

Prayer Bulletin 17

Contributed by Canon John Simons
 Sunday, 03 August 2008
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Who are the dissidents? Dr Williams believes that "speaking from the centre in Christ" means being willing to put aside the fact that you believe the other to be "wrong", and focus on why the other believes what he or she believes. In his Presidential Address this week, he gave an eloquent description of the contrasting standpoints and concerns of conservatives and liberals. And then made his appeal for "generous love" and mutual understanding "from the centre". Across the 21 days of the Lambeth Conference, I expect most of us have struggled to follow the complexities of past Anglican history, long reports and multiple acronyms. I hope you have managed to turn many of these issues into prayer - and, above all, into prayers for the bishops themselves (the central purpose of this www.praylambeth.org exercise, as Rowan himself endorsed on our web-site). We have sought to bring you a cross-section of the events and debates. The Bulletins could have been much extended - but we refrained. May I be allowed a personal contribution, as Lambeth draws to a close? As it happens, my personal Bible readings this week have included 2 Corinthians 11 (v's 13-15) and 2 Thessalonians 3 (v's 1-15). It may be politically incorrect to mention it, but I notice that St Paul does give warnings about false teaching. Also, that Jesus said that the difference in foundations for life, between rock and sand, lay in obedience to His teachings. Scripture is intended to provide a moral compass as well as a way of salvation by grace. Paul warns that both sin and error (and their messengers) are subtle and deceptive. During Lambeth, it has been clear that liberals aim to redefine both sin, and the Gospel. Some of the old "deadly sins" are still around, but they were individualistic. The new deadly sins are social, harming others. Sin is when we hurt someone - and so we must follow the Golden Rule and love our neighbour. What is the loving thing to do in any situation is not what the Bible says is good but what the liberal theologians decide is good. Hell is not real. Sin is no longer an offense against God (Gen 39:9 & Psalm 119:11) but a failure to be caring, accepting and tolerant of our "neighbour". "Loving relationships" are the benchmark of faith. All of which is a blur of half-truths. Scripture requires us to love God (to whom we are accountable) - and also to care for our neighbour. We have no quarrel with liberals that God requires Christians to work for the abolition of poverty, care for the environment, to resist social injustice, genocide, oppression - and a host of other evils. Faith without works is dead. So, when the inevitable subject of homosexuality arises, if you are in a TEC liberal church, you must accept homosexuality as an alternative, natural unchangeable sexual orientation for a minority of humans, which is accepted by God (after all, how could He complain, as He made you that way?). Since meaningful scientific study of sexual orientation did not begin until circa 1950, the biblical authors could have had little or no awareness of the topic. When the Bible and science disagree, liberals aver that we have to give priority weighting to the findings of human sexuality researchers. Bible references, apparently to the contrary, are archaic and culturally biased, causing Christians who say "sola scriptura" to become characterised as homophobic and bigoted. So, does the Bible transform culture - or vice versa? It's a big question for the 21st C. Conservative Christians can reply that the Bible does not indicate that homosexuality is unforgivable, nor the worst of all sins; nor does Scripture give a ranking to sins. The Bible condemns homosexual practice, along with many other sins, including hatred, pride, greed, hypocrisy and self-righteousness. We are all sinners, and all in need of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. It is good that Rowan Williams, this week, declared that promiscuous sexual activity, whether heterosexual or homosexual, were both wrong. He reaffirmed the Lambeth 1998 Resolution that lifelong marriage, between one man and one woman, was God's will for mankind. The Lambeth 1:10 Resolution is not harsh (though often misrepresented as such) but is pastorally caring. Gays are truly welcome to the pews. Orientation is different from behaviour. By the grace of God, they can honour God by being celibate; and some even become happily married after progressive healing from dysfunctional relationships (no difference from heterosexual singles). It is pastoral wisdom that recovering alcoholics do well not to touch alcohol; similarly that repentant embezzlers are restored to church life - but should not fast-tracked to an appointment as treasurer. But American liberals insist that non-celibate, fully practising homosexuals must also be welcomed with flaunted acclaim to the pulpits and the episcopacy. History has shown us that religion generates many false teachers. Hence, Christian leaders can never neglect the injunction: "Test all things, hold fast to what is good" (1 Thess 5:21). So, who are the dissidents? Which group is the one in rebellion? It is commonplace to read of the Bible-orthodox pastors and parishes in North America being side-lined or expelled as "the dissenters". But surely this is to have the telescope turned back to front? It is by no means a new situation. St. Paul writes of just such a role reversal in 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 3. Antonyms are words that look similar - but mean the opposite. A-symmetrical means the absence of symmetry. A-theism is the rejection of belief in God. In 2 Thessalonians 3:2 we read of "wicked and evil men", those opposing Paul and the gospel, the word translated "wicked" literally means "out of place" (a-topos, where topos = place [topography]). It's helpful to think when conducting our ministry for the Lord, whatever that should be, that we are in place, and that godless opposition is out of place. There are some things that we feel we perhaps can't say as Christians in our world. They are not "politically correct". But actually, it is godlessness that is out of place. So I think Paul encourages us to think, "We're not out of place. We are in the place God wants us to be". Keep perspective! Our desire for comfort above calling wrongly allows those who are "out of place" to put us out of place, and Paul will not have it! A similar antonym occurs in 1 Thess 3:11 in the context of sound teaching. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. If the word of opponents in 3:2 was that they were "out of place", the word here for these Christians who are becoming an obstacle is that they are "out of order". It is the same word in 1 Thess. 5:14, warn those who are idle.. The word is the negative

word of order (a-taktos, non-orderly: taktos = planned in advance [tactic]. Indeed, "this is a military term used to describe a soldier who steps out of the ranks"). So the external opponents to the gospel are "out of place" but insiders can be "out of order". If Satan can't disrupt the gospel and the church from the outside he'll try to do it from inside. Either way, Paul says, don't tolerate it. There are people on the inside who don't live by the teaching, God's truth (6). Who are these people? We don't know. But look at how Paul says to deal with them: ..keep away from.. (6) ..take special note of him. Do not associate with him,.. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother (14-15). And so we come full circle to the earlier picture of a frustrating, wonky, disobedient shopping trolley. Do we amputate the offending wheel? Or do we make time and opportunity for the wheel to be fixed? Either way, as Lambeth 2008 ends, it certainly won't be a quick fix. But love may not regard a brother (or sister) as the enemy. Ephesians 6 identifies the real opponent - both of God, and us, because we are "in Christ"; His Son. Thanks for being part of this prayer team. And for reading these Bulletins, as you have had space and time. Feedback is welcome. John Simons (on behalf of the team)

Sunday'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>

The Lambeth Conference 2008: Some Reflections by Bishop Mouneer Anis Bishop of Egypt, North Africa and the Horn of Africa: God is faithful through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ Our Lord (1 Cor 1:9) I am glad I came to this conference. It has given me a great opportunity to learn, listen to others, debate and share my views openly. It has been a great joy to meet many friends and to make new friends who love the Lord and are committed to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed. I have heard many inspiring stories from colleagues who put their lives at risk and suffer in order to stay faithful to God and His Church. I cannot describe the encouragement we received from, and the fellowship with, our ecumenical partners, especially the Coptic Orthodox. The conference has provided the Global South Bishops as well as other orthodox bishops from the UK, NZ, USA, Canada and Australia to meet and support each other. It has been a blessing to us all. Archbishop Rowan and Jane Williams warmly welcomed every one of us and worked very hard to encourage us to be united. We are deeply grateful to them and their hard working staff. I am committed to pray and support Archbishop Rowan because I know that he so much wants the present crisis in the Communion to be resolved. The task is not easy! While some very positive things are happening at the conference, the unresolved issues are still dividing the Communion. I can only wonder if during the coming two days we will truly be able to do something about these unresolved issues. I have some doubts but I would have loved to go back to my people with good news of progress towards truly resolving our crisis and that we still all continue to uphold the mind of the Church as expressed in the Lambeth '98 Resolution 1;10 which reaffirmed the historic teaching of the Church. From my experience of the Bible studies and of the Indaba discussions I see a great wall being put up by revisionists against those orthodox who believe in the authority of Scripture. The revisionists among us push upon us the view that current secular culture and not the Bible should shape our mission and morals. In this we are not divided by mere trivialities, or issues on the periphery of faith but on essentials. I am shocked to say that we are finding it very hard to come together on even the essentials of the faith we once received from the Apostles. Everywhere we go here, we meet gay & lesbian activists, receive their news letters or read about their many events. Many seem to be supported by North American churches. They are intent to push their agenda on us. No other lobbying groups seem to enjoy similar access, or to be able to have their literature prominently displayed all over the campus and at the entrance to every residence. They are determined that their way is the only right way and that everyone else should follow. They are not at all open to listening to us or the historic church teaching. Yet, it is surprising that they push all these sexuality issues so intensively into the conference and then blame us for talking about them too much! In the attitude of some from the North American churches I am reminded of the arrogance of the American administration that made a mess in Iraq because it refused to listen to millions of voices from the wider world. Through the advocacy of unscriptural practices, I would say they are inviting the church into a new form of slavery: a slavery to modern secular culture and to immoral desires and lusts. Simply because people feel desires to do certain things, or, to live in certain ways, has never before, of itself, meant that the Church should bless them in doing so. *Please note that these are my own personal views and I am aware that my colleagues in the other dioceses of the province of Jerusalem and the Middle East may have different views. Some say that same sex unions that are faithful relationships are alright. But I feel we cannot be truly faithful to each other unless we are faithful to God and his purpose made clear in the creation of man and woman for each other. We cannot endorse an inadequate substitute, that is not open to the transmission of life. The scientific literature (which as a medical doctor I have taken trouble to review) does not support the conclusion that the experience of same sex desires is in fact fixed or determined by genetics or otherwise "hard wired" into people. The church must offer a welcome to all and offer every loving support, but this does not mean it must endorse whatever temptations and lifestyles people desire. The church must uphold its moral teaching and call society to account: this is the true nature of its prophetic witness to the world. I was shocked to hear a lady bishop saying we should not preach the Gospel but work only for social justice. Ultimately, there can never be full social justice without the Gospel. Mankind needs the salvation that only Jesus Christ can provide. The world needs redemption not simply secular improvements! Economic development is good but it cannot replace salvation. Is there a way ahead? Healing requires sometimes the taking of unpleasant medicine or surgical intervention. Healing of our wounded Communion requires hard decisions. I

was greatly encouraged by the truthful and realistic assessment made by The Windsor Continuation Group (WCG) about the situation of the Communion. Their recommendation of retrospective moratoria on the blessing of same sex unions, the ordination of active gay and lesbian people and upon interventions across boundaries are indeed the only way forward to mend the torn fabric of the Communion. Their proposal of "A pastoral Forum" if fully implemented, could protect the orthodox within TEC. These recommendations will help to stop further splits and will put an end to interventions. The big question is: will the Episcopal Church in North America (TEC) accept these recommendations? Will TEC recognise the importance of mutual submission? The Covenant This is a way ahead that could prevent future crises. It can enhance our interdependence in essentials while also preserving our appropriate administrative autonomy and local identities. Some TEC bishops resist the idea of the covenant as they see it as punitive and limiting of their sense of control. They think that it will restrict them from responding to the needs of their culture which they feel should have priority. But sadly, it must be asked, if they are not willing to abide by the mind of the church why do they say the Communion is important to them? If TEC and Canada do not accept the Covenant recommendations they will leave the wider Communion with the one option that was recommended by the Windsor Report and the Dar es Salam Primates' Meeting. This was for them to withdraw from international Anglican Councils and bodies. This will create a safe distance for them to consider their priorities, while also allowing the wider communion to move forward with its shared priorities and mission and to clear away the mess created by the current crisis. It is my prayer, as we gather here in Canterbury in the historic See of St Augustine, that we will yet unite in mutual submission under God and thus be freed to carry forward the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to the waiting world that is so much in need of it. Jesus said unto him, I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes unto the Father but by me. John 14:6

Pray: for Christians in the Middle East - and especially those in Egypt, Israel and Lebanon, Iraq and Iran

More: [Click Here for the Website Article Lambeth - A Statement by the Bishops from South Asia](#)

We, the Bishops from the united churches of South Asia which include the Church of South India (1947), Church of North India (1970), Church of Pakistan (1970) and the Church of Bangladesh (1972), present at the Lambeth Conference 2008 have embodied the unity of God's Church in fulfilment of our Lord's high priestly prayer "that they may all be one". We represent nearly a quarter of the human race practicing and living all the major faiths of the world. We are grateful for our heritage of different church traditions which have contributed to our formation. The Anglican Communion, being the one common thread, connecting us all. As united and uniting churches and full and integral members of the Anglican Communion, we wish to say that:

1. We bear witness to the Triune God and to the unity of His Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic.
2. We applaud the initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury in organizing the Walk of Witness on the London Day highlighting urgent issues of poverty, deprivation, exploitation and disease in the world and demanding speedy implementation of Millennium Development Goals. We call upon the Anglican Communion to seriously take up this challenge and help to restore the dignity of the exploited and abused humanity. This will certainly mean an equitable sharing of resources within the Communion.
3. We urge the Communion to stand in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed religious minorities and work for equitable justice to all especially to the women, children and dalits of South Asia and in other parts of the world as members of the one Body of Christ; for if one member suffers we all suffer. This needs to be expressed in tangible terms through living and supporting relationships.
4. However, we are saddened and disturbed by the fractured nature of the Anglican Communion today which seems primarily to have been caused by the issue of human sexuality. We do feel the pain of the absence of some bishops who have kept themselves away from this fellowship. We acknowledge the biblical norms on human sexuality and urge that within the Anglican Communion this may be upheld for the effective witness of the Gospel. We desire that the matter may be resolved by a continuing process of listening and healing where we may be willing to forgive and accept one another generously and move towards true reconciliation.
5. So, we invite the whole Communion to do some heart-searching and in humility walk the Calvary Road so that our differences, self-justifications and arrogant attitudes may be crucified and that we all experience the power of the resurrection for the transformation of our life together in the Communion.

Signed on behalf of the participating Bishops at the Lambeth Conference 2008.

The Most Rev John Gladstone, Church of South India
 The Rt Rev Brojen Malakar, Church of North India
 The Most Revd. Dr. Alexander Malik, Church of Pakistan
 The Most Revd Paul S. Sarker, Church of Bangladesh

Pray: that this positive message from Christian leaders in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh will bear fruit in the days ahead. Pray also for believers in those territories, some of whom face great persecution.

Press Conference on Anglican Covenant: 'We are on a pilgrimage together'

Archbishop Drexel Gomez: "I believe firmly that the Anglican Communion is going to continue by God's grace and divine providence, but we do have problems," observed Archbishop Drexel Gomez, Primate of the West Indies and chair of the Covenant Design Group. "What we sought to do was find a mechanism that would redefine the basic tenets of Anglicanism, and call the members of the Communion across the world to rally around who we are and what we stand for." When disagreements arise, he noted, "we have no legal framework, no magisterium that says, 'You have had your discussion, this is it.'" Yet he insisted that a covenant would not steer the Anglican Communion into a more legalistic mindset, and said that the group "did not even think about going a legalistic or contract route." Instead, he continued, "our Covenant is founded on a principle of mutual cooperation. We see it as a pilgrimage, and all Anglicans are on this pilgrimage. We are seeking a mechanism to ease this pilgrimage." All presenters agreed that at this stage in the design process, there is no clarity about what will happen to provinces who feel they cannot sign a Covenant, and noted that such consequences will be determined as the process unfolds. They also agreed, however, that the design group was not in a hurry and that it would need to allow time and space for provinces to reflect on how they might respond. The Covenant Design Group will meet again at the end of September 2008 to review the comments of Lambeth Conference bishops. Provinces are to submit their comments by the end of March 2009 so that the Design Group can produce a third draft by April. This will be presented at the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Jamaica in May 2009. "We are trying to reflect the views of bishops and provinces rather than the views of the Covenant

Design Group.”Pray: for God's hand of blessing to rest upon all the preparatory work outlined, from now until May 2009

Windsor Continuation Group (WCG) Part 3 Presentation

The Covenant is the basis upon which ++Rowan invited bishops to Canterbury 2008 - as his choice of process to mend the 'tear in the Anglican fabric'. As explained in Bulletin 16, there are in-built problems of protracted time-scale, especially for the beleaguered orthodox Anglicans in USA & Canada. Also for the non-attending GAFCON group.

THE PRESENTATION: 1. How do we get from here to there?The various initiatives set out in Part Two and the Covenant is a longer term process to reverse the trends described in Part One; to restore the sense of trust, fellowship and communion on which we thrive. In the period leading up to the establishment of a covenant, however, there are urgent issues which need addressing if we are going to be able to get to the point where such a renewal of trust even becomes possible.

The question of the moratoria• The Windsor Report sets out requests for three moratoria in relation to the public Rites of Blessing of same sex unions, the consecration to the episcopate of those living in partnered gay relationships and the cessation of cross border interventions.• There have been different interpretations of the sense in which "moratorium" was used in the Windsor Report. Our understanding is that moratorium refers to both future actions and is also retrospective: that is that it requires the cessation of activity. This necessarily applies to practices that may have already been authorised as well as proposed for authorisation in the future.• The request for moratorium applies in this way to the complete cessation of (a) the celebration of blessings for same-sex unions, (b) consecrations of those living in openly gay relationships, and (c) all cross border interventions and inter-provincial claims of jurisdiction.• The three moratoria have been requested several times: Windsor (2004); Dromantine (2005); Dar es Salaam (2007) and the requests have been less than wholeheartedly embraced on all sides. • The failure to respond presents us with a situation where if the three moratoria are not observed, the Communion is likely to fracture. The patterns of action currently embraced with the continued blessings of same-sex unions and of interventions could lead to irreparable damage.• The call for the three moratoria on these issues relates to their controversial nature. This poses the serious question of what response should be made to those who act contrary to the moratorium during the Covenant process and who should make a response.

New Ways of Responding We make the following suggestions for situations which might arise in different parts of the Communion:• The swift formation of a 'Pastoral Forum' at Communion level to engage theologically and practically with situations of controversy as they arise or divisive actions that may be taken around the Communion. Such a Forum draws upon proposals for a Council of Advice (Windsor), a Panel of Reference (Dromantine), a Pastoral Council (Dar es Salaam) and the TEC House of Bishops' Statement (Sept 2007) acknowledging a 'useful role for communion wide consultation with respect to the pastoral needs of those seeking alternative oversight'.• The existence of such a Forum might be included in the Covenant as a key mechanism to achieve reconciliation• Part of the role of a Forum might be for some of its members, having considered the theological and ecclesiological issues of any controversy or divisive action, to travel, meet and offer pastoral advice and guidelines in conflicted, confused and fragile situations. There is a precedent in the method of the Eames' Commission in the 1980s.• The President of such a Forum would be the Archbishop of Canterbury, who would also appoint its episcopal chair, and its members. The membership of the Forum must include members from the Instruments of Communion and be representative of the breadth of the life of the Communion as a whole. Movement forward on this proposal must bear fruit quickly.• We believe that the Pastoral Forum should be empowered to act in the Anglican Communion in a rapid manner to emerging threats to its life, especially through the ministry of its Chair, who should work alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury in the exercise of his ministry.• The Forum would be responsible for addressing those anomalies of pastoral care arising in the Communion against the recommendations of the Windsor Report. It could also offer guidance on what response and any diminishment of standing within the Communion might be appropriate where any of the three moratoria are broken.• We are encouraged by the planned setting up of the Communion Partners initiative in the Episcopal Church as a means of sustaining those who feel at odds with developments taking place in their own Province but who wish to be loyal to, and to maintain, their fellowship within TEC and within the Anglican Communion.• The proliferation of ad hoc episcopal and archiepiscopal ministries cannot be maintained within a global Communion. We recommend that the Pastoral Forum develop a scheme in which existing ad hoc jurisdictions could be held "in trust" in preparation for their reconciliation within their proper Provinces. Such a scheme might draw on models derived from religious life (the relationship of religious orders to the wider Church), family life (the way in which the extended family can care for children in dysfunctional nuclear families) or from law (where escrow accounts can be created to hold monies in trust for their rightful owner on completion of certain undertakings.) Ways of halting litigation must be explored, and perhaps the escrow concept could even be extended to have some applicability here.

Windsor Continuation Group PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS A Coda A Presentation at the Lambeth Conference

Why bother with all this?Much faithful witness continues - converts are baptised; disciples are nurtured; vocations are encouraged; the scriptures are studied; the Gospel is proclaimed. Anglicanism as a distinctive global expression of Reformed Catholicism: not only in its content, but in its processes - diverse, patient, hospitable and tolerant."We believe in this Communion"; a Communion which contributes to the wider life of the Church in the ecumenical community, and gives witness in a world of many faiths.

The bishops at the Lambeth Conference need to take the opportunity to explore large questions concerning authority, accountability, Communion with Autonomy and discipline and to examine the Instruments of Communion and what relation between the instruments would most faithfully reflect and strengthen the ecclesiology of the Anglican Communion as well as taking the opportunity to affirm the direction of the covenant process.

At the Indaba on the work of the Windsor Continuation Group, a focus question could be:What might mutual accountability under God in life and mission look like at its best in the period between now and the completion of the Covenant process?What personal sacrifices might it involve for each of us?

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS Part Three "Ministering 'pastorally and sensitively to all'• The WCG note that the Resolution 1.10 of Lambeth 1998 included a call for "all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals,

violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex."We further note that in Dromantine in January 2005, the Primates stated that "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."We believe that the time is ripe for the bishops of the Lambeth Conference to reaffirm the commitments expressed in these statements, and to invite them to be committed to challenging such attitudes where they may exist in the societies, churches and governments of the nations in which they proclaim the Gospel as good news for all without exception.Pray: Thank you Lord for this 'road-map' of a way ahead. Please help all the Provinces to hear your voice as they embark upon this journey. Like Abraham, who went out 'not knowing where he was going', may they know your presence on the journey."Restore O Lord, the Honour of Your name."This morning, at the SOMA UK / Crosswinds Canterbury Prayer Room, we felt drawn to pray in a way that viewed Lambeth, GAFCON and TEC as three strands. We arranged three oyster shells from our cross, putting them at the foot.We sprinkled them with water, the element from which they came, praying for refreshing, fluidity of relationships between the three. Then we came back to the Trinity to give completeness, unity and fullness of life to these relationships. Pray: Please pray into this picture, that the torn strands of parts of the Communion, will be knitted together by His grace. [DOWNLOAD](#) and [PRINT](#) this BULLETIN