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## EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

### **General Convention: Windsor debate results in six resolutions** **Archbishop of Canterbury, other leaders respond**



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The 75th General Convention responded to recommendations set forth in the Windsor Report with six resolutions that commit to interdependence within the Anglican Communion, express regret for straining the bonds of affection, affirm pastoral care, and urge restraint in consecrating bishops "whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church."

The Anglican Communion Listening Process and the development of an Anglican Covenant also received support in both Houses of Convention.

In its most significant Windsor-related measure, Convention passed resolution B033, "On the election of bishops," in the last hours of legislative sessions on June 21.

It was presented on the morning of June 21, the final legislative day, during a joint session of the Houses of Bishops and Deputies. It was the final Windsor resolution to be acted on after the House of Deputies the day before had voted down resolution A161, preventing it from going to the House of Bishops and rejecting the resolution's call for "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." The resolution also would have directed the church not to develop rites for blessing same-gender unions.

Addressing a joint session, called for after the rejection of A161, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold relayed the text of B033 that was proposed by Bishop Dorsey F. Henderson of Upper South Carolina, co-chair of the Special Committee on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

B033 calls on bishops and standing committees to "exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion." It makes no mention of same-gender blessings.

The Windsor Report invited the Episcopal Church "to effect a moratorium on 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."

The Joint Session adjourned, and the two Houses met separately to debate the resolution. The need to make some statement was stressed in both Houses. "If we don't have something substantial, it will be very difficult for

the Archbishop of Canterbury to invite the Presiding Bishop to the Lambeth Conference," Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold told his colleagues. "I do know the complexity of what the Archbishop dealing with, in Communion terms, and he needs for something clear to come from the Episcopal Church."

Presiding Bishop-elect Katharine Jefferts Schori told the bishops that she could only support the resolution "if we understand that it's not slamming the door. It has to leave the door open for further conversation and consideration in the very near future."

After the bishops passed B033 and sent it to the deputies, Jefferts Schori asked for and received permission to speak to the House of Deputies. She told them that she is "fully committed to the full inclusion of gay and lesbian Christians in this church."

Reiterating her stance that B033 does not slam the door to further discussion, she added, "I think if you do pass this resolution you have to be willing to keep working with all your might at finding a common mind in this church. I don't find this an easy thing to say to you, but I think that is the best we are going to manage at this point in our church's history."

B033 passed in the House of Deputies during a vote by orders. It had 75 affirmative votes in the clergy order and 73 in the lay order. There were 24 no votes and 10 divided votes in the clergy order, and 21 no votes in the lay order and 11 divided. That compared with the rejection of resolution A161 on June 20 by 53 no votes and 14 divided votes in the clergy order for a total of 67 negative votes. In the lay order there were 53 no votes and 18 divided for a total of 71.

Some Episcopal Church bishops objected later in the day on June 21 to the process by which resolution B033 was developed and passed. They wrote a "statement of conscience" that was read during a closed session of the House of Bishops that day. They said that "undue pressure" had been brought to bear on the House of Deputies and that the Convention had been forced into a "flawed paradigm" that framed the Convention's choice as one between "two goods -- the full inclusion in the life of the Church of our brother and sister Christians who happen to be gay or lesbian and our full inclusion in the life of our beloved Communion."

The bishops also said that they were "absolutely committed to the future of this Communion and the process of healing the strain that we readily admit and regret exists, and has been exacerbated in our own house by events today."

The statement says that the names of the "undersigned bishops" are not available because when the statement was read in the executive session, it was uncertain which bishops stood in support of it. The text of the statement (available at <http://edow.org/news/window/special/generalconvention/2006/0621conscience.html>) notes that the group includes at least the bishops of Chicago, Newark, Northern Michigan, Rochester, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming.

Expression of regret, Listening Process, Covenant

Mindful of "the repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation enjoined on us by Christ" (Windsor Report, paragraph 134), Resolution A160 expresses "regret for straining the bonds of affection" with the election, confirmation and consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson of New Hampshire, the first openly gay bishop in the Anglican Communion.

The resolution also offers "its sincerest apology to those within our Anglican Communion who are offended by our failure to accord sufficient importance to the impact of our actions on our church and other parts of the Communion," and asks "forgiveness as we seek to live into deeper levels of communion one with another."

Convention approved two resolutions supporting the process of developing an Anglican Covenant (A166) and committing to interdependence in the Anglican Communion (A159).

The language in resolution A166, which survived an attempt to change references of a covenant to

"conversation," says the measure is "a demonstration of our commitment to mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Anglican Communion."

The resolution directs the Executive Council's international concerns committee and the Episcopal Church's representatives on the Anglican Consultative Council to follow the process of the Communion for developing an Anglican Covenant and making regular reports to Council.

Commending the "listening process," as recommended in the Windsor Report, "so that greater common understanding might be obtained on the underlying issue of same-gender relationships," resolution A165 commits the church to participating fully and openly in the "listening process," both at the local level and with the rest of the Communion.

The process was recommended by the bishops attending the Lambeth Conference in 1998 in Resolution 1.10 that requests establishing "a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion" and to honor the process of mutual listening, including "listening to the experience of homosexual persons."

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), which met in June 2005, also encouraged the listening process in each Province and called for relevant research studies, statements and resolutions to be collated and made available for study, discussion and reflection within each member Church of the Communion.

In November 2005, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Rev. Canon Kenneth Kearon, appointed the Rev. Canon Philip Groves as the facilitator of the Listening Process. In a letter to the Primates of the Anglican Communion at the time, Kearon said, "I am pleased that this Listening Process, which has been requested on many occasions, can now begin in earnest."

In other action, resolution A163 commits the church to the "centrality of effective and appropriate pastoral care for all members of this church" and urges the House of Bishops to seek the highest degree of communion and reconciliation within their own dioceses, using the Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO) process when necessary.

The resolution also urges "continued maintenance of historic diocesan boundaries, the authority of the diocesan bishop, and respect for the historical relationships of the separate and autonomous Provinces of the Anglican Communion."

#### Background to resolutions

The Windsor Report, released in October 2004, was the result of a year's deliberations between members of the Lambeth Commission on Communion who were mandated by the Archbishop of Canterbury to explore ways in which to maintain the highest degree of communion possible in light of differences concerning issues of human sexuality.

The Anglican Primates urged the Episcopal Church to address the recommendations of the Windsor Report in its February 2005 statement from Dromantine in Northern Ireland.

The Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion was established to produce resolutions for consideration by Convention as the church's response to the Windsor Report. The original 11 resolutions were debated and amended throughout convention by the special legislative committee and the houses of convention.

#### Response from Canterbury, other leaders

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, commended Convention's Windsor-related actions for the "exceptional seriousness" with which it has responded.

"There is much to appreciate in the hard and devoted work done by General Convention, and before that, by the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, in crafting the resolutions," he said. "This and the actions taken today show how strong is their concern to seek reconciliation and conversation with the rest of the Communion."

Williams said that it is not yet clear how far the resolutions represent the adoption by the Episcopal Church of all the proposals set out in the Windsor Report. "The wider Communion will therefore need to reflect carefully on the significance of what has been decided before we respond more fully," he said.

The Joint Standing Committee of the Primates and ACC has already appointed a small working group to assist in the process of reflection and to advise Williams on these matters in the months leading up to the next Primates' meeting in February 2007 in Tanzania.

Some of the Primates have already reacted to the work of the 75th General Convention. The Primates of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), meeting in Kampala on June 21-22, issued "An Open Letter to the Episcopal Church USA" on June 23. The letter, signed by Archbishop Peter Akinola, Primate of the Anglican Church of Nigeria, says, in part, that the Primates are "saddened that the reports to date of your elections and actions suggest that you are unable to embrace the essential recommendations of the Windsor Report and the 2005 Primates Communiqué necessary for the healing of our divisions. At the same time, we welcome the various expressions of affection for the life and work of the Anglican Communion."

The full text of the letter is available at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/41/50/acns4159.cfm>

Meanwhile, the American Anglican Council's (AAC) president, the Rev. Canon David Anderson, welcomed the CAPA statement and claimed that the Episcopal Church had feigned compliance with the Windsor Report. The full text of the AAC statement is available at [http://www.americananglican.org/site/c.ikLUK3MJIpG/b.691897/apps/nl/content2.asp?content\\_id={B701BA95-9CA3-44DE-A47D-34714463C941}{RDhref+}notoc=1](http://www.americananglican.org/site/c.ikLUK3MJIpG/b.691897/apps/nl/content2.asp?content_id={B701BA95-9CA3-44DE-A47D-34714463C941}{RDhref+}notoc=1)

The complete texts of all General Convention resolutions are available at <http://gc2006.org/legislation/>

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