

The Anglican Communion Primates' Meeting Communique, February 2005

1. As Primates of the Anglican Communion and Moderators of the United Churches, we gathered at the Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, Newry, in Northern Ireland, between 20th and 25th February, 2005, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams. Thirty-five of us were present at this meeting.¹ We are extremely grateful for the warmth of the welcome to Dromantine that we have received from members of the Roman Catholic Society of African Missions who run the Retreat Centre, and from the Church of Ireland, and especially the Primate of All Ireland, the Most Revd Robin Eames and Lady Eames, who have been our hosts.

2. Our meeting was held within the context of common prayer and worship, including Evensong at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, when we were formally welcomed to the Church of Ireland. On the Monday and Tuesday mornings, we spent time in Bible Study, prayer and silent retreat, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Lenten theme of the Three Temptations of Christ. He reminded us that it was our duty as Christian leaders to begin by listening to God, before going on to listen to one another. We thank God that our meeting has been characterised by generosity of spirit, and a readiness to respect one another's integrity, with Christian charity and abundant goodwill.

3. The meeting opened with reports from the Provinces most affected by the recent tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean and the works of relief undertaken by Anglican churches. We offered prayers for the victims, and for the ongoing work of reconstruction and relief being undertaken across the entire rim of the Indian Ocean, particularly in the Province of South East Asia, East Africa, the Indian Ocean, and South India and in the Church of Ceylon.

4. The most pressing business facing the Primates' Meeting was consideration of the Windsor Report 2004, in which the Lambeth Commission on Communion² had offered its recommendations on the future life of the Anglican Communion in the light of developments in Anglican life in North America.³

5. We reflected for many hours on the recommendations of the Windsor Report; listening first to Archbishop Robin Eames, who introduced the work of the Lambeth Commission, which he had chaired, and then to Primus Bruce Cameron of the Scottish Episcopal Church, who took up the work that Archbishop Peter Kwong had begun with the Reception Reference Group.⁴ We considered a careful analysis of the 322 responses which this group had received from around the Anglican

¹ Absent from the meeting were the primate of Burundi, following a family bereavement, of Hong Kong, following health problems, and the Moderator of United Church of North India, because of unavoidable business.

² This Commission was established by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the request of the Primates at their meeting in Lambeth Palace in October 2003.

³ Namely, the authorisation of a Public Rite of Blessing for Same-sex Unions within a diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada in May 2003, and the Consecration of a Bishop in a committed same-sex relationship in the Episcopal Church (USA) in November later that year.

⁴ This group had been established by the Primates' Standing Committee on publication of the Windsor Report in October 2004 to receive and review responses and reactions to the Windsor Report from within the Anglican Communion and from our ecumenical partners.

Communion, and which offered a high measure of general support for the recommendations of the Windsor Report, despite some expressions of concern in relation to matters of detail.⁵

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.⁶ 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

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 in its Sections A & B 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,⁸ although we recognise that serious questions about the content of the proposal for an Anglican Covenant⁹ and the practicalities of its implementation mean that this is a longer term process. We

⁵ The presentations by Archbishop Robin and Primus Bruce, together with the submissions to the Reception Reference Group may be found at www.aco.org/windsor2004/presentation.cfm [for the Eames presentation] and www.aco.org/commission/reception/report.cfm [for the Cameron presentation] and associated documents.

⁶ In the statement of October 2003, we wrote "The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (USA) has explained to us the constitutional framework within which the election and confirmation of a new bishop in the Episcopal Church (USA) takes place. As Primates, it is not for us to pass judgement on the constitutional processes of another province. We recognise the sensitive balance between provincial autonomy and the expression of critical opinion by others on the internal actions of a province."

⁷ See the Windsor Report, paragraph 146.

⁸ The Windsor Report, paragraphs 105-107.

⁹ The Windsor Report, paragraphs 113-120.

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.

10. We also have further questions concerning the development of the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and of a Council of Advice.¹⁰ While we welcome the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury as that of one who can speak to us as *primus inter pares* about the realities we face as a Communion, we are cautious of any development which would seem to imply the creation of an international jurisdiction which could override our proper provincial autonomy. We ask the Archbishop of Canterbury to explore ways of consulting further on these matters.

11. We accept the principle articulated in Section D of the Windsor Report concerning the universal nature of the ministry of a bishop within Anglican polity.¹¹ 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 in line with the

¹⁰ The Windsor Report, paragraphs 108 - 112.

¹¹ The Windsor Report, paragraphs 124 - 132.

recommendation in the Primates' Statement of October 2003.¹² Equally, during this period we commit ourselves neither to encourage nor to initiate cross-boundary interventions.

16. Notwithstanding the request of paragraph 14 of this communiqué, we encourage the Anglican Consultative Council to organise a hearing at its meeting in Nottingham, England, in June 2005 at which representatives of the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada, invited for that specific purpose, may have an opportunity to set out the thinking behind the recent actions of their Provinces, in accordance with paragraph 141 of the Windsor Report.

17. In reaffirming the 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution 1.10 as the present position of the Anglican Communion, we pledge ourselves afresh to that resolution in its entirety, and request the Anglican Consultative Council in June 2005 to take positive steps to initiate the listening and study process which has been the subject of resolutions not only at the Lambeth Conference in 1998, but in earlier Conferences as well.

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.

20. In the second half of our meeting we addressed some issues of practical ministry which have been on our agenda now for the last couple of years. We received a report of the present situation in relation to the ministry of African churches in particular amongst people living with HIV/AIDS; the dying, the bereaved, and orphaned children. We noted that this serious challenge is faced by all of our churches. We now accept, however, that our concerns must be broadened to include those suffering from TB and malaria. We know that this year 3 million people will die of AIDS, 2 million of TB, and 1 million of malaria. We have also been called to support the General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and world leaders in developing effective strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.¹³ In addition to the commitment to combat HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, these MDGs include reducing absolute poverty by half and reducing hunger by half by 2015. In the longer term we must eradicate both. Other MDGs include lowering child mortality and improving maternal health, universal primary education, access to clear drinking water, and the building of sustainable development partnerships between rich and poor. Accordingly we call upon the people of God in all the Provinces of our Communion to encourage leaders of government to pursue these goals with vigour, and to pray for the strengthening of their resolve to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

21. Two whole sessions of our meeting were devoted to the important work of the discernment of theological truth and the development and improvement of theological education through the sharing of resources across the Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury has identified this as a priority concern during the period of his leadership. The work of TEAC (Theological Education for the

¹² "& we call on the provinces concerned to make adequate provision for episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities within their own area of pastoral care in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates."

¹³ These Millennium Development Goals may be found at www.developmentgoals.org

Anglican Communion) which was established at our meeting in Kanuga in 2001 was reviewed, including the four separate Target Groups which are now engaged with the development of specific education and training programmes for bishops; for priests and transitional deacons; for vocational deacons, catechists and licensed lay readers; and for the laity. In all this particular attention is being paid to the distinctively Anglican component in theological education. This mandate is of concern because some theological education across the Communion needs to take more account of Anglican history, formularies or spirituality. The discernment and definition of the 'Anglican Way' is being intentionally pursued by a dedicated Target Group. It is planned to hold a Consultation for theological educators later this year in Canterbury, and it is anticipated that this work will be a significant item of consideration at the Lambeth Conference in 2008.

22. Our common commitment to the pursuit of projects such as these, together with our recent very positive experience of close practical co-operation in response to the tsunami disaster, convince us of the enormous importance of our shared work together as Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Indeed, in the course of our meeting, we have become even more mindful of the indissoluble link between Christian unity and Christian mission, as this is expressed in Jesus' own prayer that his disciples should be one that the world may believe (John 17.21). Accordingly, we pray for the continuing blessing of God's unity and peace as we recommit ourselves to the mission of the Anglican Communion, which we share with the whole people of God, in the transformation of our troubled world.

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12.2)

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5.18)

Source: <http://www.aco.org/acns/news.cfm/2005/2/24/ACNS3948>