

**Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion**

**Recent Developments  
in the  
Anglican Communion**

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## **1. Timeline to the current issues**

1998 - Lambeth Conference of all Anglican Bishops endorses by a large majority Resolution 1.10 which affirms that human sexuality is to be expressed in faithful marriage and chastity outside of marriage.

2000 – General Convention of Episcopal Church of the USA approves a resolution acknowledging committed relationships other than marriage (including homosexual) in the body of Christ and His church.

2002 – Primates Meeting calls all Bishops to maintain Christian truth.

2002 – Diocese of New Westminster (Canada) approves the blessings of same-sex unions.

2002 – ACC (Anglican Consultative Council) urges no unilateral actions

2003 – ECUSA Gen Assembly approves the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, with full knowledge that he lived in a homosexual relationship

2003 – Primates Meeting condemns ECUSA's actions saying that the actions will "tear at the fabric of the Communion". They plead for pastoral care of dissenting minorities

2004 – The Windsor Report is issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury which reaffirms Lambeth 1.10 and calls for a moratorium on same-sex blessings.

2005 – The Bishops of the Global South call for an Anglican Covenant to deal with the crisis, as a way of expressing our unity in doctrine.

2006 – ECUSA expresses regret for the hurt their actions have caused but do not change their course.

2007 – The Primates Meeting in Dar es Salaam re-affirms Lambeth 1.10 and calls on ECUSA to act to heal the Communion and provide pastoral care to the disaffected.

2007 – Approximately 1/4 of bishops (mostly from the Global South) choose not to attend the upcoming Lambeth Conference due to the invitation of the ECUSA bishops who allowed Gene Robinson's consecration.

2008 - GAFCON Conference produces the Jerusalem Declaration – an affirmation of Biblical and traditional Anglican doctrine on matters of belief, faith and conduct.

2008 - Lambeth Conference meets but no resolutions are made. Work on an Anglican Covenant continues.

## 2. This year

Two major events have recently occurred. In June 2009 a new Anglican province body was inaugurated in Bedford, Texas called the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). It has brought together various bodies that had split from the Episcopal Church (TEC, formerly ECUSA) and the Anglican Church of Canada. It is mix of groups - 700 parishes, 28 dioceses, approximately 100,000 members – from Charismatic, Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical persuasions.

ACNA is orthodox in its doctrinal statements and its understanding of human sexuality. On women's ministry, it accepts women's ordination as deacons and priests but is conservative on the issue of women bishops. Many Global South Provinces have welcomed it and recognized it, but it has not yet been accepted by any of the Anglican Instruments of Communion (Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglican Consultative Council, Primates Meetings, Lambeth Conference).

In July 2009 the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the TEC was held in Anaheim, California. Previously this body had agreed to a moratorium of the consecration of actively homosexual bishops and the blessing of same sex marriages, however this convention overturned this. As a result of this two American Dioceses (Los Angeles and Minnesota) have just announced gay and lesbian candidates for the episcopate.

Although the presenting issue is seen to be human sexuality, the Presiding Bishop of ECUSA Katharine Jefferts Schori, sees it as one of the role of scripture in the church. In her opening address at the Convention she stated "The crisis of this moment has several parts... The overarching connection in all of these crises has to do with the great Western heresy – that we can be saved as individuals, that any of us alone can be in right relationship with God. It's caricatured in some quarters by insisting that salvation depends on reciting a specific verbal formula about Jesus. That individualist focus is a form of idolatry, for it puts me and my words in the place that only God can occupy, at the center of existence, as the ground of being. That heresy is one reason for the theme of this Convention". As evangelicals we may strongly disagree with her view of salvation (see Rom10: 9-13 which reminds us that salvation is at least individual) but we do agree the key issue is that of Biblical authority and the role of human experience in determining truth, and not just human sexuality.

Later in July, the Archbishop released his reflections on the TEC Convention and wrote of the broken bridges that have now occurred. He has reaffirmed the importance of Lambeth 1:10 and possibility of a "two track" Communion.

6. However, the issue is not simply about civil liberties or human dignity or even about pastoral sensitivity to the freedom of individual Christians to form their consciences on this matter. It is about whether the Church is free to recognise same-sex unions by means of public blessings that are seen as being, at the very least, analogous to Christian marriage.

7. In the light of the way in which the Church has consistently read the Bible for the last two thousand years, it is clear that a positive answer to this question would have to be based on the most painstaking biblical exegesis and on a wide acceptance of the results within the Communion, with due account taken of the teachings of ecumenical partners also. A major change naturally needs a strong level of consensus and solid theological grounding.

8. This is not our situation in the Communion. Thus a blessing for a same-sex union cannot have the authority of the Church Catholic, or even of the Communion as a whole. And if this is the case, a person living in such a union is in the same case as a heterosexual person living in a sexual relationship outside the marriage bond; whatever the human respect and pastoral sensitivity such persons must be given, their chosen lifestyle is not one that the Church's teaching sanctions, and thus it is hard to see how they can act in the necessarily representative role that the ordained ministry, especially the episcopate, requires.

### **3. Possible future implications**

- A key issue will be what will happen to the new province of orthodox Anglicans in Nth America –ACNA. They ought to be recognized as the legitimate Anglican body in this part of the world with any orthodox parishes and diocese able to be transferred under their jurisdiction. Instead they are being sued for property by ECUSA. The Church of England will be the next “battlefield” over these issues.
- What will happen in Australia? It is possible that there will be a debate at next years General Synod about these issues focused on about the recognition of the ACNA.
- Although Lambeth 1:10 is our official position, the Australian church contains many different views on these issues. In a post modern society where objective truth is undermined and homosexual relationships are increasingly normalized, there will be increasing pressure for a revision of Christian belief and accommodation to the prevailing culture. This will come both from within and without the church.
- What can we do?
  1. Continue to hold up and teach Biblical truth in your parishes. Let the Word of God speak for itself on these issues.
  2. Don't be distracted from the primary tasks of evangelism and discipleship.
  3. Use deanery and synod meetings to restate orthodox belief as the basis of Anglicanism. Keep affirming your diocesan leaders as they take up orthodox positions on this.
  4. Keep working positively within the Diocese, being respectful to those who may not share your views.