, D.D., with the consent of its Bishop, the Right Reverend Don A. Wimberly, D.D., Bishop of Texas, hereby declares as follows:

- We affirm and adhere to the teaching of *Lambeth Resolution 1.10*, including more particularly all of its affirmations set forth above.
- We affirm and accept the recommendations of the *Windsor Report* and the *Dromantine Communique*

II. DECISIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP OF
ST. MARTIN'S, CONTINUED

- And, we declare that our intention to be a "Windsor Parish", within the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the Historic Faith and Order as set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer*; a Parish that fully supports the *Windsor Report 2004* and its recommendations; and one that prays for the day when the struggle over the issues that divide the Church will no longer diminish our witness to God's reconciling and saving love for all people as made known through Jesus our Lord.

What this means, of course, is that St. Martin's is firmly committed to a biblical/orthodox/traditional understanding of God's gift of human sexuality and that we support not only *Lambeth 1.10*, but the Windsor Process and we are committed to remaining not just a member of the Episcopal Church, but the Anglican Communion as a whole. *It is important, as well, to note that this is the stated position of our Bishop, Don Wimberly.*

That said, with the advent of your new rector, I felt it was important that our sitting vestry reaffirm its commitment to these principals, and thus at our October meeting, the vestry unanimously passed the following resolution:

A Resolution Reaffirming the Commitment of St. Martin's as a Windsor Parish

Whereas the ongoing state of affairs in the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church, USA continues to be a matter of great concern to Anglicans around the world and the members, lay leadership and clergy of St. Martin's Episcopal Church, and

Whereas the vestry of St. Martin's believes it vital to bring clarity to our members and the leadership of our Diocese, the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion as to our own position on these matters; particularly as we move through a period of transition with the beginning of the ministry of our fourth Rector, the Reverend Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

Therefore be it resolved, that with the full support of our rector, the members of the vestry unanimously reaffirms the "Resolution Establishing St. Martin's as a Windsor Parish," passed by the vestry on 3 February, 2007, and

Be it further resolved that we continue to offer our appreciation and support for the leadership of "The Windsor Bishops" and our Bishop, the Right Reverend Don Wimberly during these difficult times, and

Be it further resolved that we send a copy of this resolution, a copy of the 3 February, 2007 resolution and all supporting documents to our Bishop, the Members of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Texas, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church and The Archbishop of Canterbury.

Resolved, this 16th Day of October, 2007.

In addition, the vestry unanimously supported the recommendation of your rector and Senior Warden, Jeff Parsons, to form what we are now calling the *Anglican Relations Committee*, made up of immediate past and present wardens of the Parish, the Parish chancellor, an "at large" member of the vestry and the rector. We have been meeting on a regular basis since the fall to discuss a wide variety of matters as it relates to how St. Martin's can best live into its basic principles as they relate to this ongoing crisis.

I am pleased to share with you also, that our own member, a former vestryman, retired Secretary of State, James A. Baker has accepted my invitation, supported by the unanimous support of both the vestry and senior council, to serve as "Special Counsel to the Vestry." As we all know, Secretary Baker is clearly the most skilled negotiator of the last century. We feel his gifts and background will be helpful as we work through our relationship with the National Church, Diocese and even international Anglican Communion.

I must share with you that none of these resolutions are actions have taken place within a "void" in any way, nor have they been carried out in any kind of veil of secrecy. Not only have these decisions been shared with our Bishop, but also the Presiding Bishop and Archbishop of Canterbury. The senior warden and I have met with our own Bishop Wimberly on these matters, and I have stayed in regular touch with him. I must also share that I have been in regular touch with the Presiding Bishop's office and have continued to stress to her the need for orthodox/biblical/traditional Episcopalians to be able to live out their convictions without threat from the any institutional arm of the church that may in some way "demand" compliance with the revisionist agenda. We are going to meet personally prior to the spring House of Bishop's meeting which will take place at our own Camp Allen in March 2008.

III. Our life together as a Parish family

An important, perhaps the most important question for we, the members of St. Martin's to be asking at this moment is "How does this affect our life together?"

I, personally, think we are very, very divided as an international and national body. Even the Presiding Bishop has described the Episcopal Church with the metaphor of being "conjoined twins;" a body sharing two minds. And, of course, we all know Jesus' teaching that a house divided cannot stand, (Mt. 12:25).

We are a house divided, and to suggest otherwise, in my mind, is simply not looking the facts square in the face. Naming our current "dividedness," helps, and does not hurt. It gives us a place of honesty to begin looking toward a new direction. I also think, (and this will be a tough pill for some to swallow) that the Episcopal Church as many of us has known it; is very, very sick. For those who have come into this Church in the last three decades, that may not be the case – for it has been dominated by these divisive issues. But for many of us who predate the late 1970's, that Church seems to be a fading memory. The evidence about that illness is clearly before us. Since the 1970's, during a period when arguably the Episcopal Church has been dominated by issues, we have lost nearly 1/3rd of our membership.

Thus, I think the real question before us is not trying to keep the Church as it now exists going with the hope that eventually everyone will land in the same place, but considering bringing life to the "twins" in a new way. That may mean, for a season, some kind of division; and this may be what emerges from the *Covenant Process*.

I would venture to say that the vast majority of active Episcopalians are not on the extreme ends of the spectrum, but somewhere along the middle. I know I am safe in saying that in our Parish, our

clergy and laity are likely more "right of center" on most of these issues than "left," but that is certainly not the case for everyone; and, of course, there are a wide variety of opinions among our St. Martin's family members. I, for one, love the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. The Church I knew, and loved, has in some sense, died. Again, just naming it. But, just because something has "died," does not mean there cannot be a kind of resurrection.

I believe what we need is a "new" and "resurrected" Church. We have too long been dominated by agendas, issues, and political forces, rather than a deep down and personal commitment to relationship with the risen Lord Jesus Christ and our personal service to the Gospel in thought, word and deed.

Recently, I had two visitors (who have since joined St. Martin's) say to me at a coffee hour, "So, what do you think about all the division in the Church today... I mean... what is the position of St. Martin's?"

Here was my response, almost verbatim;

"What I would say to you is look at the witness of St. Martin's. We do not all necessarily agree on the major issues dividing the Church today, but at St. Martin's, I, and our vestry and Parish leadership, will continue to uphold the biblical principles on human sexuality.

"That said, I would tell you that our primary goal will not be to focus on issues, but to preach the Gospel. St. Martin's has grown exponentially in the last five decades and we will continue to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ – of knowing Him and making Him known in thought and word and deed as our major initiative. If we continue to do that, I believe, we – at least at St. Martin's – will be doing what we are called to do."

At present, for those committed to the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion, there is no place "to go" rather than where we are. When, and if, there is a more formal avenue to more deeply align ourselves with the Anglican Communion in some way, I will support that, both on the Diocesan level and the Parish level. For those who feel as though leaving for another denomination, or even one of the non-denominational, wing of Christianity will somehow "protect" them or "shield" them from division, heresy, false teaching, wayward leaders – frankly, I think that will be a fruitless move. All of the dividedness you find very openly in the Episcopal Church now can be found in a wide array in virtually every other denomination – and, as well, is the work of the evil one and plain old human ego – as yet, I have not found an "island" free from these marks on the human family; I would bet you will not either. So, for those willing to "bloom where you are planted," in the meantime, there is much for which we simply have to "wait and see." And so, what should we do now?

I remember years ago one of the most powerful moments in the national church was during Presiding Bishop John Allin's final address to General Convention before the end of his tenure. He said he confessed, and repented of the fact that he had "Come to love the Church more than the Lord Jesus Christ," (his words). Years after that, and shortly after my ordination, he and I were eating supper together. I still remember to this day him pulling me aside before he left the house that night and almost in a whisper saying, "Russell, don't forget it is about proclaiming Jesus, not the Church... don't let the Church sidetrack you from preaching the Gospel."

III. OUR LIFE TOGETHER AS A PARISH
FAMILY, CONTINUED

I think all of us need to hear those words. *Our first love should be, has to be, the Lord Jesus Christ. The very “first place” we need to go from here; is to make sure our lives are personally committed and grounded in Him. If they are not, then we should not, as individuals, as a Church, take one more step into the arena of the Church or the world as it exists today. Because if we are not committed, whole-heartedly, to Christ first and foremost, then we will easily be drawn into an agenda, an institution, a “position,” a graven image that is not Christ, but something or someone we have put in His proper place – the core of our being.*

“What do we need to do now?”

Reaffirm (or perhaps confirm) our commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Pray, worship, read the Scriptures. Love Christ and serve Christ in one another. Cling more to good than bad. Seek, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live moral and ethical lives. When, with God’s help, you succeed, give thanks to the Almighty. When you fail, as we all do, go to Him on your knees and ask for His forgiveness, repent of your sin, and seek His power to live a more Holy life. Spend more of your time assessing the one in the mirror rather than the one at whom you could point your finger. When you disagree with others, love them; when they disagree with you; love them.

Remember the greatest commandments, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul and mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself,”* (Mark 12:30). Remember Paul said, the chief ethic of Christianity is this; *“...the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love,”* (Galatians 5:6).

We come from different places with very different backgrounds. We come on Sundays; and then the Liturgy begins; and our voices join; the organ plays and we sing together; we are invited to our Lord’s Table – and all, all of us, saint and sinner alike, come to share in the sacraments. In those places, how powerful it is to see the differences melt away and look on the faces of God’s created children.

That is one of the reasons I so love our Mission Statement;

To bring by the power of the Holy Spirit as many people as possible to know, love, and serve God as revealed through Jesus Christ; and to be transformed into spiritually renewed disciples of Jesus who know, love and serve one another and the world.

Do you notice here – no mention of the Anglican Communion, The Episcopal Church – even St. Martin’s? These are merely arenas in which we operate and serve our Lord, and I can promise you this, the Anglican Communion, The Episcopal Church, St. Martin’s – Houston – needs us to be as faithful to our Mission Statement as we can possibly be. Staying put, being faithful and, quite frankly, refusing, absolutely refusing to budge in the living out of our mission is what I believe we are called to do.

Let me offer, as a “post-script” of sorts, two final pieces of this document: (a) (b) a glossary of terms as well as texts of various documents for your review and (b) a collection of five brief reflections on matters related to human sexuality.

I hope it has been helpful. What has – please use; what has not, feel free to disregard; that with which you disagree, know I certainly hope our different places does not diminish either our capacity to love one another or continue to serve our Lord through St. Martin’s together. I suppose I have written about all I could on this matter, for now. I am confident, that whatever the future holds for St. Martin’s Parish, if each of us clings to Christ, and seeks to love and serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit; that good – no, great – days are ahead of us. Let us strive, together, to make that our chief aim and goal.

Well?

Faithfully,
The Reverend Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.
Rector
St. Martin’s Episcopal Church
Houston, Texas
January, 2008

IV. Reflections and thoughts on the Church's traditional teaching on matters related to human sexuality, and our life together

Part A.

An Opening Appeal

In the articles that follow, I intend to reflect precisely on some of the divisive issues associated with the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America in the summer of 2003 and what it will, or will not, mean for us in our life together; and I will also take a broad brush stroke at offering some thoughts on human sexuality through the lenses of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and the collective wisdom of the Anglican Communion. I first wrote this series shortly after General Convention, 2003 during my tenure as the rector of Christ Church, Pensacola. Given that, some of the information contained herein, may be covered in the paper above. However, I have reviewed and revised these brief essays in light of my role as rector of St. Martin's.

Before I begin, let me make a few appeals.

FIRST, please read through the whole series. My intent is to touch on several areas, and thus, it is important to read these thoughts in their totality. Read alone, one or more of the segments may misdirect you as to the collective direction of these articles. At the end, some of you may be more confused, more upset, more angry, more affirmed, better informed, more at peace – I am open to all of those responses.

SECOND, I am well aware that I am offering my opinions. I do believe they are informed by many traditional and current Christian sources. They are not thoughtless reactions, nor are they offered without prayer and the hope of providing a better understanding of the place from whence your rector operates. Nevertheless, they are my opinions – and I accept, honor and hold that there are a

wide variety of views within St. Martin's on these matters. Some of these thoughts may hit the mark; some may be downright wrong – I accept that. *And whatever the case, I want you to know that I welcome diversity of thought and opinion within our Parish family.* However, of course, as noted above, it is important to hold our diversity in tandem with the reality that the clergy and lay leadership of the Parish have been crystal clear in our own positions on these matters and in our collective intent about the current and future direction of Str. Martin's.

THIRD, and this goes particularly for parents of teen Episcopalians – these matters need to be discussed at home. Your children are bright – they know what is in the papers and if they have not read the articles, they will soon be asked by friends about the goings on of the Episcopal Church. Perhaps you can use these reflections as a springboard for this conversation and a fresh approach of openness with the whole family.

LASTLY, (a point I will return to), I would rather not be using the “printing presses” of our Parish in this way. I would hope, and pray, that the word “sex” would move off the headlines of reporting on our various gatherings on a Diocesan, National or International letter. There are far more important things which the Church could, and should, be addressing.

However, this agenda continues to be forced to the frontlines of Church life, and it would be irresponsible of us to stick our collective heads in the sand and not to use this as an opportunity to be clear about what we believe and value and how, with God's help, we may be called to lead and live out our faith in our community.

The verse of Scripture that comes to mind here is John 14:1-2. In a time when there is much anxiety in the Church, Jesus whispers, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.*” It is finally, Jesus in Whom our hope is to be placed – not what comes out of General Convention; not the Church; not a particular clergyperson; not *the Bible; the Prayer Book* – but Jesus and under Him the variety of “rooms” that exists are countless. Our struggle (at least one of them) is to strive, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live and love together under the Lordship of Christ. This is finally one of the chief aims of the family of God. With those caveats offered, and praying for your indulgence and patience, I begin.

Many things that have absolutely nothing to do with human sexuality come before General Convention – virtually none of them hit the papers. The issues around human sexuality seem to be ubiquitous. On the forefront, as noted above, are issues related to some affirmation of homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle. Two avenues in which we see this being played out are (1) Proposals for the adoption of a liturgical rite to be included in the *Book of Occasional Services* or perhaps eventually in *The Book of Common Prayer*, which would bless not only same-sex unions, but other relationships (presumably heterosexual), but not officially married. (2) The approval of the election and/or consecration of Bishops or ordination of clergy who are sexually active outside of the bonds of heterosexual marriage.

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The issue for many of us that stand in opposition of these measures is supported by over 2,000 years of a position supported both by the authority of Holy Scripture, but also the tradition of the Church. It would be foolish to suggest that the “only” issue about human sexuality with which the Church should be concerned is homosexuality. The “key” issue for most Episcopalians here is that the Church would in some way “endorse” or “bless” a lifestyle that clearly steps outside of the Biblical clarity about human sexuality – that it is a gift of God given to those who have entered into the holy bond of heterosexual marriage. That offered, I also want to be clear, St. Martin’s should be open to any and all persons who are trying to faithfully seek Christ and/or live out their Christian journey – that includes persons of heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual orientation, or anywhere in between. The issue here – again – is one of the Church blessing some form of relationship that simply cannot be found in the Bible or teachings of the Church as appropriate of such endorsement or blessing.

Again, I realize that is not where some of you reading this stand, but again, I ask you to bear with me until you have read each of these pieces. I believe it is possible to oppose an agenda that would endorse a lifestyle I believe we cannot now endorse; while at the same time welcome, learn from, and love those living in such a way as full members of our Christian family.

I bid you to not be anxious. The sky is not (not yet at least) falling and there is far more to the Episcopal Church, and certainly St. Martin’s, than matters of human sexuality. Hang in there and let us begin to work through this together – but most especially, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled...trust in Christ.*” Indeed.

Part B.

The Necessity of Love

In Part A, I began to unpack some of the controversial issues that the General Convention of 2003 addressed with regard to human sexuality, more specifically, homosexuality. As we all know, this has continued to unfold over the last several years and has brought about what could arguably be one of the most significant periods in the history of Christianity. As has been noted in the early parts of this paper, as well as Part A, the leadership of St. Martin’s has made clear its position on these matters. In Part C, I will touch on the Christian and Anglican sources of support for taking such a position. But before that, it is necessary to touch on the temptation to set aside one form of behavior over and against another those of which we might be struggling ourselves. This will be the substance of Part B of this little series.

Jesus said, “*Do not judge, or you too will be judged...Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?...first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye,*” (Matthew 7:1, 3, 5). Notice, Jesus did not say (and it would be foolish to suggest) that we are to never make moral judgments about the behavior of those around us – but He cautioned against doing so in a kind of self-righteous and harsh way such that we forget, as Paul said, we are all sinners in need of God’s redemption, (Romans 3:23).

Let me be frank...at present, many people in the Church are deeply distressed that human sexuality expressed outside of monogamous, heterosexual marriage, may be endorsed in some way by the Church. Why is this issue before us now? Why is it so distressing? How are we called to respond?

Why now? In part, probably because since the sexual revolution of the 1960s people have not only been more open about discussing human sexuality, but also exploring what has popularly become known as “alternate” lifestyles, (homosexuality, bisexuality, and serial heterosexuality). In part, because the gay and lesbian lobby groups have grown quite strong in recent years and have begun to influence education, the media, the arts, business, law, and yes, the Church. Their influence is motivated by a deep desire to be accepted with equal rights due all human beings, yet simply a different sexual orientation.

Why is it so distressing?

Again, to be frank, with few exceptions throughout history, practiced homosexuality has been condemned and shunned. It is a lifestyle which many of us, who are heterosexual, do not understand, and in some instances, cannot fathom. To some, such a lifestyle is even abhorrent. It is distressing because it threatens our basic understandings of created order, human nature and traditional ethics and morals.

How are we to respond?

Here is the key challenge as is made obvious by this paper. While the leadership of St. Martin’s and I believe we should not move away from traditional sexual ethics within the Church’s teaching, we must readily admit that we tend to “pick on” homosexuality (pointing out the spot in our brother’s eye), without looking intently at our own sexuality (looking for the plank in our own). We may say, “I have never been tempted to be a homosexual.” Statistics show us that somewhere between 2 and 9% of the population claim to be of homosexual orientation, and thus is it easy to stand aside, and point to a behavior in which most of us have not participated, and shun it as immoral.

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Let all those reading hold up their hand if they have had a life free of some form of sexual sin. Ever committed adultery? (a few hands go down); Ever had sexual relations outside of marriage? (a good many more go down); Have children that are living with someone of the opposite sex? (more go down); Ever looked at someone with your eyes and lust in your heart? (down go the rest is my bet). See? Maybe we are all in the same boat to some degree. The one relationship of expressed human sexuality that receives the full endorsement of Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, is monogamous heterosexual marriage. Are any of us completely free of any and every form of human sexuality that may not fit into that particular arena? Seriously doubt it – if not deed, then thought and words are close at hand. We all, all of us, struggle.

But how do we respond, specifically, to our homosexual brothers and sisters who themselves have often been chastised, condemned, discriminated against and hurt because of their lifestyle? As my years increase, I have the opportunity to encounter more gay and lesbian persons; some of whom are very close friends. I have known some homosexual persons who through therapy, or prayer, or personal decision have in fact become heterosexual, but that has been the exception and not the rule. Most with whom I have entered serious dialogue, have shared that they have had a homosexual orientation as long as they can remember. Many of them have prayed, pleaded to God, tried to change, sought help – with no resulting change. In many instances, the Church has made them feel even worse – as if they cannot, or should not, be part of Christian communities because of their lifestyle.

I have sometimes tried to put myself in

the place of my homosexual friends. If I woke tomorrow and someone said, “Russell, you now have to be gay.” I would not know where to begin, and for me, it would feel unnatural. I have wondered if that is how my gay friends feel. Some of you reading this now may be gay; some of you have gay children; some gay parents; some gay friends or siblings. If so, you probably know the kinds of struggles I am only briefly describing.

It is a struggle that many homosexual persons have faced throughout history. We cannot, and must not, simply write off another because of such a struggle. Would you dismiss the writings of Lord Byron, Oscar Wilde, Somerset Maugham, or Virginia Woolf? The music of Tchaikovsky or Wagner? The mind of Socrates, Plato, T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), John Maynard Keynes? The acting of Marlene Dietrich, Rock Hudson? The humor of Dick Sargeant, Robert Reed or Liberace? Each of these lived out their sexuality in ways not consistent with traditional Christian teachings, and yet left behind indelible marks on the face of the human story.

We have many homosexual members that live and worship with us here at St. Martin's. They are here not, I believe, to force an agenda upon our faith community, but because they wish to have a place to worship of God and to seek to grow in their faith. They are here because we have a rich history, in this place, of welcoming all people and calling all people to a life of discipleship grounded in a deep and personal relationship with Christ.

The way I believe we are called to respond is quite simple – our Baptismal Vows demand that we will “...*strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being,*” (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305). Jesus was clearer, “*Love your neighbor...*,” (Mt. 19:19, Mark 12:31,

Luke 10:27). He did not say, “*Love your neighbor ‘if’...*” Our vows do not say, “*respect the dignity of ‘some’...*” No the words “love” and “every” should ring in our hearts and ears as we seek to better understand the difficult (for some of us) issues around homosexuality.

It is not homosexual Christians alone who need ask whether they are living as God would have them live – all of us must ask that question, and all of us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, must work out our salvation with “fear and trembling,” (Philippians 2:12). Love is always the best way and we are called to love one another – always and foremost.

I like the way my friend John Stott has put it in his book *Issues Facing Christians Today*, “*We are all human beings. That is to say, there is no such phenomenon as ‘a homosexual.’ There are only people, human persons, made in the image and likeness of God, yet fallen, with all the glory and tragedy which that paradox implies, including sexual potential and sexual problems. However strongly we may disapprove of homosexual practices, we have no liberty to dehumanize those who engage in them,*” (p. 357).

As I have noted, I do not believe we, as a Church, can or should move toward the “blessing” of any form of human sexuality that falls outside the realm of monogamous heterosexual marriage. There is a difference between “accepting” and “endorsing.” I believe we are called to accept, but not necessarily endorse. I will touch on what informs that decision in Part C (*page 18*).

It is a difficult and strange paradox – but it is one to which I believe we are called. We must honor and love others – even when we do not share, agree or even understand their views, or lifestyles. Stick with me through this series, please; and before you read on, let me bid you to pray and ponder those two words, “Love” and “every.”

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Part C.

Scripture, Tradition and Reason

In Parts A and B, I began to share with you my views, and the position I, and your vestry, have taken with regard to the controversial matters that came before our General Convention. In the conclusion of Part B, I also shared how important it was to live out our morality with what should be the primary motive of every Christian believer -- the "ethic of love." This is the chief virtue of the Christian faith, (Colossians 3:14).

This is a very difficult time in the Church and it offers me the opportunity to reflect with you on how I feel I am called to lead St. Martin's, and how we are called to live into the future together. I have also strongly asked that you read this series in its entirety, and not simply one article in and of itself. They are to be taken as a series, and then in their entirety, to better understand what I believe Christianity offers us with regard to human sexuality, and because of the matters around General Convention, specifically, homosexuality.

Thus, let me share how my position has been formed using the traditional legs of the Anglican Theology -- Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

Scripture. With regard to homosexuality, there are about ten texts which seem to specifically state that the practice of homosexuality is inconsistent with God's creation and intent for human sexuality. For your own study, these are the texts; Genesis 19:5-7; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; II Kings 23:7; Romans 1:24-27; I Corinthians 6:9-7:1; I Timothy 1:9-10; Jude 7 and II Peter 2:6. In recent years, however, some scholars have suggested many of these passages more specifically address a common, and detestable, practice of male prostitution,

and not so much homosexuality as it may be lived out between two persons who are faithfully committed to one another. Your reading of these passages may, or may not, lead you to the same conclusions.

Perhaps the overarching and compelling reasons for holding to a traditional view of human sexuality hinge not on the prohibitions found in Scripture, but instead the affirmations -- that the ideal relationship in which God has created human sexuality for is the marriage of a man and woman. Such affirmation can be found in virtually every book of Scripture, but I lift up a few for your review; Genesis 1:27, 2:18-24; Hosea 2:4-7; Malachi 2:10-16; Ephesians 5:21-33.

Those promoting an endorsement of homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle have noted that Jesus says nothing about it -- true. However, He does uphold the Judaic teaching that marriage is the arena in which human sexuality is to be lived out -- see for instance Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 19:1-12. We must also note that as radical as Jesus was for His day, (raising both women and children to places of respect and equality in the human family), in no place does He endorse or bless human sexuality practiced outside of marriage -- and in many places, Jesus specifically condemns such behavior, (see Matthew 5:27-30; John 4:1-26 and 8:1-11).

In no place in Holy Scripture do we find a blessing or endorsement of any form of active sexuality outside of heterosexual marriage, (this includes not only homosexuality, but extra or premarital sex between heterosexuals -- more on that to follow).

Tradition. Anglicanism has not looked to Scripture alone as its guide for matters related to morality, but has also turned to the traditions of the Church as they have been handed down to us. The Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria,

Origen, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint Basil of Caesarea have all upheld the traditional view of human sexuality and have opposed an endorsement of sexual activity outside of marriage. For centuries since, the Church has been quite clear on this issue, and it has really only been since 1972 that the Episcopal Church had begun to suggest what is known to most of us in ecclesiastical circles as a "revisionist theology" regarding human sexuality. **None of the great minds of the Church**, prior to our most recent century, proposed supporting the revisionist's views.

Reason. And, with thanks to our Anglican forbears, our decisions regarding morality are not bound only to Scripture and Tradition, but may also be informed by our God-given, Spirit-led reason. I believe, this "reason" should incline us to believe that while sexuality for Christians can certainly be informed by behavioral and social sciences, as well as modern cultural trends, ultimately our actions are to be lived out from a Christian perspective as revealed in Scripture and Tradition. In other words -- the "reason" leg of our Anglican theology is to be informed by what we learn from Scripture and Tradition, not the other way around. Paul Tillich wrote, "*Theology has no right and no obligation to prejudice a physical or historical, sociological or psychological, inquiry. And no result of such an inquiry can be directly productive or disastrous for theology.*" In short, our ethical behavior and decisions are beholden to the authority of God as revealed in Scripture and Tradition, not to the authority of science or other forms of purely secular thought. Thus, a reason that is informed primarily by Scripture and Tradition, would also presumably guide one to support the traditional view of human sexuality.

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So, what does our Anglican method of theology suggest regarding how we are to respond to the current debates regarding human sexuality? The mandate on the Church, and its clergy, are clear -- that we are to uphold that God's gift of sexuality is best lived out within the stream we know to be monogamous heterosexual marriage. This would then, obviously, apply, not only to homosexuality, but heterosexuality as well. It is my commitment to these "authorities" of the Church that have placed upon my heart the necessity that the greater Church, and we at St. Martin's, must continue to live with this understanding of human sexuality, which is why your rector and vestry has taken the position it has.

A little over ten years ago, early in my priesthood, I was serving in the Diocese of Alabama when, yet another, debate was raging around the suggestion that we move toward the blessing of same-sex unions. I also remember being profoundly moved when my mentor (and at the time, supervisor), John Claypool, put an end to the debate by standing at the microphone and saying, "You just cannot throw out 2,000 years of teaching and tradition for something we have only been considering for a few years." At that point, there was a spirit of agreement in the room, the debate ended and all motions were tabled.

If, at any time, General Convention approves any measure or initiative inconsistent with our balanced teachings of Scripture, Tradition and Reason, then clearly those who make such a decision, have chosen to step outside of not only historic Christianity, but mainstream Anglicanism. How then, would such a step square with our wider Anglican Communion and how will it affect us and our life together at Christ Church? I will touch on that further in the next few articles.

Part D.

Our Life Together

Part of the title of this ongoing series is "...and *Our Life Together*." In the last piece, I suggested (and I offer that you may freely disagree), that those who cast votes at a General Convention (or for that matter in other Church gatherings) that are contrary to the collaborative offerings of Scripture, Tradition and Reason on human sexuality have stepped outside of not only historic Christianity, but mainstream Anglicanism. In the last few years, I have had some people say to me regarding, for instance, Gene Robinson's confirmation as Bishop, "Well, that's way up there.' What does it have to do with us?" And others say, "Can't a Diocese elect whom they want as their Bishop?" And still others, "As long as things are okay in our Church, should we really be concerned?" I want to suggest to you that yes, we should be very much concerned.

One of the things clearly taught throughout Christianity is that there is "one Church," which by the way, is what we mean when we say in our creed that we believe in "One...catholic... Church," (Catholic with little "c," meaning universal, not Roman). It is what Paul meant when he wrote Christians in Corinth and described the "church," as "one body with many parts," (see I Cor. 12:12-20). And, it is what we mean when we say that the Episcopal Church in the USA, (ECUSA) is part of the Anglican Communion -- we are not an entity unto ourselves. This understanding distances us from "Congregationalists," (just another room in God's house by the way) who tend to practice their faith differently from house to house.

The good thing about understanding the reality that St. Martin's is part of the "catholic" Church, the "one body," the Anglican Communion, is that we are, in some way beholding to this larger body and it to us. We cannot, or perhaps, should not, run off willy nilly in any direction we see fit because of our personal preferences. So what does the greater Anglican communion have to say with regard to the ongoing debates on human sexuality?

The worldwide Anglican Communion is made up of 38 Provinces with 629 Diocese and approximately 77,000,000 worshippers. The Episcopal Churches has only 111 Diocese, (roughly 17.6% of the overall Anglican Communion) with less than, (at last count) 2.4 million worshippers, (roughly 3% of the overall Anglican Communion). Thus, the Church in the USA is merely a thin sliver of our greater Communion. The mind of this greater Anglican family on matters related to human sexuality was made clearly known when at the last Lambeth Conference, and the statements and positions made through the *Windsor* document, and the *Communiqués* both in Dromantine and Dar es Salaam.

Thus, the "greater mind" of the Anglican Communion concurs with the collaborative teachings of Scripture, Tradition and Spirit-led Reason that human sexuality was created by God to be shared by married heterosexuals. This may seem to offer a wide slap of exclusion to persons (of any orientation) who may live out their sexuality outside of this relationship -- but, what is offered is that ideal, and an acknowledgment that many do not fall into that ideal. Again, acceptance is offered, but not endorsement.

Prior to his retirement, Archbishop George Carey told a gathering of American Bishops that within the Episcopal Church of America, members who hold what is regarded as traditional "orthodox" beliefs are in the minority,

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but within the 77 million member worldwide Communion...it looks as if the Episcopal Church is "out of step" with the rest of the Communion on "sexual ethics." He went onto say to those who consider themselves "out of step" with the liberal agenda in the American Church that "*I'll probably stand with you because I believe very strongly that these lines are quite important to hold as Christians today.*" Lord Carey reiterated this position in several settings during his visit with us in January of this year.

Lord Carey's successor, Archbishop Rowan Williams, who has in recent years taken a more revisionists stance on issues related to human sexuality, has backed away from that stance, because he acknowledges that does not represent the greater mind of the Church. In an interview early in his tenure as Archbishop, he stated that while he had ordained a practicing homosexual while serving in Wales, he probably would not do it again, noting that the *Lambeth Resolution* "says what the mind of the church is." He went onto note that "I feel, in my public position, ...I am bound to live with that. If I knew that an ordinand was living with a partner, I would have, at the moment, to say, the church has made its view clear on this and you have a choice." Evidently, as he expressed in his Advent Letter of 2007, this will continue to be the direction from which he will lead.

Unfortunately, as noted, the decision to approve Gene Robinson's election as Bishop of New Hampshire, and an apparent agenda to eventually move toward the blessing of same-sex unions, has put us at grave odds, not only with many of our own members, but clearly, with the greater Anglican Communion.

Though we speak of being "one Communion," portions of the American Church continue to act much like a congregational church, and this will no doubt begin to filter down to individual Dioceses, and then onto individual Parishes, then members. The decision to allow for a continued pressing of the envelope with regard to sexual ethics in the American Church, in my mind, smacks of a western-individualism which is too often characterized by a kind of intellectual snobbery and even racial superiority, (since now worldwide, non-white outnumber whites in the Anglican Communion and much of the current concern over the ECUSA's actions come from non-white Bishops).

So, while many good things do continue to happen in and through the Episcopal Church, I believe those are very much overshadowed by decisions which now stand, in contradiction to our greater Anglican Communion which is under the authority of the teachings of Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

I promise you, that as your Rector, we will do our best to *not allow* our differences on these issues to divide us or distract us from the greater work of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our community and our world. But we should not be ignorant that we are now in a time of international turmoil in the Anglican Communion as a result of Gene Robinson's election/confirmation. We need pray for our Church at home; our Church in the US; and our Church around the world. After all, it is not our lives alone that matter, but "our life together."

Where do we go from here? I will turn to that in my final article.

Part E.

Concluding thoughts: Where do we go from here?

Now, let me offer some conclusions.

What we do, does, matter. I sometimes hear from both clergy and lay friends alike who are comfortable with promoting a more revisionists agenda with regard to ethics say things like "I don't think we worship a God who necessarily cares who's doing what with whom." In short, wrong. We worship a God Who cares about every aspect of our lives and seeks to heal and restore every aspect that is tainted by human brokenness or sin. It is not our minds alone God seeks to own, but personality, heart, soul, and yes, bodies, (see Mark 12:28-31).

The Gospel should change us and the world, not the other way around. Theologian Owen Thomas wrote in *Introduction to Theology*, "If the church tries too hard to make its message relevant, then it will lose its message altogether and simply become a sanctification of the culture around it." If one looks to General Convention, we seem to be a Church increasingly driven not by "mission," but by "issues." The culture, which continues to push the envelope on sexual issues, seems to be dictating the agenda to the Church. And the Church, sadly in many corners, seems to be allowing for it – and where it does so, begins to lose its message altogether.

IV. REFLECTIONS AND THOUGHTS ON THE
CHURCH'S TRADITIONAL TEACHING
ON MATTERS RELATED TO HUMAN
SEXUALITY, AND OUR LIFE TOGETHER,
CONTINUED

Revisionists theology on human sexuality is not simply about a particular lifestyle or orientation. Much of the controversy in the Church over the last decade has, unfortunately focused on the particular orientation of one group of people – specifically, homosexuals. That is not the key issue of concern. The greater Anglican Communion (by a huge margin); Scripture, Tradition and Reason speak clearly, virtually with one voice, that the full expression of human sexual intimacy is a gift to those in heterosexual marriage. Virtually all of us fall short in that regard, whether in body, mind or spirit. The ordination of an openly and active gay bishop, coupled with the support of same-sex blessings, is simply one aspect of a weakened understanding of human sin, redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, the authority of Scripture and so on.

The ECUSA has acted arrogantly and thoughtlessly with regard to the greater Anglican Communion. Despite numerous pleas from within the ECUSA and around the Anglican Communion, the slim majority of Bishops, and wider majority of deputies, that continue to push for a revisionist agenda on matters of human sexuality, have ignored the pleas of our greater Church. The unfolding crisis is the direct result of the actions of a portion of the leaders (clergy and lay alike) of The Episcopal Church, and thus if we are serious about our commitment to Christian unity the chief obligation to begin finding a solution and mending the tears in our Anglican fabric rests with the Episcopal Church – which calls for humility, repentance and a change of direction and heart.

I recognize there are differing opinions on these matters at St. Martin's. We do not all “have to agree” on these matters, and many of us may downright disagree. I accept that, and hope and pray that in our disagreements, we accept the obligation to care and love for one another. We must do our utmost to model for the greater Parish, our allegiance to Christ as our primary mission, and thus will not be drawn into issues, positions, relationships or agendas that may divide us or distract us from this mission.

I recognize that the position taken by your Bishop, rector and vestry may have hurt some of our members who may be gay or lesbian, or have gay or lesbian family members or friends. First, I have already noted this was not chiefly about issues surrounding homosexuality (see above). Second, to our gay and lesbian members, please know that I care deeply for you. I have said that to many of you personally, and hope you know I continue to feel just the same. That is from my heart. Third, I do not think this would have ever become a matter of public discussion or teaching unless the issue had been forced on us.

Our gay and lesbian members need to realize that they are not the only ones who may be hurting now. Many, if not most, of the clergy and lay people who oppose the revisionist's agenda on matters of human sexuality, feel as though the Church that brought them to faith, nurtured them and taught them, is now, in some way, leaving them behind. As much as our gay/lesbian members and friends feel disappointed by the division in the Church today, it is important to accept and realize there are many on the other side of these issues that are hurt as well and they who also need our love and concern.

Despite the current divisions that exist in the Church, or our own position on these matters, we are bound to love all those who come within our doors. This is not optional. This is not an opportunity to cast stones. We are to welcome and love those who come our way, including persons of any (and every) sexual lifestyle and orientation. It is important that all, not just some, come to feel and experience God at St. Martin's in and through His people, and in their own way, work out their faith with the help of God's grace.

We will continue to preach and teach with a strong regard for the authority of Holy Scripture. I strongly disagree with some public statements made by various Episcopal leaders, that we do not necessarily look to Scripture as one of our chief authorities. When I was ordained, I was asked to sign *only one document*. It was a pledge that “*I solemnly declare that I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church,*” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 526). There is increasing fanfare in the Church to say that our authority comes from “The Holy Spirit as it is revealed in community,” and thus the community at General Convention, is now leading us to new directions with regard to human sexuality. I think, when the general “feeling” of our community or our “experience” contradicts the authority of Scripture or our Tradition, we are bound to submit to Scripture. The *very divided votes*, and the apparent discord and division that are now the fruits of this fractured body of believers, do not lead me to believe this is the work of the Spirit, for Christ desires not our division, but our unity.

IV. REFLECTIONS AND THOUGHTS ON THE
CHURCH'S TRADITIONAL TEACHING
ON MATTERS RELATED TO HUMAN
SEXUALITY, AND OUR LIFE TOGETHER,
CONTINUED

The best way to understand our faith, is to turn to its foundations (i.e. Scripture, tradition, Spirit-led Reason, the greater Communion); and this we will continue to do at St. Martin's in our preaching, teaching and pastoral care.

We need to recognize the gravity of the moment in the Church.

There are some who have said to me, "Oh, we lived through integration, woman's ordination, *Prayer Book* revision – and this is just like those." I disagree once again. I am old enough to remember the experience of living through these as well. We did not have the greater Anglican Communion against us on these matters, and there were clear Scriptural imperatives for the equality of races and women – again, a point Lord Carey made clearly while he was with us. The Archbishop of Canterbury did not continue to call what can be described as "emergency meetings" of the international Primates over these issues. This is a time for us, as a Church, to be humble, to listen, to pray and to hope for the unity of the Church. I will continue to take counsel with our Bishop, and our brother and sister clergy in the Church, and will keep you informed, to the best of my ability, as to what effect this may or may not have on St. Martin's.

For the last few years, the prevailing wisdom was that regardless of what unfolded in the Episcopal Church, orthodox clergy wanted to stay "tied to" the larger Anglican Communion, even if that meant breaking or weakening ties with TEC. In part, it was felt that the larger Communion would stay faithful to the traditional teaching of the Church. That has been the position of St. Martin's and our Bishop. Now, (in my mind, unfortunately) I am not altogether certain the entire Communion will even be able to hold together. Already, African and South American Archbishops have offered "oversight" to

pieces of the American Church who have decided to split away, but this oversight has not been "sanctioned" by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It would be entirely possible for American Churches to wish to be connected to Anglicanism as it finds its roots in Canterbury, and then have that portion (someday) buy into the revisionists' position. Then what happens?

I think, at least for this chapter in our history, it is important to stay connected to both the Episcopal Church as well as the Anglican Communion — but I am confident that neither will be without their own great challenges — and thus, our primary and perhaps greatest desire should be that we live out the orthodox Christian faith — in whatever arena or under whatever umbrella we operate. I would strongly suspect if the Episcopal Church in the United States were as a whole to simply "abandon" any allegiance of the orthodox Christian faith, then we would, as a Parish, need to begin a discernment process about how we would continue to relate to our diocese, the national Church and, perhaps, even the greater Communion. We are not at that point, and I hope we never come to that bridge. But we must face the reality that these are very, very challenging times and this is a season of great significance in the life of Anglicanism.

We need to avoid any rash

decisions. I have, sadly, had some people tell me they are considering leaving the Episcopal Church. My question would be, "Where will you go?" The Methodist and Presbyterians are also divided very much over issues of human sexuality; The Romans have a slew of their own problems right now; the many variations of supposed "Anglicanism" (most of which are not recognized by the Archbishop of Canterbury) that have sprung up in recent years is already dividing into subgroups over issues like women's

ordination and *Prayer Book*; and most congregational churches tend to take on the personality of their individual spiritual leader and thus what may be good today, may be terrible tomorrow. No, while I share the sorrow many of you have right now, I am very proud and blessed by what we see happening at St. Martin's – I know, and hope, most of you share that belief.

So, finally, we will not be dissuaded, distracted or divided from our chief mission – the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus

Christ. This is our primary duty – the preaching of God's reconciling hope through the sacrificial death and powerful resurrection of our Lord Jesus; the mandate on all humans to love God and neighbor; the necessity that we all, all of us, call on God's Spirit to reveal to us those areas of our lives in need of repentance and redemption, forgiveness and salvation and the goal of bringing all of these messages through our prayers, our thoughts and our deeds. As long as I stand as your rector, I will do my best to keep these privileges at the forefront of all that we do at St. Martin's. That is the hope I hold out to you as I conclude this series – the hope that is the same yesterday, today and forever, Jesus Christ, (Hebrews 13:8). May we boldly press on together and remember when we do, our Lord is indeed with us "...to the very end of the age," (Matthew 28:20).

RJL+

V. A Glossary of Terms and Documents

What follows is a glossary of terms and documents that may be helpful to as you read through the above paper.

The following may be helpful in understanding both language and abbreviations that I may use.

The Anglican Communion.

The overall membership of the 38 Provinces of Anglicanism, of which we, as members of the Episcopal Church, are a “constituent member.” There are roughly 77 million members of the communion worldwide, and a little over 2 million members in the American Church..

The Episcopal Church. Our “flavor” of membership in the Anglican Communion as it is lived out in the United States. Sometimes called The “Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” (PECUSA) and sometimes simply called the “ECUSA,” (with the ‘P’ dropped.) There are 110 Dioceses in the PECUSA, each with an elected Bishop.

TEC. An abbreviation for “The Episcopal Church,” (sometimes also PECUSA or ECUSA is used, see above).

Bishop. In the American Church, a Diocesan Bishop is elected by a convention of clergy and lay delegates. The Bishop derives his authority from our Lord, and the power and privileges given at his/her consecration by the consenting bodies represented not only in the electing Convention, but also the wider Church. A **Diocesan Bishop** is the “sitting” Bishop of a Diocese and the clergy are under his/her care and pastoral oversight. A **Bishop Coadjutor** is elected as an “assisting” Bishop in preparation for a Diocesan’s retirement or resignation and automatically succeeds a Diocesan Bishop upon his/her end of term. A **Suffragan Bishop**, is elected as an “assisting” Bishop, but does not automatically succeed a

Diocesan, though may run for election at that point. An **Assisting Bishop** is a consecrated Bishop, usually in retirement or having ended his/her term in a particular Diocese, who is invited by a Diocesan Bishop to assist for a period of time.

The Archbishop of Canterbury.

The “primary” Bishop of all Bishops in the Anglican Communion. Often titled as “first among equals,” the Archbishop serves as one of the chief instruments of unity in the Anglican Communion and lives and works out of Lambeth Palace in London, England. The current Archbishop is Rowan Williams. His predecessor, was Lord George Carey, who just visited with us in January.

+ABC. An abbreviation for the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Bishop is elected by the House of Bishops as the one who “presides” when the Bishops gather either as a House; or in General Convention and at other times deemed appropriate. At present, the PECUSA elects its Presiding Bishop for a term of nine years and that person lives and works out of the National Office of the Episcopal Church. While the Presiding Bishop is seen as a “spokesperson” for the PECUSA, his/her opinions must often be recognized as personal and not as one who speaks for the whole Church. Unlike the +ABC, the Presiding Bishop is not technically seen as an instrument of unity for the wider Communion. The Presiding Bishop has *no power* over individual Diocesan Bishops, Dioceses, and/or their clergy, Parishes or laity, but obviously can have a strong voice of influence and opinion on matters related to our life together.

PB. An abbreviation often used for the Presiding Bishop.

The General Convention. The coming together of PECUSA Bishops and elected clergy and lay deputies every three years. Each Diocese has 8 Deputies, therefore each Diocese has a “vote” in matters before the floor of Convention. The General Convention reveals the very democratic nature of our particular denomination – ergo a wide variety of voices and opinions.

GC. An abbreviation for General Convention, (often followed by a date to signify the year it met, i.e. “GC’06”).

A Resolution of General Convention. A resolution represents the “mind” of the particular Convention that is gathered. It is not binding, but is usually put forward and approved as a “good faith” statement of agreement about the present position of the Convention on a particular matter. Given the democratic nature of Convention, virtually anything can be put forward as a resolution (many are, and many of those are not approved) and they may be passed by majority and do not have to have unanimity.

Lambeth Conference. The coming together of all worldwide Anglican Bishops. A very important meeting held every ten years at Lambeth Palace in London. The last gathering was in 1998; and thus the next will be in 2008.

The Windsor Report. GC ’03 was seen as perhaps one of the most divisive GC’s in the history of the PECUSA, and perhaps even the Anglican Communion. The high water mark of this division was made clear with the approval of the election of the Bishop of New Hampshire, who was sexually active outside the bonds of holy matrimony. As a result, discord and division began to spread not only within the US, but around the globe. Under the direction of the +ABC, a wide group of leaders were gathered to consider how to move forward in light of increasing discord

V. A GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DOCUMENTS, CONTINUED

in the Church. The end of that process was the development of “The Windsor Report.” The document, over 100 pages in length, gave specific counsel about how best to move forward. It is a non-binding document; and it certainly does not cover every aspect of our life together. For many, it represents the best way forward. It was intentionally completed prior to GC’06 with the idea that its recommendations would be adopted at that gathering. A copy of the full report is in our Parish Office or can be reviewed by pulling it up on the website of the *Anglican News Service*.

Lambeth 1.10. A very important resolution of the Lambeth Conference of 1998, which specifically stated the “mind of the Church” on matters of human sexuality. Much of the current division in the greater Church springs from a general feeling that many parts of the PECUSA are, at present, in violation of this mind both in the consecration of the Bishop of New Hampshire, continued ordinations of persons who are sexually active outside of holy matrimony, and the performance of same-sex blessings and/or unions.

The full text of *Lambeth 1.10* can be found on page 25. It also can be ordered through the National Church office or through your local bookstore.



Lambeth Palace is the official London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is located in Lambeth, on the south bank of the River Thames a short distance upstream of the Palace of Westminster on the opposite shore. It was acquired by the archbishopric around 1200. It is perhaps best known today as the site of the decennial Lambeth Conferences of all active Anglican bishops in the world.



Lambeth Palace, London

V. A GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DOCUMENTS, CONTINUED

Lambeth 1.10

Resolution I.10 Human Sexuality

This Conference:

- a. commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- b. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- c. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- d. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- e. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;

- f. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
- g. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

APPENDIX

Resolutions of Sections and Regions referred to in Subsection (f) of Resolution I.10 (Human Sexuality)

Resolution IV.26 from Section IV

This Conference, noting that no province of the Anglican Communion has voted to change the traditional ethical teaching on homosexuality, in order to have and promote credibility with our brothers and sisters in New Churches and Independent Christian Groups, receives and recognises the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality as a contribution of the 'South - South Encounter' to the Anglican Communion.

Note: This Resolution was not voted upon, as the Conference agreed to pass to next business.

Resolution V.1 from Central and East Africa Region

This Conference:

- (a) believes in the primary authority of the Scriptures, according to their own testimony; as supported by our own historic tradition. The Scriptural revelation of Jesus the

Christ must continue to illuminate, challenge and transform cultures, structures, systems and ways of thinking; especially those secular views that predominate our society to day;

- (b) consequently, reaffirms the traditional teaching upholding faithfulness between a husband and wife in marriage, and celibacy for those who are single;
- (c) noting that the Holy Scriptures are clear in teaching that all sexual promiscuity is a sin, is convinced that this includes homosexual practices, between persons of the same sex, as well as heterosexual relationships outside marriage;
- (d) believes that in this regard, as in others, all our ordained Ministers must set a wholesome and credible example. Those persons who practise homosexuality and live in promiscuity, as well as those Bishops who knowingly ordain them or encourage these practices, act contrary to the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. We call upon them to repent;
- (e) respects as persons and seeks to strengthen compassion, pastoral care, healing, correction and restoration for all who suffer or err through homosexual or other kind of sexual brokenness.
- (f) affirms that it is therefore the responsibility of the Church to lead to repentance all those who deviate from the orthodox teaching of the Scriptures and to assure them of God's forgiveness, hope and dignity.

Note: This Resolution was put to the Conference in the form of an amendment to Resolution I.10 and was defeated.

V. A GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DOCUMENTS, CONTINUED (LAMBETH I.10)

Resolution V.10 from the Latin American Region

This Conference recognises the importance of strengthening Christian family values, and thereby reaffirms traditional Anglican sexual ethics.

Note: This Resolution was put to the Conference in the form of an amendment to Resolution I.10 and was withdrawn by the mover.

Resolution V. 23 from the South East Asia Region

This Conference receives the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality with gratitude as an authentic expression of Anglican moral norms.

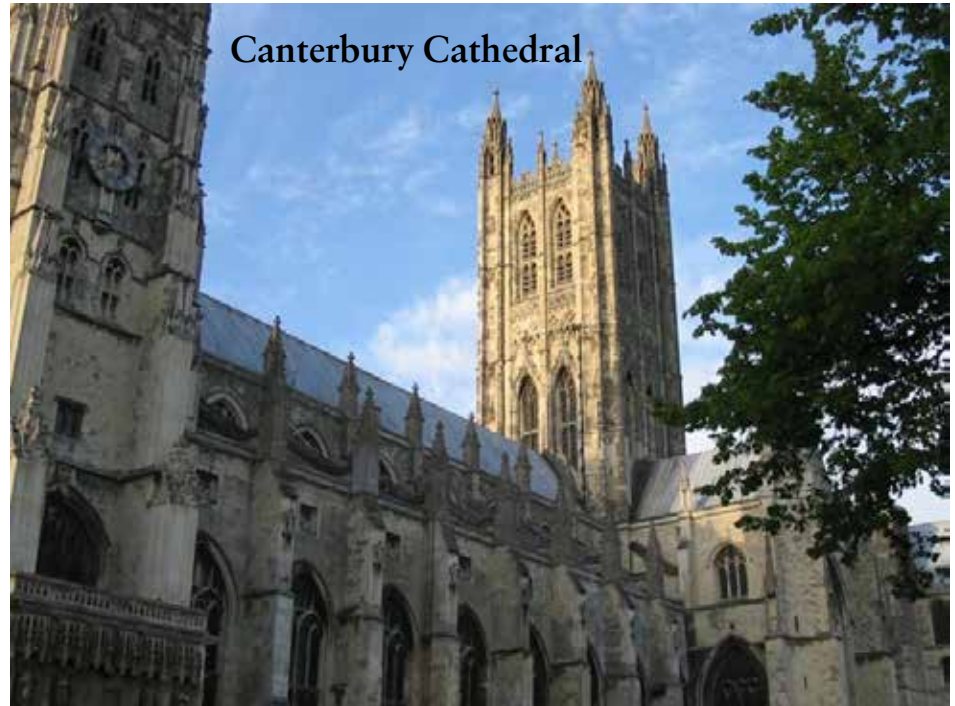
Note: This Resolution was not voted upon, as the Conference agreed to pass to next business.

Resolution V.35 from the West Africa Region

This Conference:

- (a) noting that -
 - (i) the Word of God has established the fact that God created man and woman and blessed their marriage;
 - (ii) many parts of the Bible condemn homosexuality as a sin;
 - (iii) homosexuality is one of the many sins that Scripture has condemned;
 - (iv) some African Christians in Uganda were martyred in the 19th century for refusing to have homosexual relations with the king because of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their commitment to stand by the Word of God as expressed in the Bible on the subject;
- (b) stands on the Biblical authority and accepts that homosexuality is a sin which could only be adopted by the church if it wanted to commit evangelical suicide.

Note: This Resolution was put to the Conference in the form of an amendment to *Resolution I.10* and was defeated.



Canterbury Cathedral is one of the oldest and most famous Christian structures in England and forms part of a World Heritage Site. It is the Cathedral of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of All England and religious leader of the Church of England. It houses The Chair of St. Augustine As well as being the mother church of the Diocese of Canterbury (east Kent) it is the focus for the Anglican Communion.



Our Core Values

Every community (think of your family, clubs or organizations to which you belong) has a collection of basic “values” to which they subscribe. While they do not necessarily define the community, they offer basic parameters of what it means to be part of the community. In short, it is often said that “If you want to live in the house, you have to play by the house rules.” Below are the “Core Values” of St. Martin's Episcopal Church:

To glorify God in all we do, St. Martin's Episcopal Church affirms and values:

The Christian Faith — As affirmed by the worldwide Anglican Communion which emphasizes the Holy Scriptures as the primary authority and guide for individual faith and practice.

Worship — Based on traditional Anglican theology, liturgy and the Christian Sacraments, always striving to offer God our very best in prayer, preaching and music in an inspirational setting.

Discipleship — Bringing as many people as possible into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and enabling each of us to be transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ through participation in the ministries of St. Martin's.

Ministry — Ministering to those in spiritual, emotional and physical need through Pastoral Care and Outreach programs designed to serve the St. Martin's church family and our entire community.

Stewardship — Becoming faithful stewards of our time, talent and treasure for the ultimate glory of God, the growth of His Kingdom and as an example to others.

Fellowship — Providing a Christian home for individuals and families seeking to experience and share Christian fellowship and community.

The Seven Christian Habits

Often, one lives out their values with specific Christian Habits, for instance, one's beliefs are lived out in their actions. The third Rector of St. Martin's Episcopal Church, the Rev. Laurence A. Gipson, D.D., developed seven “Christian Habits.” These habits were adopted by St. Martin's leadership and the Parish counsels each member of the Parish to “adopt” these habits into their Christian life as a visible expression of their life of discipleship. These Christian Habits are:

The Seven Christian Habits

1. A personal, intimate relationship (through the Holy Spirit) with God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ in which I believe and trust in Him and His love for me and for my salvation in this life and the life to come.
2. Daily personal prayer and weekly worship of God in His Church by which I receive the renewal of my emotional-spiritual energy which I need to live my life.
3. Regular study of the Bible to understand how God has related to His people and what His will has been.
4. Adjusting my will to the will of God for me as revealed in Scripture, prayer, worship and my relationship with Him.
5. Service (which is ministry, which is loving, which is doing good to God, others and self):
 - a. At home to family and friends.
 - b. At work to co-workers.
 - c. At Church.
 - d. In the world by leading others to Christ, by helping those in need and by working for justice and peace.
6. Fellowship (renewing relationship) with Christian people.
7. Stewardship of my resources:
 - a. Of my relationships.
 - b. Of my time and talent.
 - c. Of my money, giving to God and His work my tithe (as I calculate it).

Appendix A

An Historical Background to that Certain Resolution

To Establish St. Martin's As
A Windsor Parish

In 1998 the bishops of the world-wide Anglican Communion of 77 million members assembled in England at the Lambeth Conference and passed *Resolution 1.10* by an overwhelming majority. *Resolution 1.10* affirmed to all Anglicans:

- *That Holy Scripture upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union*
- *That Holy Scripture reveals that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage*
- *The homosexual practice is rejected as incompatible with Scripture*
- *That the Bishops, therefore*
 - *Do not advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions*
 - *Do not advise the ordination of those involved in same gender unions*
- *Yet, the Bishops* recognize that persons of homosexual orientation seek and are entitled to the pastoral care and moral direction of the Church and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships... and, so the Bishops assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ...and, the Bishops therefore call on all Anglicans to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals.

More recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury has reaffirmed that Resolution 1.10 is the teaching of the Anglican Communion on human sexuality,

Despite the foregoing, in 2003 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church gave consent to the election of V. Gene Robinson, a gay man living in a same sex relationship, to be consecrated the Bishop of New Hampshire and refused to forbid the blessing of same sex unions. Such actions created division in the Anglican Communion around the world,

Thereafter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, established the Lambeth Commission to recommend actions upon these problems.

In 2004, that Commission issued the Windsor Report, which made the following recommendations among others:

1. *The Episcopal Church (USA) be invited to effect a moratorium on the election and consent to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same gender union...*
2. *While we recognise that the Episcopal Church (USA) has by action of Convention made provision for the development of public Rites of Blessing of same sex unions, the decision to authorise rests with diocesan bishops. Because of the serious repercussions in the Communion, we call for a moratorium on all such public Rites...AND,*

In 2005, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the thirty-eight Primates (heads of the constituent churches) of the Anglican Communion approved the Windsor Report and its recommendations in the Dromantine Communique of 2005 calling for a response to Windsor's recommendations from the Episcopal Church (USA).

In the summer of 2006, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) met. Despite the foregoing, the

General Convention failed to effect a moratorium upon the ordination of practicing homosexuals (as requested by the Windsor Report's recommendation #1) or to effect a moratorium on the blessing of same sex unions (as requested by the Windsor Report's recommendation #2).

It is also noteworthy that the Windsor Report called for the creation of an "Anglican Covenant:"

This Commission recommends, therefore, and urges the primates to consider, the adoption by the churches of the Communion of a common Anglican Covenant which would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion.

Those churches who would commit to the Covenant ("sign on to it") would become constituent members of the Anglican Communion with voice and vote within the councils of the Communion. Those churches that did not would be reduced to "associate" status without voice and vote within the councils of the Communion.

It is supposed that the Covenant would prevent the ordination of persons living in same gender relationships and the blessing of same sex unions. This supposition is made because it seems fairly certain that the Covenant would contain Lambeth Resolution 1.10 that rejects both practices, AND,

In September 2006, the Rt. Rev. Don A. Wimberly, our Bishop, called together at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas a meeting of bishops who agreed to the following statements:

APPENDIX A.

AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THAT
CERTAIN RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH
ST. MARTIN'S AS A WINDSOR PARISH

- *Agreement that Lambeth 1.10 now constitutes the teaching of the Anglican Communion.*
- *Commitment to the Windsor Report as marking the way ahead for the Communion, and acceptance of its recommendations in respect to blessing same-sex unions and the ordination of persons engaged in sexual relations outside the bonds of Holy Matrimony.*
- *Acceptance of the Communique from Dromantine issued by the Meeting of the Primates in response to the Windsor Report.*
- *Agreement that the response of ECUSA's General Convention to the Windsor Report does not go far enough, and the intent to find a way to be related to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Communion in a way that is not impaired, AND,*

The Bishops who met at Camp Allen are called "Windsor Bishops", because they affirm that the Windsor Report with its recommendations including the Anglican Covenant is the way forward for the Anglican Communion in solving these present difficulties and returning the entire Communion to orthodox Christian faith and practice;

and they accept the Windsor Report and submit themselves to abiding by its recommendations.

Given the foregoing, St. Martin's Parish wishes to support our Bishop, Don A. Wimberly, our Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and the Primates of the Anglican Communion, AND St. Martin's has, therefore, prayerfully adopted the Resolution to which the foregoing history is appended.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Houston, acting under the authority of its Vestry and its Rector, the Reverend Laurence A. Gipson with the consent of its Bishop, the Right Reverend Don A. Wimberly, D.D., Bishop of Texas, hereby declares as follows:

- *We affirm and adhere to the teaching of Lambeth Resolution 1.10, including more particularly to its affirmation*
- *That Holy Scripture upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union*
- *That Holy Scripture reveals that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage*
- *That homosexual practice is incompatible with Scripture*
- *That Scripture is incompatible with*
 - *the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions*
 - *the ordination of those involved in same gender unions*

- *Yet, persons of homosexual orientation seek and deserve the pastoral care and moral direction of the Church and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships... and, We at St. Martin's therefore assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ...and, that our clergy and members will minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and we condemn irrational fear of homosexuals.*

And, that we intend to be a Windsor Parish within the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the Historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer; that fully supports the Windsor Report 2004 and its recommendations; and that prays for the day when the struggle over the issues that divide the Church will no longer diminish our witness to God's reconciling and saving love for all people as made known through Jesus our Lord.



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