

## Prayer Bulletin 16

Contributed by Canon John Simons  
 Saturday, 02 August 2008  
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As Lambeth reaches its closing stages, it looks as though schism has been avoided, but unity not achieved. No "quick fix" solution to the profound disagreements is in prospect. But the distant horizon is a tad less stormy, if the "Covenant mechanism" is allowed to generate the profound corrections that are vital.

Rowan Williams has told the bishops that unless they come up with a set of the common values, shared Anglican principles, and an agreement to abide by them, he could see nothing but further disintegration ahead.

The agreement - or "covenant" - will not spring fully-formed from the conference, and will need to be ratified by each of the 38 autonomous Anglican Churches in the world. Its chances of success, in some degree, depend on how much of the renewed sense of fraternity and goodwill, will be retained when the bishops scatter next week to their homes all over the world. The Lambeth Conference has invested heavily in the Indaba discussions (rather than resolutions and debates) so that each bishop could take part - rather than just "the usual vocal suspects".

The ratification process is unlikely to be a short one. For example, it might need, after diocesan debates, to go to successive meetings of the US General Convention. Since the Convention meets only every two years, this could mean no endorsement (or rejection) till 2015. The Americans will be reluctant to sign anything that stays their hand. Plenty of Canadians and Americans fear that a binding agreement would curtail their "progressive" policies, their wish to stay in touch with fast-developing societies. It could stand in the way of their stated aim of making the Church more "inclusive" of actively homosexual people "as a matter of social justice".

It seems possible that the Episcopal Church, in America, will before long ordain another gay bishop - despite the fact that the Windsor group (WCG) implies that the "moratoria" on such appointments will have some retro-active force. It "requires the cessation of .. practices that may already have been authorised as well as proposed for authorisation in the future".

Critics of the Covenant-plus-Pastoral-Forum (a "holding bay" for problems) say that splitting the discussion into lots of small groups will have the effect of not solving the problem, but just kicking it into the long grass. The process could eventually produce some sort of looser federation of Anglican churches, with some not so much expelled as in a temporary outer orbit.

This Bulletin gives you a sense of how things stand, from various perspectives, as the bishops reach the closing days at Canterbury 2008.

Kyrie Eleison..

John Simons (On behalf of the team)

### Saturday's Agenda:

Pray: Please feel free to use the agenda in whatever way you like to prompt your prayer cover over the day's proceedings. Click the more link to the right to find further information from the main Lambeth Conference website. More: <http://www.lambethconference.org/index.cfm>

### Reflections upon the Lambeth Conference 2008

This formidable document, the fruit of the Indabas, runs to 62 sections. We refrain from reproducing it for your prayers (other than the beginning and concluding parts). The link below will take you to the full text, if you so wish.

The Archbishop of Canterbury invited us to gather between 16th July and 3rd August 2008 in Canterbury for purposeful discussion to consider the two themes of "Equipping Bishops for Mission", and "Strengthening Anglican Identity". We gather at a sensitive time in the life of the Communion. Acknowledging this, the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote in his invitation that acceptance carried with it a willingness to work with the Windsor Report and the Covenant as tools by which the future of the Communion could be shaped. From the very beginning, however, the Archbishop of Canterbury has indicated to us that, although we would have to give attention to the tensions which assail us, the wider life of the Communion is broader and richer than these matters alone. He invited us to reflect with him on how we as bishops might be better equipped for mission and the ways in which we could strengthen our Anglican identity as a faithful response to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

61. The Service we offer as bishops. The Bishops in the Anglican Communion serve in a variety of contexts, but our fundamental ministry is common to us all. With all the baptised, and with our fellow presbyters and deacons, we are called to be people of prayer, disciples of Jesus Christ, servants of the people of God and leaders in mission. The characteristics of the bishop's ministry include:

- > To gather the whole community in celebration, presiding over the sacraments and ordaining new priests and deacons.
- > To proclaim the Word of God as an apostolic witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- > To be a teacher, guardian and interpreter of the faith and the apostolic tradition.
- > To be active in making and nurturing disciples.
- > To be a shepherd (pastor) of the whole people of God, with a special concern for the clergy of the diocese.
- > To be a prophetic voice for the voiceless.

As bishops, we are committed to the life of the Church, to the wider communities in which we minister and to civil society. We recognise that it is in our calling to be bridge-builders, reconcilers and symbols of unity, representing the local to the universal and the universal to the local, taking our place within a world-wide college of bishops across the Communion and within the one Church of Christ.

62. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that there are great tensions in our relationship at present, and an erosion of trust between us. There is concern caused by a perceived lack of restraint and self-limitation, by impaired communion and by intervention across provinces. There is some lack of confidence in the "Instruments of Communion"; as the means of achieving this and a particular concern about the role of the Primates' Meeting. The four Instruments of Communion: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' Meeting.

Pray: for optical endurance, and discernment, as you read and reflect. More:  
[http://www.lambethconference.org/vault/Reflections\\_Document\\_080731.pdf](http://www.lambethconference.org/vault/Reflections_Document_080731.pdf)

The Church cannot heal this crisis of betrayal

'Those who violate biblical teaching must show repentance and regret before we can share communion with them' - The Most Rev Henry Luke Orombi - Archbishop of the Church of Uganda

I love the Lord Jesus Christ, and I love the Anglican Communion. So, why did the bishops of the Church of Uganda and I decide not to attend the present Lambeth Conference? Because we love the Lord Jesus Christ and because we love the Anglican Communion.

St Francis of Assisi said: "Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary use words." We believe that our absence at this Lambeth Conference is the only way that our voice will be heard. For more than ten years we have been speaking and have not been heard. So maybe our absence will speak louder than our words.

The crisis in the Communion is serious; our commitment to biblical and historic faith and mission are serious; and we want to be taken seriously. In 2003 the Episcopal Church in America consecrated as bishop a man living in an active homosexual relationship. This unilateral and unbiblical action was directly contrary to a resolution of the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

I participated in that conference and we overwhelmingly resolved that "homosexual practice is incompatible with Scripture" and the conference "cannot advise the legitimising of same-sex unions". As a result, the 2003 action of the American Church plunged the Anglican Communion into a crisis that, as the primates of the Anglican Communion said in 2003, "tore the very fabric of our communion at its deepest level". The crisis is about authority - biblical authority and ecclesiastical authority.

The American decision disregarded biblical authority by violating clear biblical teaching against homosexual behaviour. For this reason, the Church of Uganda and other Anglican provinces broke communion with the Episcopal Church in America in 2003, and we continue in that state of broken communion today.

Even though some scholars have tried to explain away specific biblical passages that refer to homosexual practice, the fact remains that nowhere in Scripture is homosexual practice affirmed or presented as a legitimate alternative to heterosexual relationships.

In every case, homosexual practice is considered sinful - something that breaks our relationship with God and harms our

wellbeing. It is something for which one should repent and seek forgiveness and healing, which God is ever ready to do. Not only is Scripture to be taken seriously, but it is to be obeyed, because God intends for us things far better than we could ask or imagine.

If a whole province, such as the Episcopal Church, acts contrary to God's word and the consensus of the communion, who in the Anglican Communion has the authority to discipline that erring province?

We in the Global South believed the Primates' Meeting had this authority - the 1988 Lambeth Conference urged the Primates' Meeting to "exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters"; and the 1998 Lambeth Conference reaffirmed this.

So, it was appropriate, after the American decision in 2003, that the Archbishop of Canterbury convened an emergency meeting of the primates to address the biblical and ecclesiastical crisis into which the Americans had plunged the Anglican Communion. The primates, including the American primate, unanimously advised that the consecration should not proceed. Nonetheless, two weeks later, the primate in America presided at the consecration as bishop of a man living in a same-sex relationship. This was a deep betrayal.

Since that meeting there have been numerous other "betrayals" to the extent that it is now hard to believe that the leadership in the American Church means what it says. They say that they are not authorising blessings of same-sex unions, yet we read newspaper reports of them. Two American bishops have even presided at such services of blessings. Bishops have written diocesan policies on the blessings of same-sex unions. It is simply untrue to say they have not been authorised.

That such blessings continue and seem to be increasing hardly demonstrates "regret", let alone repentance, on the part of the American Church. So, when the Archbishop of Canterbury invited these American bishops to participate in the Lambeth Conference, against the recommendations of the Windsor Report and the Primates' Meeting, and in the face of the unrelenting commitment of the American Church to bless sinful behaviour, we were stunned. Further betrayal.

It was clear to me and to our House of Bishops that the Instruments of Communion had utterly failed us.

Anglicans may say there are four "Instruments of Communion" (the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Lambeth Conference; the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting). But de facto, there is only one - the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The peculiar thing is that this one man, who is at the centre of the communion's structures, is not even elected by his peers. Even the Pope is elected by his peers, but what Anglicans have is a man appointed by a secular government. Over the past five years, we have come to see this as a remnant of British colonialism, and it is not serving us well. The spiritual leadership of a global communion of independent and autonomous provinces should not be reduced to one man appointed by a secular government.

It is important that our decision not to attend this Lambeth Conference is not misunderstood as withdrawing from the Anglican Communion. On the contrary, our decision reflects the depth of our concern and the sober realisation that the present structures are not capable of addressing the crisis.

How can we go to Holy Communion, sit in Bible study groups, and share meals together, pretending that everything is OK?, that we are still in fellowship with the persistent violators of biblical teaching and of Lambeth resolutions?

The Bible says: "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" The Archbishop of Canterbury has asked us to "wait for each other". But how is it possible when we are not travelling in the same direction?

The Church of Uganda takes its Anglican identity and the future hope of the global Anglican Communion very seriously. We love the Lord Jesus Christ, and we love the Anglican Communion. Lord, have mercy upon us.

+ Orombi

Pray: Heavenly Father, in these testing times, when the spirit of the age threatens Christian values and truth, give our bishops holiness of life and wisdom to direct the church, so that your people may grow in their service to You.

More: [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest\\_contributors/article4438729.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article4438729.ece)

Deeply Exercised but Moving On

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It is both a moral and pastoral responsibility to bring closure to a disciplinary issue for the sake of the flock. The nature, intensity and duration of the disciplinary response can be mitigated by various factors, but to fail to exercise them is a failure of pastoral leadership. Vicars of parishes know this only too well. There can be a lot of listening and pastoral understanding, but the continual viability of a community is dependent on the proper exercise of this moral and pastoral responsibility.

Those who are quick to judge the Lambeth absentees need to know that these very same ones have worked tirelessly to heal the torn fabric these past five years. Leadership means sticking your necks out, being misunderstood and criticised, and this is the price which many of them have paid. Some have felt that they are now relegated to the category of those who "are deeply exercised over matters which they have no control." And so, they stayed away. For the record, even the Province of Southeast Asia is not fully represented. A bishop and assistant bishop chose to absent themselves to protest that "all is not well and it cannot be business as usual. In this context, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Second Presidential Address is deeply disappointing. Once again, the crisis is seen as a family squabble. Whatever the background whispers may be and personal insight one may have on the Archbishop of Canterbury's real intentions (and I have deep admiration for his spiritual commitment, exemplary devotional life and theological wisdom), we can only respond to him based on his public communication and leadership actions.

In the earlier part of this year, I had the privilege of spending time in conversation with a clergyman who was vicar of one of the largest Episcopalian parishes on the West Coast. He had just left his Church recently, and the parting of ways amicably handled with his Bishop. I could sense he was a humble but honest man. He told me that he came to a point where "enough was enough." TEC has become a different religion and he recounted those various Synod occasions where these signs were clearly exhibited and unashamedly. It came to a point where he needed to walk away and move on. There is only so much one can do (or take) in coping with things which are beyond one's control. Of what use the presidential address will be for him? How long can one keep listening and empathizing?

For the rest of us, it will not be that easy. We will need to continue to live with that tear (of the 2003 action) and tension (of relating to those of a "different religion" - in Asia, we do this all the time being part of a minority religion.. imagine having to face the same thing within the "refuge" of the church!). It has to be managed. New relationships have to be formed (and they are forming), as the wounded body limp along, seeking to move on with the help of others.

Perhaps all is not doom and gloom. These new friendships and partnerships across the globe may well spell for many of us, a first-hand experience of one of the treasures of being in communion. Wounded as we may be, there can be joy in linking with those with whom we can say what we mean, and mean what we say, where our different cultures have no major bearing on our shared orthodoxy.

"I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." - Jesus Christ  
Pray: Lord, give renewal of hope in these times of division and confusion; in union with You (as branches cling to the Vine) please work through your church and keep it fruitful. More: [CLICK HERE](#) (mouse over for web address)

Sex at Lambeth, but the real Issue is : Does the Bible transform culture, or does culture transform the Bible?

THE SEXUALITY SECTION of the final "Reflections" document, released in draft form on Friday, contains a 12-point list of the problems which were caused by the consecration of a partnered gay man, the Rt Revd Gene Robinson, to the diocese of New Hampshire in 2003. The list covers a range of negative impacts:

- It questions the authority, the interpretation of the Bible, and the basic teaching of marriage and questions the traditional teaching on morality of the Church. The question for many is "Whether the Bible transforms the culture or the culture transforms the Bible";

- This is an issue which divides people within provinces and not only between provinces;

- In some cultures, the action of the North American Churches has commended the Gospel in some quarters. In some places the Church is ridiculed as the "gay church", so membership is lost;

- Partnership in mission is lost and damaged;

- It is felt in some provinces as a betrayal of the teaching of the missionaries who brought the faith, and it is experienced as a new form of colonialism;

- Confidence in the validity of Anglican Communion is severely damaged;

- It is dishonouring to former Lambeth Conference decisions;

- It diverts us from our primary focus;
- It is seen as leading to 'sexual license';
- It affects ecumenical and interfaith relationships;
- Bishops cannot be a symbol of unity when their consecration itself divides the Church. The unique focus of catholicity in the Communion is lost;
- In some regions, the issue has become a test of orthodoxy and a basis for hostile actions.

Despite this list, and the acknowledgement of anxiety that 'this will not turn out to be a single act but something that is likely to happen again', the bishops report a 'spirit of generosity and prayerful humility' in their discussions of sexuality, which took place on Thursday.

The draft text records that: 'Apologies have been expressed in the indaba groups by some of the Episcopal Church [of the United States] who had no idea that their action in the consecration of the present Bishop of New Hampshire had caused such a negative impact in many parts of the Communion.'

Most tellingly, the draft states: 'While there is a desire to end the spiral of chaos around this issue, there appears to be no desire to be so decisive at this stage that anyone would want to walk away.'

The bishops' indaba groups also talked about sex. The official title for the day was 'Listening to God and each other: the bishop and human sexuality'. The media and a small number of gay rights people were in evidence during the day, but nothing of great excitement appears to have occurred. As the Indaba are closed sessions, the best-gleaned information comes from the 'episcopal blogosphere'.

David Walker, Bishop of Dudley:

"Our indaba group on sexuality was every bit as moving as I had hoped for. Emotionally I think the Conference has gone a long way towards endorsing what I would call responsible, accountable, contextual diversity. The tricky bit may be trying to capture that in a text that will survive the flights home, the determined shredders of the blogs and the efforts of some of our absent friends."

David Rosedale, Bishop of Grimsby:

"Those who have been supporting the process of Bible Study followed by an Indaba were vindicated this morning. I sat, listened and contributed as one of 40 bishops engaging with issues in human sexuality. As far as I could tell, everyone was able to make a contribution and the challenges facing us were clarified. There was no 'grandstanding' and people were able to make their contribution without having to run the gauntlet of a plenary of 660 bishops - which would have ensured that only a minority were heard.

In my Indaba, one thing about which there was unanimity was that our attitude to homosexual people must be positive, generous and full of Christian love. There, however, the unanimity ended.

Nick Baines, Bishop of Croydon:

Anyway, Sex Day was a bit of a disappointment for the thrill-seekers. There were no fall-outs, no hissy fits and no demonstrations of outrageous behaviour on the part of bishops or their spouses. In other words, a media disaster.

Pray: that, over the coming months, the Lambeth debates about sexuality will be purified by obedience to the refining fire of God's truth.

More: [http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/blog\\_post.asp?id=61371](http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/blog_post.asp?id=61371)

Today in the Canterbury Prayer Room

A) Today in the SOMA UK / Crosswinds Canterbury Prayer Room we found ourselves given Psalm 133.

1. How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!
2. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.
3. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life

forevermore.

We prayed for the oil of anointing for healing, unity, outward and inward consistency. Oil is smooth, lubricating, it hangs around a long time, gets to places that nothing else can.

The shepherd used to oil the horns of rams so that when they met, fought, they wouldn't clash, they'd just slip off each other.

B) One of us was given a dream/picture of a nursery with no rules and boundaries.

The leader desired order and together time for the children, so asked for help.

They had been given their drink and cake on the floor &ndash;result mess.They had had no songs, actions, conversations and listening to each other, they just went from one game and rough and tumble to the next.

I sat the children at tables to eat and drink without toys.

Then the quietened children were able to have conversation and songs, encouraging each in his ability.

It worked a treat and they very quickly enjoyed, learnt and matured into the discipline &ndash; listening to the leader and each other.

I put one child onto a rocking horse. Another wanted to ride, too, and climbed up. I could hold the two safely and they loved it. But a third, rebellious child with a disruptive spirit tried to climb up and knock the others off. She fell and lay collapsed on the floor.

I let go of the two who were riding safely and laid hands on the collapsed child on the floor.

After some time she was able to climb back up and I helped her onto the horse with the others.

These prophetic insights can apply just as well to the current Conference as to the wider Anglican Communion. It may be a warning that, in the days ahead, there will be those who seek to disrupt the Covenant process - or decline to be involved with it. Pray: that, by the grace of God, all the bishops will cooperate with the Covenant process and, that through it, steady progress towards unity in truth will emerge. **DOWNLOAD and PRINT this BULLETIN**