



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THE GENERAL CONVENTION

16 July 2009

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Rowan Williams
Lambeth Palace
London

Dear Archbishop Williams,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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In 2006, the 75th General Convention adopted Resolution B033 which “called upon Standing Committees and Bishops with jurisdiction to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider Church and will lead to further strains on communion.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faithfully,

Your sisters in Christ,

Bonnie Anderson

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

Katharine Jefferts Schori

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate