

What Should General Convention 2006 Do?

Commentary on the Resolutions Proposed by the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion



Lionel E. Deimel, Ph.D.
Board Member and Past President,
Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh

May 23, 2006

General Convention 2006, through what it does and, perhaps, what it does not do, will make an official Episcopal Church response to the Windsor Report and to other demands of the Anglican Communion. The Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, in its report “One Baptism, One Hope in God’s Call,” has proposed a set of 11 resolutions, A159–A169, for consideration in Columbus as the church’s reply to the challenges presented to it.

What follows is a commentary on the proposed resolutions. This is not a voter’s guide designed to tell deputies which resolutions to vote for and which resolutions to vote against. It is, rather, a reflection on the resolutions that should help deputies focus on relevant issues, even if their points of view differ substantially from that expressed here. Moreover, it is important to remember that the Special Commission’s recommendations are a starting point for General Convention discussion; the final product of the legislative process will surely be different, in major or in minor ways.

The church’s proper response to events that followed General Convention 2003 needs to be considered in the context of those events and of longstanding movements in the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion. Deputies should familiarize themselves with that history, which is documented and explicated elsewhere. Above all, the following questions must be kept in mind as resolutions are considered:

1. What problem are we solving?

2. How is any proposed resolution supposed to contribute to a solution?
3. What are the likely (and possibly even unlikely) negative consequences of any proposed resolution?

Discussion should be conducted in a spirit of generosity, of course, and with a bigger question always in mind: What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do at this time and place to further the mission of the Church?

Although doing so lengthens this document significantly, the proposed resolutions are presented along with the commentary on them in parallel columns, resolutions on the left and commentary on the right. We hope this makes the document as user-friendly as possible. We suggest duplicating it using both sides of the paper to make it easier to handle. To facilitate discussion about particular provisions, individual resolves are given numbers, which do not appear in the Special Commission report.

It is sometimes necessary to refer to people within and outside the Episcopal Church who have been most critical of the work of the 74th General Convention and of what they view as a long-term movement of our church away from long-accepted doctrines. We have referred to these people as “militant traditionalists,” a term meant to be descriptive, rather than censorious. This group is not homogeneous in its belief, but it is distinguished from other Anglicans by the strength of its advocacy. “Militant traditionalists” is sometimes abbreviated to “traditionalists” where the reference should be clear.

Some General Remarks. Undoubtedly, many were surprised that the Special Commission thought that 11 resolutions were needed to respond to the Anglican Communion. There are many words here, and the more one reads them, the more subtle and nuanced they seem. This makes the set of proposals quintessentially Anglican, but we must ask if it is not time to be as clear as possible, in addressing our Anglican sisters and brothers, about just where the Episcopal Church stands. For example, we should make it clear that, to our understanding, we have no intention of “walking apart” from the Anglican Communion, although this is a matter that is not completely ours to decide.

Experience has shown that vagueness or ambiguity in church documents sometimes encourages interpretations that distort or misrepresent the intended meaning. Nuance and subtlety, too, can lead to censure. The carefully constructed but subtle resolutions proposed by the Special Commission have already been criticized for their craftiness. These circumstances argue for brevity and clarity in resolutions wherever possible, in preference to wordiness, ambiguity, and cleverness.

In dealing with these resolutions, it will be useful to work from a list of essential provisions growing out of what we are trying to accomplish. (An actual discussion of what we should be trying to accomplish is beyond the scope of this document.) This is likely good advice whether or not one shares our point of view. Here is a possible set of key provisions that deputies can modify, to which they can add, and from which they can subtract. The Episcopal Church

1. Values the Anglican Communion as a fellowship of autonomous churches tracing their histories to the Church of England, the use of the Book of Common Prayer, and the emphasis on common worship practices over uniformity of belief.
2. Regrets any distress felt by others over the actions of the 74th General Convention.
3. Affirms its intent to remain in communion with all provinces of the Anglican Communion.
4. Regrets any state of impaired communion declared by other provinces of the Communion with respect to the Episcopal Church.
5. Is willing, even if not enthusiastic, to discuss any kind of agreement or covenant that others believe to be helpful. Only General Convention can cause such an instrument to be binding on the Episcopal Church, however.
6. Affirms its provincial autonomy in the selection of its own bishops.
7. Will maintain its position regarding the blessing of same-sex unions, neither going forward nor backward on the matter.
8. Asks the Anglican Communion to take a strong stand against bishops who cross diocesan boundaries without permission. (Should we ask for a moratorium?)
9. Regrets its failure to mend divisions within it, which has resulted in the export of those divisions to the wider Communion.

Commentary. The proposed resolutions, with annotations, begin on the following page.

Resolution A159 Commitment to Interdependence in the Anglican Communion

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church reaffirm the abiding commitment of the Episcopal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion, and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the descriptive Preamble of our church's Constitution that states 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 be it further

Resolve 1. This states our commitment to the Anglican Communion. Significantly, it describes the Communion as a "fellowship of churches," as the Episcopal Church has always understood it. It is unlikely that anyone will object to this provision, which reflects the charge to the Special Commission and the language of Lambeth 1998 III.2 cited in the Windsor Report.

Resolve 2. Immediately after the 74th General Convention consented to the election of Gene Robinson, militant traditionalists articulated a somewhat incoherent argument to the effect that the reference to the Anglican Communion in the preamble of the church's constitution, along with the "departure" of General Convention from an "orthodox" position on homosexuality, meant that the Episcopal Church had violated its constitution, somehow transforming opponents of the change into the "true" Episcopal Church. Preambles of constitutions—the Episcopal Church constitution has not always had one—establish context, however, not rules, and this resolve rightly refers to the reference to the Communion in the preamble as *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*. Even the Windsor Report (in §128) acknowledges that General Convention acted consistent with its constitution.

If this resolve is actually intended to counter the traditionalist argument, then "descriptive nature of the Preamble" might be a helpful substitute for "descriptive Preamble," though even this is not likely to put the argument over the preamble to rest.

Even if one were to grant legal significance to the preamble, there are factors that weaken the traditionalist case. First, because the preamble occurs in an Episcopal Church document, not an Anglican Communion one, the "constituent member of the Anglican Communion" description of the church is more reasonably construed as indicating that the Episcopal Church is an essential component of the Anglican Communion, rather than the reverse. Second, the traditionalist argument has been that the 74th General Convention departed from the "historic Faith and Order" mentioned in the preamble. Whereas this suggests a reference to some "orthodox" abstraction, it is not what is intended in the preamble, where "historic Faith and Order" is followed by "as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer." As is clear from the constitution, this refers to the *current* prayer book, that is, that of 1979.

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention join with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the primates, and the Anglican Consultative Council in making a commitment to the vision of interdependent life in Christ, and commends Sections A and B of the Windsor Report as a means of deepening our understanding of that commitment; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, as an expression of this interdependence, make provision for persons from other Provinces of the Anglican Communion to serve with voice but not vote on each of the Standing Commissions of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

EXPLANATION

The Windsor Report is part of a process for maintaining the highest degree of communion possible. The first two resolve clauses of this resolution state this General Convention's desire for full life in the Anglican Communion and to maintain the distinctively Anglican bonds of communion. At their 2005 meeting, the primates requested "all Provinces to consider whether they are willing to be committed to the interdependent life of the Anglican Communion understood in the terms set out in" sections A and B of the Windsor Report (Dromantine Communiqué, paragraph 8). The third resolve addresses this question. The final resolve clause invites members of other Anglican churches into the deliberations of our standing commissions as an expression of our mutual responsibility and interdependence with sister and brother Christians from around the world.

Resolve 3. It is not clear how much of a commitment this resolve represents. Although there is much in sections A and B of the Windsor Report that we can accept, there are problems as well, and this resolve seems to make an unnecessarily strong commitment to the report. It is, after all, only a report. Perhaps significantly, the commitment here is "to the vision of interdependent life in Christ," with the introductory sections of the Windsor Report being "a [not "the"] means of deepening our understanding of that commitment."

Resolve 4. This provision is intended to underline our sincerity in offering the previous resolve. It is likely that those who demand "consultation" with the Anglican Communion before Episcopalians enact any "innovation" will see this mechanism as more show than substance. General Convention should discuss how the representation described might be achieved in practice, what it might accomplish, and what problems it might create. The idea should be evaluated on its intrinsic merits, not on its symbolic value. If there is a good idea here, we should ask other provinces to implement it as well. Although this proposal implements a kind of consultation with other provinces, it is not clear either that it will be or will be seen to be effective consultation.

There is little sentiment within the Episcopal Church for simply walking away from what has been a longstanding and, in many ways, mutually beneficial relationship. It is to be hoped that the Episcopal Church will never be forced to choose between its ability to pursue its understanding of its mission and unity with the wider Communion. There are surely forces acting to fracture the Communion, however, and, in the end, we may be powerless to prevent schism. If we can do so while preserving our integrity, we should make every effort to remain in the Anglican Communion and, if a break is to come, leave it to others formally to precipitate it.

Resolution A160 Expression of Regret

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church join the House of Bishops' March 2005 "Covenant Statement" in expressing "our own deep

Resolve 1. As is indicated, the House of Bishops has already expressed the sentiment in quotation marks. A statement by the House of Bishops is not a statement from the Episcopal Church, however,

regret for the pain that others have experienced with respect to our actions at the General Convention of 2003 and we offer our sincerest apology and repentance for having breached the bonds of affection in the Anglican Communion by any failure to consult adequately with our Anglican partners before taking these actions.”

EXPLANATION

This resolution addresses the invitation of the Windsor Report that “the Episcopal Church be invited to express regret” for breaching the proper constraints of the bonds of affection (Windsor Report 134). It concurs with and affirms the language of the House of Bishops’ expression of regret, thus signaling our synodical intentions to remain within the Communion.

which can only come from or be authorized by General Convention. Windsor Report 134 was directed to the Episcopal Church, not simply to its House of Bishops.

One may quibble about whether this apology is too little, too much, or just right. The church would be severely criticized were we to weaken the statement made by the bishops, so this resolution or a resolution expressing the same sentiment should, no doubt, be passed.

It is worth noting that the phrase “pain that others have experienced with respect to our actions at the General Convention of 2003” is significant. The resolution does not refer to “pain *caused* by our actions at the General Convention of 2003” or something similar.

The formulation used by the House of Bishops and repeated here is not precisely the wording found in §134, although it has been acknowledged by Lambeth Commission chairman Archbishop Eames as sufficient.

Resolution A161 Election of Bishops

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church regrets the extent to which we have, by action and inaction, contributed to strains on communion and caused deep offense to many faithful Anglican Christians as we consented to the consecration of a bishop living openly in a same-gender union. Accordingly, we urge nominating committees, electing conventions, Standing Committees, and bishops with jurisdiction to exercise very considerable caution in the nomination, election, consent to, and consecration of bishops whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.

Resolve 1. The Anglican world expects General Convention to enact on a moratorium on the selection of partnered gay bishops. It seems neither prudent nor reasonable, however, that we should give other provinces a veto over episcopal candidates or over particular classes of episcopal candidates within our church, and this resolve attempts diplomatically to decline to do so. Even if one argues that the American church deserves no special privileges, neither does it deserve special handicaps. Should not the logic of the Windsor Report allow us to object to episcopal candidates in other provinces who support oppressive governments or who oppose free speech or women’s ordination?

The wording here, unlike that of A160, has General Convention admitting to *causing* “deep offense to many faithful Anglican Christians.” Certainly, General Convention had ample reason to believe that some Anglicans, here and abroad, would be upset by its actions. It should be remembered, however, that (1) what was done was understood to be the right thing to do, and (2) those who were offended could have chosen *not* to be offended.

EXPLANATION

The Windsor Report has invited the Episcopal Church 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 until some new consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges” (Windsor Report 134). Within the parameters set by our Constitution and Canons, this resolution frames a response encouraging caution regarding “nomination, election, consent to, and consecration of bishops whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.” The resolution does not specify what constitutes a “manner of life” that “presents a challenge to the wider church;” we leave this to the prayerful discernment of those involved in nominating, electing, and consecrating bishops. Concerns we discussed were by no means limited to the nature of the family life; for example, the potential of bishops to serve effectively as pastors for all within their diocese, and their level of commitment to respect the dignity of and strive for justice for all people are also relevant. Finally, the Special Commission was not of one mind on the use of the words “exercise very considerable caution in,” with some instead recommending the words “refrain from.” As a group and in a spirit of cooperation and generosity, however, we decided to offer the resolution as it stands for debate at the 75th General Convention.

That the members of the Special Commission felt it necessary to explain how divided they were on the wording of this resolution is a clear indication that similar disagreement will surface at General Convention. The church could, of course, enact the moratorium that has been urged upon it, reject such a moratorium outright, reject it implicitly by not acting upon it (possibly exposing us to the charge of not paying attention, or worse), or enact some compromise like the one embodied in this resolution. Such a compromise could be a “no, but” response—the recommendation of the Special Commission—or a kind of “yes, but” response that we have not seen advocated by anyone.

The temporary moratorium on the election of *any* bishop implemented by the House of Bishops imposed great hardships on particular dioceses and individual bishops, and it clearly cannot be extended. We sincerely hope that General Convention will avoid trying to buy peace in the Communion by weakening its commitment to our gay sisters and brothers. No new moratorium should be imposed.

This resolution leaves to the imagination exactly what “manner of life” might present “a challenge to the wider church” and “lead to further strains on communion.” Whereas this resolution may discourage the consecration of gay bishops—some will argue that it will have no such effect—it could have a similar effect on those, say, opposed to women’s ordination, whose consecration would arguably impede the reception process of women’s ordination in the Communion.

Opponents of Gene Robinson’s consecration have argued that bishops have a special mission as role models not shared by ordinary priests. This notion that special restrictions should be applied to episcopal ministry has been roundly rejected by those who argue that our unity in Christ comes in baptism, and that the baptismal covenant applies to the behavior of all Christians, lay or ordained.

Resolution A162 Public Rites of Blessing for Same-Sex Unions

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirm the need to maintain a breadth of private responses to situations of individual pastoral care for gay and lesbian Christians in this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention concur with the Windsor Report in its exhortation to bishops of the Anglican Communion to honor the Primates’ Pastoral Letter of May 2003, by not pro-

Resolve 1. This resolve will not likely encounter strong opposition, although those opposed to private blessings of same-sex unions will likely object to it.

Resolve 2. This resolve misrepresents history. It has become the conventional wisdom that the Episcopal Church was warned against moving forward with same-sex blessings by the primates

ceeding to authorize public Rites of Blessing for same-sex unions, until some broader consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges; and be it further

meeting in Brazil. In fact, what the pastoral letter said was the following:

The question of public rites for the blessing of same sex unions is still a cause of potentially divisive controversy. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke for us all when he said that it is through liturgy that we express what we believe, and that there is no theological consensus about same sex unions. Therefore, we as a body cannot support the authorisation of such rites.

Moreover, and somewhat ironically, the following passage immediately preceded the one above:

We recognise that all churches, and not just Anglicans, face challenges in applying the Gospel to their specific situations and societies. These challenges raise questions for our traditional teaching and understanding—questions which require of the Church a careful process of thought and discussion in order to discover a way forward that is true to our inheritance of faith in Christ and to our duty as Christians to care for all people.

Recalling the Virginia Report's exhortation that we should strive for "the highest degree of communion possible with tolerance for deeply held differences of conviction and practice" (Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, 1997, chapter 1), we are committed as Primates:

- to the recognition that in each province there is a sincere desire to be faithful disciples of Christ and of God's Word, in seeking to understand how the Gospel is to be applied in our generation;
- to respect the integrity of each other's provinces and dioceses, acknowledging the responsibility of Christian leaders to attend to the pastoral needs of minorities in their care;
- to work and pray that the communion between our churches is sustained and deepened; and to seek from God "a right judgement in all things" (Collect of Pentecost).

If we must wait for "some broader consensus" among the provinces, we may have to wait a very long time indeed. In the meantime, we will be arguing about how broad the consensus needs to be. If we had been forced to wait for such consensus

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention advise those bishops who have authorized public diocesan rites that, “because of the serious repercussions in the Communion,” they heed the invitation “to express regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached by such authorization” (Windsor Report 144).

EXPLANATION

The first resolve clause reaffirms the need for a breadth of response in pastoral care for gay and lesbian Christians (Windsor Report 143). The second resolve concurs with the Windsor Report’s call for a moratorium on authorizing public Rites of Blessing (Windsor Report 144). Recognizing that some dioceses may in fact have developed diocesan-authorized rites, the third resolve recommends that the bishops so authorizing be invited to express regret.

about women’s ordination, we likely would be practicing it nowhere within the Communion today. Partnered gay Episcopalians may rightly feel like pawns in a Communion-wide power struggle.

Some have objected that General Convention 2003 acted without first establishing a clear theological position regarding homosexuality. Archbishop Williams’ statement that “through liturgy ... we express what we believe” is well taken, however. Since Anglicanism is not confessional in nature and is not given to making binding and definitive theological pronouncements, the normal practice in the Episcopal Church, once a general consensus has been achieved, is to act on that consensus, either in the creation of liturgy or in other matters.

Resolve 3. The Special Commission, in §53 of “One Baptism, One Hope in God’s Call” attempts to clarify exactly what the 74th General Convention did and did not do in adopting resolution C051. In explaining the meaning of “authorized rites” in §53, the report seems to be imply that no diocesan can create one, yet §54 refers to “bishops who have authorized such public diocesan rites.” There is some confusion here that should be clarified, if only in the discussion of this resolve.

This resolve surely does not repeal C051, though it seems to limit its application, whether or not more tightly than was originally intended is unclear.

Many have argued that the Episcopal Church has already engendered cognitive dissonance among its members by accepting the election of Gene Robinson and accepting experimental use of liturgies for blessing same-sex unions in the absence of a clear teaching on matters relating to homosexuality. Greater clarity from the 75th General Convention would be welcome.

Resolution A163 Pastoral Care and Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight

Resolved, that the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirm the centrality of effective and appropriate pastoral care for all members of this church and all who come seeking the aid of this church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commit the Episcopal Church to the ongoing engagement of and sensitive response to the request and

Resolve 1. One hopes that this resolve is not controversial. Note the use of “all.”

Resolve 2. This, too, should be uncontroversial. As in the previous resolve, no one and no points of view are excluded.

need of all the people of God – in particular, but not exclusively, those who agree and those who disagree with the actions of this body, those who feel isolated thereby, and gay and lesbian persons within and without this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention recognize the agonizing position of those who do not feel able to receive appropriate pastoral care from their own bishops, and urges the members of the House of Bishops to seek the highest degree of communion and reconciliation within their own dioceses, using when necessary the Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO) process detailed in the March 2004 statement of the House of Bishops, “Caring for All the Churches;” and be it further

Resolve 3. One has to wonder if there is not an excess of hand wringing here. Is not “the agonizing position of those who do not feel able to receive appropriate pastoral care from their own bishops” a bit hyperbolic? Most, though not all, of the calls of parishes for pastoral care by bishops other than their own are based on allegations of theological incompatibility and on an apparent desire not to sully themselves by having to deal with an “unworthy” bishop. This is hardly an attitude to be encouraged, though it may not be a helpful enterprise to attempt to specify precisely what are appropriate and inappropriate reasons for invoking DEPO. It would be helpful to clarify that DEPO is appropriate for any congregation having differences with its bishop *for any reason*, a point not obvious in “Caring for all the Churches.” In light of the previous resolves, this seems to be the intention here. (In practice, not all congregations that have availed themselves of DEPO have been “orthodox.”) Here is a suggested rewording:

That the 75th General Convention urges the members of the House of Bishops to seek the highest degree of communion and reconciliation within their own dioceses, using, when necessary, the Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO) process detailed in the March 2004 statement of the House of Bishops, “Caring for All the Churches,” when differences between congregations and their bishop are deep and have been impervious to sincere and repeated reconciliation efforts; and be it further

If bishops are acting inappropriately, DEPO (and even discipline of the offending bishops) may be indicated. If congregations are behaving badly, they should not be rewarded for their bad behavior. In recent years, we have indeed heard agonizing cries for bishops other than the diocesan to minister to particular congregations. Are serious problems in particular dioceses receiving inadequate attention? Are particular congregations crying “foul” to achieve special consideration to which they are not entitled? It would be useful, and would be a sign of good faith, for General Convention to establish a commission to investigate the nature of the complaints congregations have made of their bishops and to report its findings to the church.

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention urge continued attention to the proper maintenance of historic diocesan boundaries and the authority of the diocesan bishop.

EXPLANATION

This resolution affirms the process of reconciliation known as Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight and the ancient practice that bishops exercise their ministries within their own dioceses or elsewhere only with permission of the diocesan bishop (*Constitution of the Episcopal Church*, Article II.3).

Resolve 4. One would certainly like to see this resolve have some effect, not only on bishops—particularly retired ones—within the Episcopal Church, but also on bishops in other provinces. We believe this particular resolve deserves to be strengthened. As written, this resolve only “urges” and is addressed to no one in particular. (See additional comments below.)

DEPO was rightly praised in the Windsor Report, and, although it has been condemned as inadequate by traditionalists within the Episcopal Church, this is very much a minority view. Whereas the House of Bishops has been generous in providing an institutional mechanism for allowing congregations to minimize contact with bishops they find objectionable, incursions into Episcopal dioceses by bishops from other provinces can properly be described as out of control. That Windsor Report 155 strongly objects to cross-boundary interventions and asks for both expressions of regret for past actions and a moratorium on future incursions has been dismissed with impunity by certain “orthodox” bishops. As General Convention accedes to demands of the Communion, it should demand that others show similar willingness to live out the “autonomy in communion” they espouse.

Resolution A164 Continued Attention to the Millennium Development Goals

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church urge continued participation in and advocacy for the Millennium Development Goals, and the giving of at least 0.7% of diocesan, parish and individual financial resources to international development work as a step toward the goal of relieving abject poverty, and making real a vision of the reign of God in our own day; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention ask that this resolution be referred to each Diocesan Council or Convention for affirmation and action as a sign of the Episcopal Church’s understanding that participation in the Millennium Development Goals is an expression of the hunger of this church for far deeper communion with all of God’s beloved.

EXPLANATION

This resolution signals the ongoing commitment of the Episcopal Church to deeper communion in God’s mission by participating actively in the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Resolve 1. Although laudable, many find this resolution out of place here. Perhaps the intended message is that the Episcopal Church, as it seeks to fulfill its mission in the world, will not abandon its Anglican Communion partners.

Resolve 2. There is surely nothing objectionable here.

This resolution deserves passage for the reason stated in the explanation.

Resolution A165 Commitment to Windsor and Listening Processes

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church commend the Windsor Report as an important contribution to the process of living into communion across the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commit the Episcopal Church to the ongoing “Windsor Process,” a process of discernment as to the nature and unity of the Church, as we pursue a common life of dialogue, listening, and growth, formed and informed by the Baptismal Covenant and Eucharistic fellowship; and urges all members of this church to commit themselves to the call of communion and interdependent life; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commend the steps taken by the Anglican Communion Office in beginning a formal “Listening Process” across the Communion, as commended by resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commend for further study and as part of the continued Listening Process the document *To Set our Hope on Christ*, prepared for the 13th Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council by the Office of the Presiding Bishop; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention express its gratitude to the women of the Anglican Consultative Council’s Delegation to the United Nations

Resolve 1. It might be considered proper to thank the Lambeth Commission on Communion for its work.

Resolve 2. Committing to some ill-defined “Windsor Process” may seem like a step into the abyss. This resolution offers a vision of a process that reflects the theology of the 1979 prayer book, one that is less legalistic, doctrine-driven, and primate-dominated than might be anticipated from study of the Windsor Report and recent events within the Communion. The description here may provide some reassurance for those who suspect that elements of the Anglican Communion conceive of the “Windsor Process” as the project of suppressing the independence and innovation of the Episcopal Church and who use “autonomy in communion” to designate the opposite of what the phrase suggests.

The Episcopal Church cannot control the exact trajectory of any “Windsor Process,” but perhaps it can influence it in beneficial ways and promote ideas that have not heretofore received a hearing. For example, no one made a case for simple autonomy in the Communion, akin to that sometimes made for American federalism—namely, that allowing experimentation in individual provinces provides a test of ideas without having to make an all-out, Communion-wide commitment to them. If we believe that the Holy Spirit guides the church, why not give the Holy Spirit a better opportunity to demonstrate the value of innovations, whether that value be positive or negative?

Resolve 3. Surely the action of the Anglican Communion Office is long overdue and deserves commendation.

Resolve 4. *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, the Windsor Report, and a variety of other documents generated in the Anglican Communion within the past few years should be studied by all Episcopalians. Many would find the kind of reasoning embodied in *To Set Our Hope on Christ* very enlightening.

Resolve 5. There is a truly good idea in this resolve, though one must wonder if it does not get lost in this long resolution. Notice that a less legal-

Consultation on the Status of Women for providing a model of dialogue and engagement on issues of concern to all; and asks that this model be considered for implementation in the Windsor and Listening processes across the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commends the report “One Baptism, One Hope in God’s Call” of the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion as a resource in the Windsor and Listening processes.

EXPLANATION

The Windsor Report has advanced a process for mutual discernment of our common life together in the Anglican Communion. In a similar way, the Anglican Communion has taken steps to fulfill the 1998 Lambeth Conference commitment to a “Listening Process.” This resolution commends these two processes and commits the Episcopal Church to participate faithfully in them.

istic process of dialogue, akin to that suggested in resolve 2, is commended here.

Resolve 6. This seems straightforward enough.

It is easy to forget that the “Listening Process,” known for its mention in resolution I.10 from the 1998 Lambeth Conference, is really an extension of the “need for deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality” expressed in resolution 10 of the 1978 Lambeth Conference. Ten years later, this was reaffirmed in another resolution (64) that again urged “study and reflection” of medical and “socio-cultural factors” that led provinces to treat homosexuals differently. The resolution called for “each province to reassess ... its care for and attitude towards” homosexuals.

It is hard not to be cynical about these two processes. The “Listening Process” seems largely to have been ignored for 28 years by much of the Communion; the “Windsor Process” is expected to move along swiftly, however. If we are going to mention the Listening Process in this resolution, we should perhaps be more demanding respecting its progress.

Resolution A166 Anglican Covenant Development Process

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, as a demonstration of our commitment to mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Anglican Communion, support the process of the development of an Anglican Covenant that underscores our unity in faith, order, and common life in the service of God’s mission; and be it further

Resolve 1. “One Baptism, One Hope in God’s Call” emphasizes that the sort of Anglican covenant put forth in the Windsor Report is not the only covenant model being advanced. Within the Episcopal church, few outside the ranks of the militant traditionalists—without whom we likely would not be dealing with most of the matters with which these resolutions are concerned—have expressed any support for a covenant intended to narrow Anglican diversity or to facilitate the “discipline” of “errant” provinces. In fact, the report states (§71): “It is in the spirit of such ‘covenants for mission’ [‘Called to Common Mission’] that we embrace the recommendation of WR for the possible development of an Anglican Covenant.” This resolve does not, therefore, necessarily support the vision embedded in the Windsor Report. As we have noted earlier, however, we will not be in control of any process we might sign on to in these resolutions.

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention direct the International Concerns Standing Committee of the Executive Council and the Episcopal Church's members of the Anglican Consultative Council to follow the development processes of an Anglican Covenant in the Communion and report regularly to the Executive Council as well as to the 76th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention report these actions supporting the Anglican Covenant development process, noting such missiological and theological resources as the Standing Commission on World Mission and the House of Bishops' Theology Committee to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates, and the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion; and that the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church report the same to the primates of the churches of the Anglican Communion.

EXPLANATION

This resolution supports the development of an Anglican Covenant as suggested by the Windsor Report, the Primates' Meeting of February 2005, and the 13th Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. It directs appropriate bodies in the Episcopal Church to serve as resources for the development of an Anglican Covenant, and to report to the Episcopal Church regularly as to current covenant proposals.

That said, we do want to be able to influence whatever process that goes forward.

In any case, we must absolutely preserve the rights of General Convention by not submitting to the insidious idea of the Windsor Report (in §118) that "the brief 'communion law' referred to above (paragraph 117) might authorize its primate (or equivalent) to sign the Covenant on behalf of that church and commit the church to adhere to the terms of the Covenant." General Convention cannot abrogate its authority to act on the adoption of any Anglican covenant. Such an action likely *would* violate our constitution.

Resolve 2. Obviously, we want to track what happens.

Resolve 3. This is largely a matter of implementation.

It may be necessary to sign on to the covenant-writing process in order to influence (or stop) it, but the very fact that General Convention is debating how to respond to demands from an Anglican Communion does not encourage optimism that the outcome of such a process will be to our liking. Any covenant that will actually prevent the inter-provincial conflicts that so many in the Communion see as harmful must necessarily be coercive.

The text of the proposed Anglican covenant found in Appendix Two of the Windsor Report has actually received little attention, perhaps because it has been promoted as suggestive of what a covenant might be, rather than as an actual draft of one. Everyone involved in consideration of this resolution, however, should read carefully the proposal that begins on page 65 of the Windsor Report. This is not the place for a full critique of the proposal, but it is fair to say that the proposed covenant is vague,

authoritarian, and without checks and balances. It should be clear from this proposal, if not from the Windsor Report generally, that “autonomy in communion” is an oxymoron. The approval of an Anglican covenant along the lines of the proposal in the Windsor Report would make autonomy an illusion.

Resolution A167 “Full and Equal Claim” for All the Baptized

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church reaffirm that gay and lesbian persons are by Baptism full members of the Body of Christ and of the Episcopal Church as “children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church” (GC 1976-A069); and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reiterate its apology “on behalf of the Episcopal Church to its members who are gay or lesbian, and to lesbians and gay men outside the Church, for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church,” and recommit to “seek amendment of our life together as we ask God’s help in sharing the Good News with all people” (GC1997-DO11); and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reiterate that “our baptism into Jesus Christ is inseparable from our communion with one another, and we commit ourselves to that communion despite our diversity of opinion and, among dioceses, a diversity of pastoral practice with the gay men and lesbians among us” (GC2003-C051).

EXPLANATION

This resolution firmly articulates that the Episcopal Church is not backing away from its prior commitments against discrimination, and for the dignity of and justice for all people. The resolution does not provide an exhaustive catalogue of such commitments or of the church’s teaching on matters of human sexuality, but rather offers clarity regarding our church’s ongoing intention to ground our relationship with one another firmly within our Baptismal Covenant as members of one Body of Christ.

Resolve 1. We should support this resolve. If gay persons have the same claim on God’s love as everyone else, they should have the same claim on access to all clerical orders also.

Resolve 2. This is particularly appropriate, since we are apparently going to postpone acceptance and justice for another triennium.

Resolve 3. No problem here.

Again, a fair description of the resolution, though the concept of “the church’s teaching on matters of human sexuality” is a bit slippery.

Resolution A168 Human Rights for “Homosexual Persons”

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal

Resolve 1. This is hardly objectionable. Gays might wish that it went further.

Church reaffirm “its conviction that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens, and calls upon our society to see that such protection is provided in actuality” (GC 1976–A071); and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention affirms the statement in the Windsor Report paragraph 146:

“Moreover, any demonizing of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment, is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care. We urge provinces to be proactive in support of the call of Lambeth Resolution 64 (1988) for them to ‘reassess, in the light of ... study and because of our concern for human rights, its care for and attitude toward persons of homosexual orientation’”; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns seek ways to address this concern through the Anglican Communion Office.

EXPLANATION

The respect and dignity due every human being, and the affirmation of the human rights of every person, require the constant attention of this church. This resolution affirms the need for this attention.

Resolve 2. This would be an excellent place to take a stand supportive of the homosexual community in Nigeria, perhaps even if such support is expressed in an independent resolution.

Resolve 3. This is straightforward and uncontroversial.

One would hope that this explanation would be widely applauded.

Resolution A169 Amend Canon III.1: Quadrilateral and Exercise of Ministry

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That Canon III.1 be hereby amended by adding the following section:

Sec. 3. No person shall be denied access to any discernment process under these canons or to the exercise of any ministry in this Church on account of theological opinions consistent with (a) the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith, (b) the Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith, (c) the two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and the elements ordained by Him, and (d) the Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

Resolve 1. This resolution is ill-conceived, poorly phrased, and could produce damaging and unforeseen side effects.

The canon this resolution expands is titled “Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons,” and the text proffered here would follow section 2:

No person shall be denied access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to licensing, ordination, or election is hereby established.

Why is the wording in the resolution nearly, though not completely, parallel to that of section 2? (The opening words are different, and the repetition of the last sentence of section 2 is not recommended for inclusion in section 3.) If the different phrasing is meant to suggest a different meaning, what, exactly, is the difference?

The text of items (a)–(d) in the suggested canonical addition is taken verbatim from resolution 11 (not II, as listed on page 877 of the prayer book) of the 1888 Lambeth Conference. In the Lambeth resolution, the items of the list are said to “supply a basis on which approach may be ... made towards” church union. (The Quadrilateral was written for ecumenical purposes.) Whereas there, the list essentially enumerates *topics*, here, it seems intended to represent actual *theological opinions*. This resolution not only reads poorly, but it does not accomplish its apparent purpose. What, for example, must one *believe* about “the two Sacraments” in order to have “theological opinions consistent with” (c)? Is a commitment to open communion consistent with it, for example?

Significantly, the Lambeth resolution appears in the “Historical Documents” section of the prayer book, as it has no canonical status in the Episcopal Church. The version of 1886, which is also in the prayer book, was adopted by the House of Bishops but was never given any official status by General Convention. Although it is true that the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has served well as a shorthand formulation of what Anglicans believe, one would be hard-pressed to recover a fair description of Anglicanism from the Quadrilateral alone. One of the most distinctive features of Anglicanism, namely its diversity, is only implicit in what the Quadrilateral does *not* say. After nearly 120 years of accepting the Quadrilateral as a kind of definition of Anglicanism, are we willing to enshrine it in our canons without some significant discussion?

The proposed section 3 seems intended to prevent the rejection of a candidate for having theological opinions consistent with the Quadrilateral. Presumably, someone could be rejected for other reasons or accepted in spite of having theological opinions *inconsistent* with the Quadrilateral (rejection of the *filioque* clause, for example). Evaluating “theological opinions” is harder than determining sex or any of the other characteristics named in section 2. To discourage disputes, perhaps even litigation, in the more subjective theological sphere, there will be a natural tendency to interpret section 3 as preventing the disqualification of anyone who “subscribes” to the Quadrilateral and requiring the disqualification of anyone who does not. This would be an unfortunate, damaging, and unnecessary consequence for the church.

The specific “theological opinions” of a candidate for the priesthood, say, are of less concern than the candidate’s opinions upon graduating from seminary, which, one surely hopes, are different. Psychological fitness for the priesthood and a sincere

EXPLANATION

Both the Episcopal Church and the bishops of the Anglican Communion encourage and recognize a diversity of theological opinions within the Christian Church subject to the broad boundaries defined by the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, as quoted, which has been a guiding principle in ecumenical relations of the Episcopal Church since 1886. The Quadrilateral's generosity of spirit has fostered cooperative service to the mission of Christ both around the world and at home. For the sake of that same mission, our generosity toward those within our tradition should be at least as great as toward those of other traditions.

commitment to the Gospel are more important to evaluate on entry into the ordination process, and the proposed canonical change would tend to minimize those factors in favor of a theological litmus test. Moreover, incorporating "theological opinions" into the canons here will only encourage the specification of more theological requirements in the future. This could lead to a *de facto* incorporation of a confession into the Episcopal Church canons, which surely would violate the spirit of Anglicanism.

Perhaps the worst technical flaw in the proposed section 3, however, is that the section fails in a very obvious way to say what it means. Leaving out words that merely add details, it says: "No person shall be denied access ... on account of theological opinions consistent with [the Lambeth Quadrilateral." Remarkably, this does not say *whose* "theological opinions" are being referred to. Presumably, a bishop, based on her or his theological notions *inconsistent* with Anglicanism, could, under this provision, reject anyone!

One suspects that this resolution is primarily meant to reassure traditionalists that "orthodox" candidates for ordination will not be rejected by "liberal" bishops for their "orthodoxy." It has not been established that there is a problem to be solved here, and if dioceses are unfairly rejecting qualified candidates, this proposal certainly addresses the problem obliquely.

It is difficult to imagine that this proposal can be transformed by General Convention into an acceptable proposal. Perhaps it will occasion some useful discussions, however.

Acknowledgements. The author would like to thank the many people who reviewed this document and contributed to its correctness, form, tone, substance, and distribution. Any errors of fact or judgment, however, are those of the author.

