

AGENDA

CONVERSATIONS – INTRODUCTIONS

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

Blessing of Same Sex Unions / St. Michael Report

General Synod 2004 voted to defer a clause of a resolution calling the church to “affirm the authority and jurisdiction of any diocesan synod, with the concurrence of its bishop, to authorize the blessing of committed same sex unions.” In deferring the resolution it requested the Primate’s Theological Commission “to review, consider and report to the Council of General Synod, by its spring 2006 meeting, whether the blessing of committed same sex unions is a matter of doctrine.”

Their report, called the *St. Michael Report*, was presented to CoGS in May 2005. The Commission concluded that the blessing of committed same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine, but is not a matter of ‘core’ doctrine, in the sense of being creedal doctrine.

During this “Conversation” the issue of blessing same sex unions will be discussed in the context of the conclusions of the *St. Michael Report*. It will be led by the Rev. Paul Jennings [member of the Primate’s Theological Commission]; the Very Rev. Peter Elliott [Dean of the Diocese of New Westminster and Prolocutor of General Synod]; and the Rev. Canon Dr. Linda Nicholls [Coordinator of Dialogue, Faith, Worship and Ministry, Anglican Church of Canada].

Windsor Report

In 2003, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams created the Lambeth Commission to consider ways in which the world-wide Anglican Communion can stay together in light of stresses created by issues such as the blessing of same-sex unions in one Canadian diocese and the election of a gay bishop in the U.S. Episcopal Church. The report of the Commission was submitted in 2004 and is called *The Windsor Report*.

The Windsor Report Response Group has collated responses to the Windsor Report from across the Anglican Church of Canada. Their report is called “*A Response to the Windsor Report*.”

This “Conversation” time offers a time for discussion of this *Response*, of the *Windsor Report* itself, and of issues of unity in the Anglican Communion. It will be led by Dr. Patricia Bays [chair of the Windsor Report Response Group]; the Most Rev. John Sentamu [Archbishop of York]; and the Rev. Canon Kenneth Kearon [Anglican Communion General Secretary], and the Rev. Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan [Director, Faith, worship and Ministry].

Finance and Development

For the past triennium, General Synod has worked with a Framework for Strategic Planning and a program called Letting Down the Nets, which provided an outline of the whole church's mission and ministry. Our ability to provide ministry is inevitably linked to the resources available to support the ministry. The complexity of the church's issues today calls for an integrated, multi-disciplinary and multi-front approach to advancing Christ's mission and growing our churches financially and spiritually. Without a major push in financial development, the Framework's mission and ministry will be severely diminished during the next triennium.

Participants in this "Conversation" will hear of plans for the next triennium for financial development activities for the Anglican Church of Canada. Leaders will include Peter Blachford [Treasurer and Director, Financial Management and Development, Anglican Church of Canada] and Monica Patten [Chair, Financial Management and Development Committee], and the Right Rev. Phillip Poole [Suffragan Bishop, Diocese of Toronto].

Governance

Although the church's mission is unchanging, the organizational structures and the strategies with which it is fulfilled must change to suit the time and place. General Synod 2004 requested the Council of General Synod to "review the governance of General Synod with a view to enhancing the work and mission of General Synod." The goal of the Governance Working Group (GWG) was to facilitate, stimulate and lead discussion about governance throughout all levels of the church.

The GWG provided two reports to CoGS. In the second it made proposals for the restructuring of the membership of General Synod and its committees. It also proposed that the process of restructuring be changed to permit some changes which currently require acceptance at two synods to be adopted in one. CoGS concluded that some of the proposed changes required more study but that others should be considered at this session of the General Synod.

It is clear that any serious discussion of structure must include all levels of the church. In order to deal with structural matters that are not within the legislative power of General Synod, there will be a motion of the Primate, after consultation with the House of Bishops, to initiate discussion throughout the Anglican Church of Canada concerning the role of the provinces, the possible reform of diocesan organization and boundaries, and the implementation of any other change that might improve effectiveness, efficiency or economy of operation.

In this "Conversation" participants will discuss the implications of structural change, and some possible recommendations to be considered in the next triennium. Leaders will be Brian Burrows [Vice Chancellor of General Synod], the Rt. Rev. Susan Moxley [Suffragan Bishop of Nova Scotia and PEI], and Susan Winn [Deputy Prolocutor].