

The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Easter, 2007

“Out of Africa ...”

By *Diana Versegby*

At the conclusion of their recent meeting in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in February, the Primates of the Anglican Communion issued a communiqué that must surely be seen as a landmark in the history of Anglicanism.

The Primates discussed a number of important initiatives, receiving reports on the U.N. World Millenium Development Goals, and an outline of progress on establishing standards for theological education across the Communion. They took steps to launch a new Communion-wide study of hermeneutics (the methods of interpreting Scripture). However, the groundbreaking item on the agenda was of course the review of the “Windsor process” and the actions coming out of it.

The background

It was recognized that as a result of the events of 2003, there had been a breakdown of trust and mutual recognition between members of the Anglican Communion. The Windsor Report of 2004 had identified two threats to the common life of the Communion:

- First, the disregard of parts of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. and the Anglican Church of Canada of the official position of the Anglican Communion (stated at the Lambeth Conference of 1998 and reaffirmed at subsequent meetings of the Primates) which upholds the traditional Christian teaching on human sexuality;
- Second, the resulting interventions of some other provinces to provide pastoral care for groups of North American Anglicans who have taken issue with the actions of their provinces.

As a result of these tensions, the Windsor Report had recommended the formulation of an “Anglican Covenant”, to lay out clearly what membership in the Anglican Communion involves, along with the responsibilities of provinces to maintain mutual accountability. A drafting committee, chaired by the Primate of the West Indies, Drexel Gomez, had been appointed and had produced a first draft of such a covenant, which was submitted to the Primates’ meeting.

The Tanzania meeting

The Primates reviewed the draft covenant, and have set in place a process of revision and ultimate adoption, to progress over the next few years. Alongside this, however, it was recognized that in the meantime something had to be done about the situation in the United States. Submissions from four bishops of the Episcopal Church were heard, including the current Presiding Bishop, representing a diversity of views. Each of the four spoke passionately about their understanding of the problems that the Episcopal Church faces, and each, in their own way, looked to the Primates to assist.



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The events of the General Convention of the U.S. Episcopal Church last June were reviewed. It was recognized that General Convention had taken seriously the concerns of the worldwide Communion. However, it was pointed out by several at the meeting that there was an inconsistency between the position of General Convention and local pastoral provision. In the view of the Primates, this ambiguous stance required clarification, and they were not able as yet to recognize that the Episcopal Church had mended its broken relationships.

It was further recognized that a number of Episcopal dioceses and parishes are committed to visibly upholding the teaching of the Anglican Communion, and that this has led to deep estrangement between them and other parts of the Episcopal Church, resulting in requests from them for alternative oversight from other provinces of the Communion. On the other hand, it was recognized that the granting of this oversight has exacerbated the situation, even though those so acting did so out of pastoral concern and in response to direct appeals from the parties involved.

The way forward

In response to this situation, the Primates have proposed that an interim Pastoral Council be set up. This Council is to be made up of five members: a chair nominated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, two members nominated by the Primates, and two members nominated by the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Its task will be to negotiate appropriate structures for pastoral care and to monitor their ongoing effectiveness, on behalf of those groups that have

requested alternative oversight. Once these structures are in place and are recognized to be fully operational, the Primates that have offered oversight to groups in the U.S. have agreed to cease their interventions. This scheme is intended to have force until the Anglican Covenant has been finalized and a definitive decision has been made by the Episcopal Church as to its stance towards the Covenant and its place within the life of the Communion. At that point it is recognized that some new provision may be required.

The Primates have also requested that the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church enter into an agreement to respect the teaching of the Anglican Communion: i.e. to refrain from authorizing rites for same-sex blessings and from consenting to the election of a bishop living in a same-sex union, unless and until some new consensus on these matters should emerge across the Communion. A clear answer on this is requested by the end of September of this year. If these reassurances cannot in good conscience be given, they warn that this will have consequences for the full participation of the Episcopal Church in the life of the Communion.

The Primates have made it abundantly clear that their stance does not stem from homophobia. The 1998 Lambeth Conference committed the Provinces “to listen to the experience of homosexual persons” and called “all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals”. The initiation of this process of listening was requested formally by the Primates at their meeting in Ireland in 2005; in Tanzania the Primates affirmed the work that had been

done, and gave encouragement to the material being made more fully available across the Communion for study and reflection, and to the preparation of material to assist the bishops at the 2008 Lambeth Conference. However, as Archbishop Rowan Williams has pointed out, one province cannot unilaterally introduce innovations contrary to the common mind of the rest of the Anglican Communion and expect it to make no difference in its relationships with the other provinces.

The future

Despite the difficult road ahead, the future for the Anglican Communion now looks brighter than it has in a very long time. At last we are seeing concrete, committed movement towards a shared concept and vision of a Communion of provinces united by more than just a vague sense of shared historical background. As Archbishop Rowan Williams said in an address to the English General Synod at the end of February, “The debate triggered by certain decisions in the Episcopal Church is not just about a single matter of sexual ethics. It is about decision making in the Church and it is about the interpretation and authority of Scripture. It has raised ... the painfully difficult question of how far Anglican provinces should feel bound to make decisions in a wholly consultative and corporate way. In other words, it has forced us to ask what we mean by speaking and thinking about ourselves as a global communion.” God grant that the Anglican Communion will emerge from this period of testing with new-found strength and unity.

The Anglican Covenant

By Desmond Scotchmer

Among the accomplishments of the meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion in Dar-es-Salaam in February was their commendation of the draft **Anglican Covenant**. This will likely prove to be one of the most significant developments in the history of Anglicanism.

The **Anglican Covenant** has been drafted by the Covenant Design Group, working under the leadership of Drexel Gomez, Archbishop of the West Indies. The Covenant was envisaged by the Windsor Report in 2004, as a response to the crisis within the Anglican Communion after the actions of the Episcopal Church in the USA, and the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada, when they broke with traditional Christian teaching and Anglican norms regarding marriage and sexuality, actions which, to use the words of the Primates of the Anglican Communion “tore the fabric” of the Anglican Communion “at its deepest level”.

The purpose of the Covenant is to answer the “urgent need to re-establish trust” between the churches of the Anglican Communion. It will essentially be an instrument of unity, an articulation of common purpose which defines the Anglican Communion. It is a way forward to ensure the mutual respect and interdependence of each Anglican Church within the Communion, and the integrity of Anglican witness to the world.

Now that it has been commended by the worldwide Primates, the draft Covenant will go forward to each of the churches in the Anglican Communion. Each

church has been asked to respond by the end of 2007. A revised draft will be discussed at the Lambeth Conference in 2008, and following a further round of consultation, a final text will be presented to the Anglican Consultative Council. If adopted as definitive, the full text will be offered to the Provinces for ratification. Those who ratify it will be full constituent members of the Anglican Communion. Those who choose not to ratify will be left outside, either as associate or partial members of the Communion, with only a limited voice, or no voice at all on matters of importance to the Communion, or else excluded from the Communion entirely. Canadian Primate Andrew Hutchison (an outspoken advocate of same-sex blessings) put it this way: “The consequence [of not signing the Covenant or complying with the Primates’ resolutions] wasn’t articulated, but the implication was that the Archbishop of Canterbury would have to look long and hard at the invitation list for the next Lambeth Conference.”

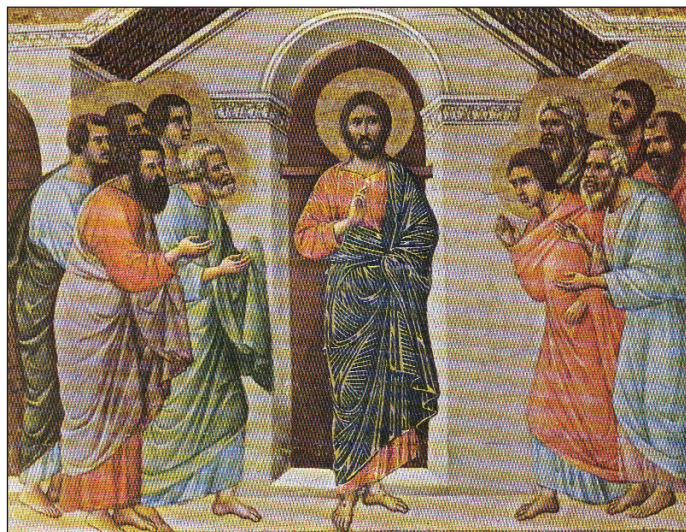
The draft Covenant does not offer anything new. Nor does it go into

specifics about what has caused the current crisis and disunity within the Communion. Rather, it is a “fresh restatement” of the broad principles that have always defined Anglicanism.

What Does the Covenant Say?

Under the proposed Covenant each Anglican church, and the Anglican Communion as a whole, affirms one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, worshipping one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith which is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures – declared to contain all things necessary for salvation and to be the rule and ultimate standard of faith – and which is set forth in the catholic creeds. This is the faith that the Church is called upon to proclaim.

The Covenant acknowledges the origins of the Anglican Church worldwide in the undivided Church, and the “rich history of the Church in the British Isles shaped particularly by the Reformation”; it “cherishes its faith and mission heritage”, and acknowledge its growth into a global communion.



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Each church commits itself to “uphold and act in continuity and consistency with the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, biblically derived moral values and the vision of humanity received by and developed in the communion of member churches”.

It sets forth four Instruments of Communion: the Archbishop of Canterbury as the symbol of Anglican unity, and first among equals of all Anglican primates; the Lambeth Conference; the Primates’ Meetings; and the Anglican Consultative Council.

What is its significance?

To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, the Covenant re-states “mere Anglicanism”, as it were. The rules are set out, broad, yet uncompromising. There is no mention of any “inclusive” Godhead. The uniqueness, integrity and authority of Scripture are affirmed. Echoing the Windsor Report’s description of each Anglican church as holding “autonomy in communion”, the Covenant stresses the balanced exercise of the interdependence of the churches and provinces of the Communion. This will be a well-needed antidote to much vague talk over the past few years about the independence of each Anglican church, as if each church were free to re-invent basic Christian teaching. The Covenant will, God willing, have an immeasurably salutary effect, in the long run, in bringing the wayward Anglican ship of state back on course.

Where is the Book of Common Prayer in all of this?

Members of the PBSC will be heartened to learn that the draft Covenant explicitly declares the

Book of Common Prayer (1662) to be central and foundational for Anglicanism. All too often over the past thirty years and more we have heard in lectures and seminars our learned professors of church history talking of the Book of Common Prayer as if it were merely “one voice” among many conflicting voices in Anglican doctrine and history. The Covenant will set the record straight in this respect, and re-affirm the centrality of the Prayer Book to Anglican thought and doctrine.

Members of the Prayer Book Society of Canada may be forgiven for noting that this draft Covenant is a thorough vindication of the positions taken by the Society since its inception over twenty years ago.

What will it mean for Canadian Anglicans?

The main questions will be, of course: How will the Episcopal Church respond? Will the Canadian Anglican Church ratify it? What, if any, changes will be made to the draft? One thing looks increasingly certain: the Anglican Communion worldwide is taking steps to put its house in order, to re-affirm what it stands for, and to face the twenty-first century with a robust and orthodox Christian witness. Whether the existing American or Canadian churches choose to be a part of that future is another question. Initial reaction has not been encouraging.

It’s salutary for Anglicans worldwide to consider that these events are taking place in Africa, at the behest of the newest, poorest, but most active and faithful of the Anglican churches. A Roman Catholic observer of the events in Dar-es-Salaam, Fr Raymond de Souza, writing in the February 22nd edition of the *National Post*, sees it this way:

“In less than 20 years, according to

the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, the world’s 2.6 billion Christians will be comprised of 623 million Latin Americans, 595 million Africans, 513 million Europeans, and 498 million Asians. The growth in Africa has been astonishing, from 10 million Christians in 1900 representing about 10% of the population, to some 360 million in 2000, comprising about 50% of the population. In such a world the concerns and cultural mores of the Upper West Side of Manhattan are marginal at best.

The impact of this shift will shape Christianity in the twenty-first century, and it will be a muscular Christianity, in which the biblical drama of sin, chastisement, repentance, mercy, healing, salvation and liberation will reassert itself. The this-worldly social projects of the deracinated northern Christians will be cast aside. The old-time religions will emerge from the newest churches.

An oft-quoted Christian poet from Ghana, Afua Kuma, has a contemporary hymn that would no doubt drain the remaining colour from the faces in a typical northern Anglican choir:

*If Satan troubles us,
Jesus Christ,
You who are the lion of the
grasslands,
You whose claws are sharp,
Will tear out his entrails
And leave them on the ground
For the flies to eat.*

Most Anglicans in the north likely tend towards polyphony and evensong rather than torn entrails and so the cultural expression of southern Christianity may seem alien at first. Yet, if the contest is

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between torn-entrails spiritual-warfare Christianity and pat-on-the-back spiritually-compromising

Christianity, where the greatest offence is giving offence, it seems clear that the lion of the grasslands is going to be the one with the growing band of disciples. And the roar you hear disturbing the

tranquillity of the Anglican Communion might just be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in African cadences.”

What the Primates' Communiqué says in a nutshell:

- *The traditional Christian teaching on marriage and human sexuality remains the teaching of the Anglican Communion.*
- *The Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. has departed from that standard of teaching, and the response made by their General Convention was inadequate.*
- *Clarification of their position, and a commitment to abide by the teaching of the Communion, is requested from the American House of Bishops by the end of September 2007. Failure to do so will affect the place of the Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion.*
- *Groups in the Episcopal Church that wish to remain faithful to the global Anglican Communion and are at odds with their local bishop are to be given effective protection.*
- *The goal over the next few years is for all provinces worldwide who wish to remain within the Anglican Communion to adopt together an Anglican Covenant, which will specify what being “in communion” involves.*

Christ Church Cathedral, Zanzibar

The Anglican primates, meeting in Dar-es-Salaam, took time out of their busy schedule to visit to the island of Zanzibar, off the Tanzanian coast, where they celebrated Holy Communion. The service commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade within the British Empire, a seminal act in world history. It took place at Christ Church Cathedral, a lovely old Victorian building, and an anchor for English speaking Christianity up and down the eastern coast of Africa. The service was an act of contrition and repentance for one of the abominations of history, and a commemoration of many years of hard work and lobbying spearheaded by evangelical Anglican William Wilberforce.

Zanzibar, off the east coast of Africa, had long been the centre of the Arab slave trade. When the slave trade was abolished within the British Empire in 1807, the Royal Navy was used to put down the slave trade of other nations, wherever it took place. Zanzibar became a British protectorate in 1890, and the slave market was closed down, and the site used for the Anglican cathedral. The transformation of a slave market to a cathedral is living testimony of the power of the Gospel to redeem man's wickedness and violence towards his fellow man.



Picture credits

The paintings on pages 1 and 3 are details of the “Maestà” by Duccio di Boninsegna (1278-1318), in the collection of the Museo dell’Opera Metropolitana in Siena. On page 1, “Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane”; on page 3, “Christ Appearing to the Disciples”. The photo on page 3 in our last issue was incorrectly captioned. From left to right, the four young people should have been listed as Sarah Hogarth, Peter McCormick, Sarah Blacker and Maya Beven. Our apologies!

John Douglas Webb

November 23rd, 1918 – January 20th, 2007

By Desmond Scotchmer

Those who remember Jack Webb will be saddened to hear of his passing in January of this year. John Douglas Webb was one of the founding members of the Prayer Book Society of Canada, and the Society's first Treasurer.

Jack was born in Toronto on November 23rd, 1918. During the Second World War he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, serving as a navigation trainer in Canada and in England. In 1944 he married his wife Margaret, his life's soul-mate.

After the war he resumed his teaching career, becoming a vice principal and then a principal with the Toronto Board of Education. Jack was a man of great character and integrity. It was typical of the man that he was still running marathons in his sixties. He loved the Book of Common Prayer, and fought for it with tenacity, resolution, courage, and deep conviction.

In 1985, Jack, along with the Revd. Kenneth W. Scott and the Revd. Robert S. Greene, sponsored a series of lectures on the Book of Common Prayer at St Paul's Church, Bloor Street, Toronto, with the aim of bringing together Anglicans who shared their concerns about the future of the Book of Common Prayer within the Anglican Church of Canada. The lecture series was one of the catalysts out of which came the Prayer Book Society of Canada, which was formed in January, 1986, at the Faculty Club at the University of Toronto. Ken Scott became the first President of the PBSC, and Jack served as its first Treasurer, a role he took up with great enthusiasm, and fulfilled with great devotion.

He was profoundly disturbed over the introduction of the Book of Alternative Services in 1985. He sensed immediately that far more than an outward form was at stake: the very essence of Anglicanism itself was under threat.



Pointing to the reference to *lex orandi, lex credendi* in the Introduction of the BAS, Jack saw that the BAS was, among other things, an attempt to change what Anglicans believed about the relationship between God and man, about the authority of Scripture and the nature of the Church, about the nature of the Eucharist, about sin and redemption, about the atoning death of Christ on the Cross: all this without any debate, or acknowledgement that there were far deeper issues at stake than mere outward form. In addition, he and Margaret simply could not get over the crassly insensitive way in which the book was introduced.

We both attended one of the Implementation Sessions of the BAS put on by the Diocese of Toronto in

which the Prayer of Humble Access was held up to mockery, amidst much laughter and derision, as the "Prayer of Humble *Excess*". I know it rankled deeply with Jack (as it did indeed with me).

If one of the most sublime prayers of Christendom, something so quintessentially Anglican, so profoundly Scriptural, that breathed the very essence of New Testament spirituality and Patristic devotion, could be held up to officially-sanctioned ridicule, what did this say about the state of the contemporary Anglican Church? What did it say about the sort of theology that was at work in the BAS, or Anglican claims to historicity and catholicity? If the piety of faithful, ordinary Anglicans could be treated so contemptuously, what did that say about claims that the new services were being introduced out of concerns for pastoral sensitivity?

These were issues, of course, that went to the very heart of the debate about the BCP and the BAS. They are, indeed, the concerns that any thinking person should have about the state of the contemporary Anglican Church today, some twenty years on.

Jack spent many of those early years of the PBSC fielding phone calls from many, many ordinary Anglican folk from all over the country who were distraught about the loss of their beloved Prayer Book. He did this because he empathized deeply with their sense of betrayal and hurt, too deeply, almost to be articulated. While a man of Jack's temperament and generation would never have used words like "hurt" and "betrayed", I know that is what he felt.

John Douglas Webb

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So Jack devoted himself to the PBSC, learning doctrine and theology, and debating fine points of doctrine with clarity and vigour. He attended, and wrote about, sessions of the Atlantic Theological Conferences. It was important not merely to defend the Book of Common Prayer but to understand why it was so important that it be preserved - and used. His deep, rasping voice, like a large dump truck crunching up a gravel road, belied a tender, compassionate heart and a subtle mind.

So the PBSC became a vehicle to cope with that deep sense of loss and

betrayal, as well as a means of working for the recovery of the Anglican mind.

Jack was generous with his time, his energy and his money. I remember with deep affection, in the early days of the Society, going over with Dorothy Stubbs to Jack and Margaret's lovely house in Guildwood Village in Scarborough, and spending whole evenings folding, stuffing, and stamping the PBSC Newsletters by hand, some 4,000 - 5,000 of them at that time, discussing all the while theology and the history of Anglicanism, and the current state of the Church.

Jack retired as treasurer in 1990 owing to ill health, and spent many

of his remaining years caring for Margaret, who was afflicted with that modern-day scourge, Alzheimer's disease. Jack told us that Margaret would struggle with her failing memory by reciting the entire Communion Service from the Book of Common Prayer, something that gave them both great comfort and strength. After Margaret's death in 2000, Jack himself had to face his loneliest struggle, against Parkinson's Disease, where he once again showed his characteristic inner strength. His last year was saddened further by the unexpected death of his son Doug.

Jack is survived by his son Donald, daughter Janet, and son-in-law Charles, and grand-daughter Jennifer, to whom he was devoted.

The 2007 Atlantic Theological Conference

Justification & Sanctification

May 29 - June 1, 2007
Christ Church Cathedral
Fredericton, NB

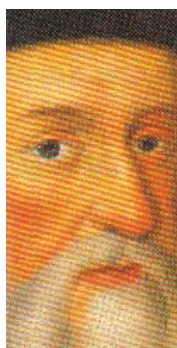


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