

**Windsor Report Response Group  
Report to General Synod**

The Windsor Report Response Group was established in 2005 to coordinate the response of the Anglican Church of Canada to the Windsor Report of the Lambeth Commission on Communion (published October, 2004; available online at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/>). It is composed of members of the Partners in Mission and Faith Worship and Ministry Committees and the House of Bishops.

Initially the group prepared a report outlining the response of the Canadian church for the Primate to take to the February 2005 Primates Meeting. The group met again in October 2006 and drafted a response for the Council of General Synod to consider as the response of the Canadian church to the Windsor Report. That draft was considered by the Council of General Synod at its meeting in November 2006. Focus groups and individuals provided helpful comments. The Council asked the Response Group to revise the draft and bring it back to the March 2007 meeting of the Council. A summary of the first draft response was placed on the website, and the full draft was sent to the House of Bishops, with a request for further comments. Four comments were received. A number of groups met in dioceses and parishes to talk about the Windsor Report, and this too has provided helpful information.

The Windsor Report Response Group met in February 2007 and revised the draft in the light of comments received and of further discussion within the life of our church. That draft was considered by the Council of General Synod in March 2007, which made a few amendments and then adopted it.

The Group met again by conference call in the light of the Primates' Meeting in Tanzania and proposed a resolution regarding the Covenant, which was also amended by the Council of General Synod and adopted. The Group has agreed to stand by to take any actions necessary until a successor body, similar in composition, can be named.

Patricia Bays  
Chair, Windsor Report Response Group

## **A Response to the Windsor Report**

prepared by the Windsor Report Response Group  
and adopted by the Council of General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada  
March 2007

### **Introduction**

1. We present a response from the Anglican Church of Canada to the Windsor Report, in the spirit of Archbishop Eames' foreword to the report, "in the prayerful hope that it will encourage the advanced levels of understanding which are essential for the future of the Anglican Communion."
2. In October 2004, the bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada "received with thanks the Windsor Report" and "recognizing its importance . . . commended it for study throughout the church." The report was widely read and studied. Responses were invited from Anglicans across Canada, and many, both lay and clergy, took the opportunity to comment on the report. A summary of their response is found in Appendix 2.
3. As Canadian Anglicans, we are committed to our membership in the Anglican Communion. We are committed to engaging in a process of dialogue, listening to the voices of other Provinces and sharing our experience as we try to live out those tasks to which the gospel calls us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
4. We understand that, in responding to the Windsor Report, we are engaging in a process of discernment. From 1997 to 2001, the Virginia Report of the International Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission was studied widely and a Canadian response prepared. The Virginia Report raises many of the questions with which the Windsor Report is concerned – what binds Anglicans together, what is the theological basis for unity and communion, what structures can best express the kind of communion we seek. The Windsor Report builds upon the Virginia Report and on the reports of Lambeth Conferences, Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' Meetings, and other Anglican gatherings. We recognize the Windsor Report as an important contribution to this process within the Anglican Communion, and we commend it to our church and to the Communion for wider study. We see the present dialogue as one stage in an ongoing process of discernment of the nature of communion. We agree with Archbishop Eames that the Report 'is not a judgement...but is part of a pilgrimage towards healing and reconciliation'. We view the Report, and the responses it has engendered, as 'a genuine contribution to what communion really means for Anglicans'. (Preface)

5. In the Windsor Report, we find much to affirm and to celebrate, and we find there areas where we believe further work needs to be done. These two aspects shape the next sections of our response.

### **What we affirm**

Among the many things we can affirm in the Windsor Report, we wish to highlight these:

6. We believe that the opening reflection of the Report (paragraphs 1-5) makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the nature of the Church (ecclesiology). We celebrate the statement that “communion with God and one another in Christ is thus both a gift and a divine expectation.” Our unity is based on “our common identity in Christ.” The purpose of our unity is “the furtherance of God’s mission within the world.” (§5)
7. We affirm that “the communion we enjoy as Anglicans involves a sharing in double ‘bonds of affection’: those that flow from our shared status as children of God in Christ, and those that arise from our shared and inherited identity, which is the particular history of the churches to which we belong.” (§45) Communion is not an abstraction but a lived reality that finds its concrete expression in particular communities of faith. We live in Canada, in a particular time and place, and are called to minister within that context. Within the Anglican Church of Canada, as within many of the Provinces of the Communion, there is great diversity – of language, of culture, of ways of understanding and expressing theology. We celebrate that diversity and share with the Communion some of the ways we have come to understand that call to unity in diversity.
8. We remind ourselves that our primary task is “to take forward God’s mission to his needy and much-loved world.” (§46)

### **Scripture**

9. We affirm the importance of Scripture as a “focus and means of unity” (§53) and the Report’s emphasis upon the central role of Scripture in Anglican belief and life. The Windsor Report recognizes that reference to the authority of Scripture in historic Christianity means “the authority of the triune God, *exercised through scripture*”. (§54) It affirms this authority as an aspect of “the dynamic inbreaking of God’s kingdom”, rather than “a static source of information or the giving of orders” (§55). With the Windsor Report, we affirm that “Scripture is thus part of the means by which God directs the Church in its mission, energizes it for that task, and shapes and unites it so that it may be both equipped for this work and itself part of the message.” (§55)
10. We celebrate the way in which Scripture is central to Anglican worship. “For scripture to ‘work’ as the vehicle of God’s authority it is vital that it be read at the heart of worship in a way which (through appropriate lectionaries and the use of

scripture in canticles etc.) allows it to be heard, understood and reflected upon, not as a pleasing and religious background noise, but as God’s living and active word.” (§57) We note the statement in the Windsor Report that “questions of interpretation are rightly raised, not as an attempt to avoid or relativise scripture and its authority, but as a way of ensuring that it really is scripture that is being heard.” (§59) We affirm that it is “the responsibility of the whole Church to engage with the Bible together . . . so that when difficult judgements are required they may be made in full knowledge of the texts.” (§57)

11. We want to respond to the call of the Windsor Report “to re-evaluate the ways in which we have read, heard, studied and digested scripture. We can no longer be content to drop random texts into arguments, imagining that the point is thereby proved, or indeed to sweep away sections of the New Testament as irrelevant to today’s world, imagining that problems are thereby solved.” (§61) We pray that the Bible can be for Anglicans “a means of unity, not division.” (§62) “Our shared reading of scripture across boundaries of culture, region and tradition ought to be the central feature of our common life guiding us together into an appropriately rich and diverse unity by leading us forward from entrenched positions into fresh appreciation of the riches of the gospel as articulated in the scriptures.” (§62)

### **The Lambeth Quadrilateral**

12. With §51, we affirm the Lambeth Quadrilateral which “commits Anglicans to ‘a series of normative practices: scripture is *read*, tradition is *received*, sacramental worship is *practised*, and the historic character of apostolic leadership is *retained*.’ ” In saying this, we affirm the statement of the Primates’ Meeting in 2000, “We believe that the unity of the Communion as a whole still rests on the Lambeth Quadrilateral: the holy Scriptures as the rule and standard of faith; the creeds of the undivided Church; the two sacraments ordained by Christ himself and the historic episcopate. Only a formal and public repudiation of this would place a diocese or Province outside the Anglican Communion.” We note that Appendix 3.1 of the Windsor Report does not quote the Lambeth Quadrilateral, but an earlier version (see Appendix 1 of this report for the text of the Lambeth Quadrilateral as adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 and received by the Anglican Church of Canada in 1893.)

### **Episcopacy**

13. We affirm that “the unity of the Communion is both expressed and put into effect among other things through the *episcopate*.” (§63) We affirm the role of bishops as representing the universal church to the local and vice versa (§64), as teachers of scripture (§58), as chief pastors to their diocese and as bonds of unity in the Communion. (§64)
14. We affirm Windsor’s call to “those bishops who believe it is their conscientious duty to intervene in provinces, dioceses and parishes other than their own:

- To express regret for the consequences of their action
- To affirm their desire to remain in the Communion, and
- To effect a moratorium on further interventions.

We also call upon these archbishops and bishops to seek an accommodation with the bishops of the dioceses whose parishes they have taken into their own care.” (¶155) We as a Province have been affected by bishops who have intervened. Such interventions are contrary to the Windsor Report, Lambeth Conference resolutions and the Primates’ Communiqué of 2005.

15. We believe, with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Panel of Reference, that the Shared Episcopal Ministry scheme of the Canadian House of Bishops provides sufficient supplementary episcopal oversight for dissenting congregations. (See Appendix 4 and Windsor ¶151; the report of the Panel of Reference is available at [http://www.aco.org/commission/reference/docs/report\\_october.pdf](http://www.aco.org/commission/reference/docs/report_october.pdf))

### **The Listening Process**

16. We affirm the statement of the Windsor Report – “We remind all in the Communion that Lambeth Resolution 1.10 calls for an ongoing process of listening and discernment, and that Christians of good will need to be prepared to engage honestly and frankly with each other on issues related to human sexuality.” (¶146) In the Anglican Church of Canada, we have tried to take seriously this call to listening and dialogue. Appendix 2 describes some of the ways in which our church has engaged in this discussion. We look forward to hearing how the “listening process” is proceeding in other Provinces, and to learning new insights from their experience.
17. We are concerned for the human rights of homosexual persons and affirm the call of the Windsor Report for Provinces to be pro-active in support of Lambeth resolution 64 (1988), which called upon each Province to reassess “its care for and attitude toward persons of homosexual orientation.” (¶146) We would like to encourage dialogue on what is appropriate pastoral care for homosexual persons and their families.

### **Diversity**

18. “The nature of unity within the Anglican Communion necessarily includes the rich diversity which comes from factors such as local culture and different traditions of reading scripture.” (¶71) We believe that, among Christians of good faith, there can be legitimate differences on many issues, and we wish to protect the freedom of conscience of those with differing views. We believe that further work needs to be done on expressing a theology of diversity, including its limits, especially as rooted in the theology of God the Trinity. We rejoice in the publication of the Cyprus Statement of the International Commission for Anglican Orthodox Theological Dialogue as an important contribution to this subject.

## What we have done so far

19. Appendix 2 outlines events and actions in the Anglican Church of Canada. Shortly after the release of the Windsor Report, in response to ¶144, the Bishop of New Westminster stated, “We do regret the consequences of our actions with sadness. We realize that many have not understood what we have been attempting to do in this diocese, or have even received news of our actions with dismay. What we have been trying to do is make the church more welcoming and open to all Christians, whatever their sexual orientation.” In April 2005 the Canadian House of Bishops adopted a statement committing themselves to a moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions. The synod of the Diocese of New Westminster in May 2005 confirmed the decision to effect a moratorium by restricting the Blessing of Same Sex Unions to the eight parishes which as of the end of synod had, by majority vote of the parish membership, decided to ask to be places of blessing. None of the remaining congregations would be authorized to hold such blessings, until the decisions of General Synod in 2007. The synod expressed its desire to remain full members of the Anglican Communion
  
20. Decisions made in the diocese of New Westminster have been the result of resolutions of synod over a period of years. In the Anglican Church of Canada, we are taking the time required by our synodical procedures for decision-making. We acknowledge the need to keep other Provinces informed of our decisions, and we continue to work at methods of sharing information. At its meeting in May, 2005, the Council of General Synod passed the following resolution: “that the Council of General Synod affirm the membership of the Anglican Church of Canada in the Anglican Consultative Council in the expectation that the duly elected members attend but not participate in the June 2005 meeting of the Council.” We made a presentation at the meeting describing our experience in the Canadian Church. We continue to take our place in the networks and on the commissions of the Anglican Communion, and remain committed to our partnership relationships.
  
- 21. Though in an episcopally led church bishops have a good deal of power and authority, in Canada there are many areas of church life in which bishops have agreed to yield that power to synods. The Primate and the bishops are not free to make decisions themselves on these matters. In the Anglican Church of Canada, we have developed a system of synodical government in which clergy and laity share with bishops in decision-making. As a church, we are moving slowly through the process that our constitution and canons require. The decision-making process takes time, and we need to allow time for the discernment process to unfold.**
  
22. A resolution to allow for the blessing of same-sex unions was deferred by the General Synod of 2004, pending an evaluation by the Primate’s Theological

Commission. The Commission was asked to consider and report to the Council of General Synod whether the blessing of committed same sex unions is a matter of doctrine. The St. Michael Report in 2005 concluded that the blessing of same sex unions is a matter of doctrine, but not of “core” or credal doctrine. They also stated that they do not believe that this should be a communion-breaking issue’. The Council of General Synod received the St. Michael Report and recommended that General Synod debate the following resolution: ‘that General Synod accept the conclusion of the Primate’s Theological Commission that the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine but is not core doctrine in the sense of being credal.’ We are obligated by our canons and constitution to consider this report at General Synod 2007, to evaluate its conclusion, and to consider the motion on the blessing of same sex unions deferred from General Synod 2004. Since their publication, both the Windsor Report and the St. Michael Report are being studied extensively in parishes and dioceses. We enter these discussions mindful of the common life of the Communion and in response to the leading of the Spirit, as we see it in our own context

- 23. In Canada, we live in a society in which civil governments have made legal the marriage of same-sex couples. We are compelled to explore the distinction between the blessing of same sex unions and marriage. We note the distinction the report makes between authorized Public Rites and ‘a breadth of private response to situations of individual pastoral care’ (¶143). . One diocese has made provision to authorize public rites; others allow a range of private pastoral responses. All are motivated by pastoral concern, and we continue to be in conversation together about this issue.**

What requires further work

- 24. We believe that much more work needs to be done in the Communion on understanding what “reception” means. How do we receive and make effective in the life of each Province the reports and documents of international bodies? How has the Virginia Report been received by Provinces since it was presented to the Lambeth Conference 1998? How do individual Provinces receive, for example, the reports of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)? How are comments and suggestions received and acted upon? In the Anglican Church of Canada, we try to commend all such reports to dioceses and parishes for study and comment. This process of reception takes time, but we believe that there is a value in consulting widely among the members of our church. This process would be enhanced by the translation of critical documents into the languages of the Communion and a more intentional process of listening to linguistic minorities within the Communion who might otherwise be cut out of the discussion.**
25. We believe that more work needs to be done to clarify our understanding of what is meant by the phrase ‘the authority of Scripture’, recognizing that Anglicanism

has historically accommodated a variety of approaches to the reading and understanding of Scripture and has in each period used the best contemporary techniques of scholarship and interpretation. We heartily concur that ‘it is the responsibility of the whole Church to engage with the Bible together.’ (§57) We acknowledge the important role of bishops as teachers of scripture (§58), but want to affirm also the role of lay and clergy scholars in their ongoing work as teachers of Scripture. We affirm, as a vital aspect of our Reformation heritage, that it is the common vocation of all the baptized to engage in the learning and teaching of Scripture. Given the Windsor Report’s very high expectation of Christian leaders as teachers of Scripture, the Anglican Church of Canada (and possibly other parts of the Communion) must place renewed emphasis on the biblical and theological formation of bishops, clergy and lay leaders. To this end we applaud the Archbishop of Canterbury’s initiative and call for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion.

- 26. We believe that a wider range of Scripture should be used in exploring the nature of communion and the Church. The Windsor Report makes use of a relatively small range, drawing on examples from the epistles but not from the gospels or the Old Testament.**
  
- 27. We believe that more work should be done in examining the way authority is exercised in the Anglican Communion. We are concerned about the attempt to increase the influence of bishops by giving to the Lambeth Conference and the Primates’ Meeting an authority not previously held. In particular, the meeting of the Primates brings together bishops who have differing powers and jurisdiction in their own Provinces. What began as a meeting of collegial consultation is increasingly acting as an authoritative body. With regard to the Lambeth Conference, we refer to the preface to the Lambeth Conference report of 1978 which describes the authority of Lambeth resolutions: ‘The resolutions have no legislative authority unless or until they have been accepted by the Synods or other governing bodies of the member Churches of the Anglican Communion, and then only in those member Churches’. (p. 5)**
  
28. Provinces of the Communion have made different decisions about the ordination of women, the admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation, polygamy, the remarriage of divorced persons, liturgical revision, entering into relationships of full communion with other churches, the jurisdiction of primates, and synodical government. Wherever possible, it is preferable that Provinces consult with one another on important matters, but it has never been the case that all Provinces must agree before a decision is taken. We note the proposal of the Windsor Report that on serious matters, ‘in order for bonds of affection to be properly acknowledged and addressed’, churches proposing to take action undertake ‘to demonstrate to the rest of the Communion why their proposal meets the criteria of scripture, tradition and reason’ (§141). We want to work with all other Provinces to explore ways in which such consultation can happen.

29. We believe that it is important to ensure that laity share in taking counsel on matters affecting the life of the Communion. We do not wish to see this role diminished in the membership of the Anglican Consultative Council. This council provides the one opportunity in the Anglican Communion for lay people and clergy to share with the bishops in discussions and recommendations. We have taken an active role in the Council since its inception. In the Anglican Church of Canada, laity and clergy share with the bishops in decision making at all levels of the church's life.
30. We affirm the idea of developing an Anglican Covenant, noting the call of Windsor that it be developed through a "long-term process, in an educative context, be considered for real debate and agreement on its adoption as a solemn witness to communion." (§118) We are committed to such a long-term process and would hope that such a covenant would promote mutual responsibility and interdependence within the Communion. We have reservations about the constitutional tone of the example provided in the Windsor Report. We find that example too detailed in its proposals and we are concerned that such a model might foster the development of a complex bureaucratic structure which might stifle change and growth in mission and ministry. We would prefer a shortened and simplified covenant, perhaps based on the model of the baptismal covenant, or ecumenical covenants such as the Waterloo Declaration between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, or the covenant proposed by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism. We value the Ten Principles of Partnership cited in Appendix 3 of Windsor and would hope that they inform the drafting of a covenant. We affirm that any group given the responsibility of developing an Anglican Covenant needs to be broadly representative of the membership of the Church, including men and women, clergy and lay people, a variety of geographical regions and theological emphases.
31. The Covenant process could provide a place where the evolving structures of the Communion can be discussed and agreed upon. The current practice seems to be the development of *ad hoc* agreements or actions based on reports which have not yet been received by the whole Communion. We affirm that "we do not favour the accumulation of formal power by the Instruments of Unity, or the establishment of any kind of central 'curia' for the Communion." (§105) In responding to the Virginia Report in 2001, many Canadians felt that the present structures serve well when used fully and creatively. "The personal and relational life of the Church is always prior to the structural. ... Right structuring and right ordering provide channels by which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ is discerned, the right conduct of the Church encouraged and the gifts of the many are drawn upon in the service and mission of the Church." (*Virginia Report*, 5.4)

We would be wary of the over-development of structures which would make it difficult for the Church to respond quickly and easily to fulfill its mission in its local context. We are distrustful of the development of structural changes driven primarily by issues and in the midst of acute crisis.

32. We affirm that respect for dissenting minorities needs to be applied to all sides of all issues being discussed in the Church. The Anglican Church has a long tradition of holding together in one church a variety of theological positions and emphases. We hope that the Church will be resilient enough to maintain that degree of diversity while growing in its sense of communion.

#### Conclusion

33. We affirm ¶40 of the Windsor Report where it describes “a more general feature which ought to characterize life within the Communion: *a relationship of trust.*” Such trust is, in the first place, the fruit of our shared faith in Christ. Trust is built when we meet together, to listen and to talk in mutual acceptance and humility, to read Scripture, to engage in theological study, and to pray. Trust is built when we engage in partnership for mission and development, for social action and education. As Anglicans, we have spent time in ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, developing ways of speaking and listening respectfully, of sharing insights and experiences, of expressing differences and yet trying to find those deeper levels of agreement that will enable us to remain in a relationship. We affirm our willingness to work with other Provinces to develop such a relationship of trust and mutuality within the Anglican Communion. We commit ourselves to try to walk with more humility with our sisters and brothers and with our God.

34. With Archbishop Eames, we again wish to affirm that the Windsor Report is “part of a process. It is part of a pilgrimage towards healing and reconciliation.” We look forward to continuing with others in that process and pilgrimage.

Resolution for General Synod to consider

#### **BE IT RESOLVED:**

**That this General Synod endorse the report of the Windsor Report Response Group, as adopted by the Council of General Synod (March 2007), and that the following be forwarded, along with the report, to the Anglican Communion Office and the Provinces of the Anglican Communion.**

The Anglican Church of Canada:

1. reaffirms its commitment to full membership and participation in the life, witness and structures of the Anglican Communion;

2. reaffirms its commitment to the Lambeth Quadrilateral, as received by our church in 1893;
3. expresses its desire and readiness to continue our participation in the ongoing life of the Communion through partnerships and visits, theological and biblical study, in order to foster Communion relationships, including the listening process and the development and possible adoption of an Anglican covenant;
4. reaffirms its mutual responsibility and interdependence with our Anglican sisters and brothers in furthering the mission of the church;
5. notes that, in response to the Windsor Report, the Diocese of New Westminster expressed regret, and the House of Bishops effected a moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions, and
6. calls upon those archbishops and other bishops who believe that it is their conscientious duty to intervene in Provinces, dioceses and parishes other than their own to implement paragraph 155 of the Windsor Report and to seek an accommodation with the bishops of the dioceses whose parishes they have taken into their own care; and
7. commits itself to participation in the Listening Process and to share with member churches of the Communion the study of human sexuality which continues to take place, in the light of Scripture, tradition and reason.

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1 - The Lambeth Quadrilateral**

In 1893, the first General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada adopted the resolution: “We desire hereby to make it known that we adopt and set forth as forming a basis for negotiation with any of the bodies of our separated Christian brethren, with a view to union, the following Articles agreed upon by the Lambeth Conference held in London in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight, viz.: -

- 1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation,’ and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- 2) The Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- 3) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s Words of Institution, and of the Elements ordained by Him.
- 4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.”

### **Appendix 2 – A Chronology of Events**

Discussions about issues around human sexuality have taken place in the Anglican Church of Canada, both in the House of Bishops and in parishes and dioceses, for more

than thirty years. In 1976, the House of Bishops commissioned a task force to assist in their deliberations. In a press release in 1978, the House made this affirmation:

We believe as Christians that homosexual persons as children of God have a full and equal claim, with all other persons, upon the love, acceptance, concern and pastoral care of the Church. The gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians to guard against all forms of human injustice and to affirm that all persons are brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. We affirm that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law with all other Canadian citizens.

The House, at that time, declined to authorize the blessing of homosexual unions, but said, "We will not call in question the ordination of a person who has shared with the bishop his/her homosexual orientation if there has been a commitment to the Bishop to abstain from sexual acts with persons of the same sex as part of the requirement for ordination."

The discussion of issues around human sexuality and homosexuality continued at each meeting of the House of Bishops. The House suggested that bishops take the opportunity to meet and talk with homosexual persons in their own dioceses. A statement of the House of Bishops affirmed, "Our commitment is to continue the study; to listen intently to voices across the church; to probe the scriptures; and to discern, as fully and as honestly as we can, the path of faithfulness."

Lambeth Conferences from 1978 on have called on all Provinces to study these matters. In Canada, we have taken seriously that call to study and to dialogue. At the General Synod of 1992 a major block of time was devoted to an open forum on the topic. More materials were made available for parish study and by 1994/95 approximately 170 groups and 2500 people had used the study guide "Hearing Diverse Voices, Seeking Common Ground". Many diocesan synods included opportunities for study and the sharing of information. The Anglican Church of Canada participated in the Archbishop of Canterbury's commission to study issues of human sexuality.

Lambeth 1988 affirmed the human rights of persons of homosexual orientation. A motion of General Synod in 1995 declared "that this General Synod affirms the presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the life of the church and condemns bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation." The House of Bishops in 1996 adopted a motion to "support the legislation before the House of Commons to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation." Their statement read, "This is based on the church's belief that all persons are created in the image of God, and that Christ died for all." In 1997 the House of Bishops redrafted the 1979 guidelines in the light of new pastoral awareness and concern for gays and lesbians, while retaining their original intent.

The Faith Worship and Ministry Committee of the ACC was given a mandate to provide leadership to the church to ensure a continuation of the dialogue and asked that all dioceses set up a commission to foster dialogue, to represent the diversity of attitude

within the Church and to consider the full range of expressions of human sexuality in relationship and the church's response to those expressions. Many dioceses have held Days of Listening to provide opportunities for studying issues of human sexuality and hearing the wide range of theological views held by Canadian Anglicans.

### **The Diocese of New Westminster**

In 1987, the Diocese of New Westminster initiated a study of human sexuality for both clergy and laity, and study continued over the next decade. In 1998 the synod of the diocese of New Westminster voted by a narrow majority to request the bishop of authorize clergy in the diocese to bless covenanted same-sex unions. The bishop withheld consent, pending further consultation in the wider church. Synods in 2001 and 2002 passed the same motion, by increasing majorities. The bishop in 2002 consented to this motion. Efforts were made to work with parishes which disagreed with this action, and alternative episcopal oversight was arranged. The bishop continued to consult widely with the national and provincial Houses of Bishops, and representatives of the diocese held an information session at the 2002 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Hong Kong. In 2003 six parishes voted to become congregations in which such unions are blessed, and were authorized to do so. A further two parishes were later authorized.

Following the publication of the Windsor Report, in response to the request for bishops who have authorized rites of blessing to express regret, Bishop Ingham stated:

We do regret the consequences of our actions with sadness. We realize that many have not understood what we have been attempting to do in this diocese, or have even received news of our actions with dismay. What we have been trying to do is make the church more welcoming and open to all Christians, whatever their sexual orientation.

In 2005, the diocese constructed a formal diocesan response to the Windsor Report. The response included a decision to restrict the Blessing of Same Sex Unions to the eight parishes which as of the end of Synod had, by majority vote of the parish membership, decided to ask to be places of blessing. None of the remaining congregations would be authorized to hold such blessings, until the decisions of General Synod in 2007. The synod expressed its desire to remain full members of the Anglican Communion.

### **The Anglican Church of Canada**

In 2004, in light of the developments in New Westminster, General Synod spent time considering the blessing of same sex unions. In its resolutions, the synod affirmed that through our baptism we are members one of another in Christ Jesus; called for continued respectful dialogue and study of biblical, theological, liturgical, pastoral and social aspects of humans sexuality intentionally involving gay and lesbian persons and respectful of the cultures of indigenous and other communities; called for the provision of adequate episcopal oversight and pastoral care for all, regardless of the perspective from which they view the blessing of committed same sex relationships; and affirmed the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same sex relationships. A resolution authorizing the blessing of same sex unions was deferred until the meeting of General Synod 2007,

pending an assessment by the Primate's Theological Commission. The deferred motion reads 'That this General Synod affirm the authority and jurisdiction of any diocesan synod, with the concurrence of its bishop, to authorize the blessing of committed same sex unions'. (The Declaration of Principles of the Anglican Church of Canada reads that the jurisdiction of General Synod includes 'the definition of the doctrines of the Church in harmony with the Solemn Declaration adopted by this synod'.)

**That commission was asked to consider and report to the Council of General Synod whether the blessing of committed same sex unions is a matter of doctrine. The St. Michael Report in 2005 concluded that the blessing of same sex unions is a matter of doctrine, but not of "core" or credal doctrine. The Commission did not believe that this should be a communion-breaking issue. The St. Michael Report and its conclusions will be presented to General Synod 2007.**

The Anglican Church of Canada submitted to the Anglican Communion a preliminary response to the Windsor Report, based on wide consultation with dioceses, theological colleges, and individuals. The Canadian church responded to the request of the Primates' Meeting to withdraw our members from full participation in the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in 2005. At its meeting in May, 2005, the Council of General Synod passed the following resolution: "that the Council of General Synod affirm the membership of the Anglican Church of Canada in the Anglican Consultative Council in the expectation that the duly elected members attend but not participate in the June 2005 meeting of the Council." Our members attended as observers, and hosted a reception for members to share information about our church. As a church, we remain committed to membership in the Communion.

In our society, the civil marriage of gay and lesbian couples is now legal in all parts of Canada. In the church, ongoing dialogue and discussion continue. Other dioceses in the Canadian church have discussed authorizing the blessing of same sex unions. The Diocese of Toronto deferred consideration of such a motion until after General Synod 2007. The Diocese of Niagara passed such a motion but the bishop withheld consent. Resources on human sexuality have been prepared and distributed to diocese and parishes. The Faith Worship and Ministry committee is working on material to assist our church in talking about the reception of reports. How are documents such as the Virginia and the Windsor Reports "received" and made operative in the life of our church?

### **Appendix 3 A Canadian Response to the Windsor Report January 2005**

#### **The Response Group**

**The group met in Oakville on January 26 and 27, to read the Canadian responses to the Windsor Report and to prepare a summary for the Primate. Members were chosen from the Partners in Mission Committee, the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee, and the House of Bishops. They included Dr. Patricia Bays (Ottawa), the Rt. Rev'd Michael Bedford-Jones (Toronto), the Rt. Rev'd Peter Coffin (Ottawa), the Rev'd Dr. Tim Connor (Huron), the Rt. Rev'd Jim Cowan (British**

**Columbia), Ms. Cynthia Haines-Turner (Western Newfoundland), the Rt. Rev'd Colin Johnson (Toronto) and Canon Linda Nicholls (Toronto). Staff support was provided by Dr. Eleanor Johnson with the assistance of Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, Archdeacon Jim Boyles, and Archdeacon Paul Feheley.**

The responses

Canadian Anglicans were asked by the Primate to send in responses to the Windsor Report. By the time of the meeting, 171 responses had been received. 9 were from dioceses, 87 from laity, 51 from clergy, 13 from groups of clergy and laity, and 11 could not be identified as to order. The group was delighted with the large number of lay people who responded. Responses came from all ecclesiastical provinces (17 from Canada, 58 from Ontario, 34 from Rupert's Land, 36 from British Columbia and Yukon, and 20 could not be identified as to geography). On a spectrum from those most concerned to preserve the present practice of the Anglican Church (1) to those most open to change (5), the following was identified:

1 – 44      2 – 28      3 – 29      4 – 41      5 – 24      Can't tell – 3

Since January 26, other responses have come in. They have been read but the numbers are not reflected in the above statistics. The responses covered the whole spectrum of opinion within the Canadian church. The majority of the responses dealt with questions about homosexuality and the authority of scripture. Again, opinion covered a broad range. A smaller number of responses (about a quarter of the total number) dealt directly with the Windsor Report and the four questions prepared by the Primates' Meeting.

### **The process**

The response group, including staff, divided into 6 groups of 2. The responses were divided into packets of equal length. Each group was asked to read the responses in their packet, record statistical information, and make a note of themes, concerns and quotes. Every response received by Wednesday evening (January 26) was read by two people. We looked also at a response from the Council of General Synod, and a report on the discussion held at the House of Bishops meeting. The task force then drew out themes from what they had read. Finally we looked at the four questions (see below) and tried to summarize responses, using direct quotes as examples.

The **four questions** formulated by the Primates' Standing Committee

**1. What in the description of the life of the Communion (A & B) can you recognize as consistent, or not, with your understanding of the Anglican Communion?**

There were many expressions of thanks to the Commission for the work that they had done.

“The Commission is to be commended on having produced a unanimous Report under very difficult circumstances. We affirm whole-heartedly the assertion that our communion with one another is a gift from God.”

“Overall, I think the report is excellent, and the Commission is to be congratulated on a thorough and persuasive presentation, and particularly for stating the scriptural and historic authority for what it says. I believe it correctly analyses the internal causes of our present problems, although it does not touch upon the external (e.g. the rapid change in Western mores in the past 50 years which other regions have, unsurprisingly, not yet followed.)”

Responses varied as to the accuracy of the description of the life of the Communion. Some said that this was a good description of Anglicanism. Others expressed concern that the ecclesiology described does not match their historical understanding of it. One said that the description was “a somewhat rosy view of Anglicanism, given its history of sectarianism and political factionalism.”

There were a number of concerns about the material in sections A and B. Many felt that more exploration was needed around words like autonomy, interdependence, and adiaphora.

“Although there is a scriptural basis to the Report, many of the terms used are not scriptural, e.g. autonomy, adiaphora, subsidiarity. It seems to us that the key biblical concept we need to affirm is that of the Body of Christ. There should be more emphasis on the world-wide Body of Christ, and on ways in which this understanding of our church and churches could be enhanced.”

## **Biblical foundations**

There was approval for beginning with an examination of the biblical foundations.

“We appreciated the close and logical nature of the reasoning the report, especially in the passages on Scripture.”

“The report’s description of the fundamental character of the church, drawing on Ephesians and 1 and 2 Corinthians, portraying the church as “the practical embodiment and fruit of the gospel”, is one we enthusiastically endorse. We agree that the “redeemed unity which is God’s will for the whole creation is to be lived out within the life of the church.”

“We strongly affirm and support the conclusions of the Windsor Report, and its approach to the importance of the continued integrity of the world-wide Anglican Communion. We acknowledge and especially appreciate the emphasis that the Windsor Report placed on Scripture as the Church’s supreme authority and basis for unity.”

Other responses raised concerns about the choice of texts.

“There seems to be a concentration on the Pauline epistles, with no quotations from the Gospels or Acts or elsewhere. For example, Jesus’

treatment of the topic of divorce, or the apostles' handling of the reception of Gentiles into the church, might usefully have been referred to.”

“The theological reflection begins in #1 with the fact of sin, and moves very quickly to the reality of division. Sin seems to be understood on the model of the Babel story as alienation and division. It would be fruitful to contrast this with a reflection beginning with creation, in which the rich diversity of the Trinity overflows into all creation. Such a model would first of all celebrate diversity, rather than see it as a threat or punishment.”

There was a plea for more education around the Scriptures, and a commendation of paragraph 67 which expresses a need for us to read Scripture together. “One of the hallmarks of healthy worldwide communion will be precisely our readiness to learn from one another (which by no means indicates an unquestioning acceptance of one another’s readings but rather a rich mutual accountability) as we read scripture together.”

### **The ordination of women**

The description of the procedure followed in bringing about the ordination of women provoked a good deal of response. In general, it was felt that the Windsor Report describes the story of the ordination of women to the priesthood from the perspective of bishops and decision makers, and not from the perspective of women. We need to acknowledge the pain and the cost that is involved in our decision making process, both in the past and the present.

“The example given as a model of decision-making, namely the ordination of women and the consecration of women to the episcopate, is idealized. It was nowhere near as smooth as the Report makes out, and it is still a source of conflict in the world-wide church.”

“The section entitled “Recent Mutual Discernment within the Communion” (12-21) is a breath taking re-writing of Anglican history that few women would recognize as either helpful or appropriate. In the midst of a pastoral crisis in 1944 Bishop Hall did not consult the “Instruments of Unity” and, in fact, was roundly condemned by them all prior to the Anglican Consultative Council in Kenya almost thirty years later. Despite censure and pressure from Lambeth 1948 and two successive Archbishops of Canterbury, Bishop Hall did not deprive Li Tim-Oi of her priestly orders; she surrendered her license. In light of the terrible suffering that Li Tim-Oi underwent during the Cultural Revolution and of her rejection by the Anglican Communion, the use of her experience as an example of the effective working of the various instruments of unity is, to say the least, disrespectful of a courageous woman.”

“The real lesson derived from the history of the ordination of women is that having the need for unity and fellowship as the first priority results in the endless postponement of decision-making and inequitable treatment for those most closely involved.”

“This section of the report shows that the Anglican Church of Canada is already in impaired communion with many Provinces, even though all the appropriate steps were followed. If we can exist with a measure of impairment on this issue [ordination of women and of persons divorced and remarried], why can we not now exist with a similar measure of impairment?”

“The report argues that there is no precedent in Scripture and tradition for the ordination to the episcopate of gays/lesbians and the blessing of their union. Was there any such precedent for the ordination of women or for the remarriage of divorced persons? Lambeth 1968 dealt with this question when it pointed to the dynamic nature of tradition with the words,

“If the ancient and medieval role and inferior status of women are no longer accepted, the appeal to tradition is virtually reduced to the observation that there happens to be no precedent for ordaining women to be priests. The New Testament does not encourage Christians to think that nothing should be done for the first time.”

### **Authority of Scripture**

There was a wide range of views on the authority of Scripture. There were statements about the supreme authority of Scripture and insistence that the words of Scripture be followed exactly as read. A number of responses indicated a strong belief that the blessing of same sex unions is forbidden by the Scriptures, and there is a concern that, in some of its recent decisions, the Anglican Church is departing from the Scriptures.

“How can I remain true to orthodox Anglicanism under the authority of leadership that appears to challenge the Scripture?”

“How can those of us who consider the Bible as God’s true Word be one in Christ with those who are interpreting Scripture to fit in with worldly agendas?”

There were also responses which called for a more nuanced reading of Scripture in the light of contemporary scholarship and the changing life of church and society. Some responses encouraged the church to look at the gospel’s message of inclusion.

“We felt it might be important to explore some of Jesus’ own teaching, particularly passages such as the High Priestly prayer and those passages

that speak of inclusivity in the life of the faith community. Indeed, there are other Pauline passages on inclusivity that might be quoted.”

One response directed our attention to the way the apostles made decisions on how biblical laws and mores were to be applied, particularly in the case of admitting new members to the church. “The unwavering example of Jesus was and is to look beyond the rules to the people for whom the rules are made.”

“The apostolic example warns us not to prejudge the answer. Nor does it leave the answer to those whose lifestyle is in question. It names two or three trusted senior leaders representing opposite positions to study together whatever texts they deem relevant to the case before them, to examine witnesses to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those asking a blessing, and to pronounce what minimum rules for bestowing a blessing should apply.”

There was some question about the statement “The Anglican Communion has always declared that its supreme authority is Scripture.” Some saw this statement as a departure from Anglican tradition.

“In fact, Anglicanism from its early days has looked to a balanced authority. Richard Hooker said that Scripture must always be read in the light of tradition and reason. The Bible goes hand in hand with Tradition – the historic creeds, the collective wisdom of the church throughout the ages. This is perhaps more of an emphasis of the catholic side of Anglicanism. The Bible is always to be interpreted in the light of reason. Anglicans tend to use current scholarship to interpret the scriptures, and reject a narrow literalist understanding of the Bible. As well, Anglican scholarship has always studied and used where appropriate contemporary scientific knowledge. This was evident, for example, in the challenge to traditional Anglican thought of Darwin and the new science of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We should be wary of forcing a narrow understanding of authority on the Communion.”

### **Making decisions in the Communion**

There was felt to be a need to define autonomy and interdependence, and there were questions about how decisions have been made in the past. Traditionally as Anglicans we have not decided much on the communion level but rather on the diocesan and provincial levels.

“The description of the life of the Communion does not reflect any recognition of the respect one Province ought to have for synodical decisions of another Province. Canadian Anglicans have long tolerated positions taken in other Provinces which do not reflect their own positions. The issue of women as Bishops is an easy example of that tolerance. It is not merely a matter of *adiaphora* but a reflection of the authoritative foundation of decisions made by the Canadian Church which ought to be

given more weight than positions espoused by provinces without that authority.”

“The synodical decisions made by the Diocese of New Westminster and General Synod, which are dealt with in the Report, are decisions of the kind of substantial authority I have in mind. I would submit that what is missing from Parts A and B of the Report is a recognition that at least until recently, Canadian Anglicans expected that the Commission would recognize the significance of those synodical decisions and respect them as more authoritative than pronouncements from Communion-wide bodies newly labeled as Instruments of Unity. For example, I would regard the synodical decisions of ECUSA as more persuasive and influential in the Canadian Church than the pronouncements of a Primate of a Province made without consultation with a Synod.”

Reference was made to the fact that the Communion has in fact changed its mind on occasion, in the discussion of contraception at the Lambeth Conferences of 1920 and 1930, and in the discussion of the ordination of women.

## **2. In what ways do the proposals in C and D flow appropriately from the description of the Communion’s life in A and B?**

Again, responses varied. Some supported the instruments of unity as described in the Windsor Report.

“I am pleased that the Commission supports the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates’ Meetings as the mean of unity and the working of that same Holy Spirit. I do not fear that the support of these instruments will diminish the gains we as a communion have made. In fact, the use of these instruments has caused us to grow in the spirit of justice and truth in Christ.”

“I believe that, with proper care, the instruments of unity can effectively be used for the building up of the body of the communion without the use of a covenant. If we shore up the existing Instruments of Unity, we will move beyond the individualism of this age, not losing our diversity, but finding the common call we have in Christ for the world.”

On the other hand, other responses were concerned about the dangers of a greater centralization of authority.

“The main proposals presented in the Report would seem to call a halt to this development in synodical governance, replacing it with a trend to centralize authority in small bodies operating at the highest levels of the Communion, and not necessarily involving laity. We thus regard them with some hesitation.”

“There seems to be a slide into a corporate organizational model, versus the *consensus fidelium*. We believe that there should be freedom and even encouragement to stretch the boundaries, which is an exciting adventure and a way in which the church discovers new leading from the Holy Spirit.

The Report concentrates on developing rules of procedure in decision-making, whereas the urgent need is to find ways of fostering our bonds of affection, that is, our mutual love, and of finding new and improved ways of being together. It is more important to concentrate on improving the bonds of affection within the Communion than on clarifying authority and process.”

There was concern about the proposed Council of Advice.

“If it is seen as a permanent body, would it not simply add yet one more bureaucratic level to the mix? A group of specialist advisers can be called together by the Archbishop of Canterbury to consider any issue whenever he or she wishes, and the right to do this might be spelled out in the Covenant. The proposed permanent Council smacks to us of being a kind of “creeping Curia.”

“The proposed Council of Advice appears to lack any ecclesiological significance, and it actually hampers the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who already has a formal staff at Lambeth Palace. What is proposed seems to be nearly a curia, and not one that necessarily enables the episcopal ministry of the successor to St. Augustine, but which may well dictate and control it.”

There was some concern over strengthening the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury when this is an appointment of the British Crown. Should the Archbishop be appointed from elsewhere in the Communion? In some of the responses, there was a real resistance to “English” and “colonial” style.

“Often assumptions and attitudes from the British colonial period colour our conversations with each other in ways that we do not always acknowledge. . . . Another visible sign of post-colonialism can be seen in the Church of England’s blithe assumption that, until it has agreed to a particular innovation (like the ordination of women), the change really hasn’t happened.”

“We also note that the Commission has chosen not to question the inherent structure of the current Instruments of Unity nor to examine the implications of the historic relationship between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the British Crown as it pertains to issues of accountability within our wider Communion. The Commission’s recommendations suggest a desire to entrench

existing mechanisms, rather than to address the possibility of the need for systemic reform.”

There was concern that the provision of alternative episcopal oversight is a departure from the Anglican tradition of bishops not intervening in other dioceses.

“If there is to be provision for alternative episcopal oversight, it must work both ways so that those in favour of the blessing same-sex unions can be assured of pastoral care.”

The “Shared Episcopal Ministry” statement of the Canadian House of Bishops speaks about the need for episcopal oversight that works both ways. It says, “It would be important to have a number of bishops from different theological perspectives so that all parishes requesting Shared Episcopal Ministry might be served.”

Opinions differed on the “expressions of regret.” Some felt that New Westminster and New Hampshire had made decisions according to the canons of their provinces and so had done nothing for which they needed to express regret.

“I can’t see how any part of the church should be expected to apologize for having taken actions which were in total compliance with the legal requirement of the church (province and diocese), and which faithfully followed the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Others felt that their statements of regret had not gone far enough.

“For any expressions of ‘regret’ to be meaningful we also look for them to be accompanied by substantial actions, including the “withdrawal from representative positions . . .” and “turning away from policies. . . “ which have been variously called for. We deeply regret that we have not seen any indication that this is likely to happen. To the contrary, several key North American Church leaders have blatantly assured the media that they intend to continue their policies and practices.”

Some pointed out that, though we have expressions of regret from some bishops, we have not yet heard expressions of regret from bishops who have intervened in other dioceses.

“If listening, respect and dialogue are to be the hallmarks of communion, then I would hope that this might be exercised on all sides of the debate. We have not yet heard expressions of regret from all involved.”

### **3. What do you think are the ways in which the recommendations and proposals of the Report would impact on the life of the Communion if they were to be implemented?**

A large number of responses were concerned over increasing centralization, as illustrated by the examples above (page 7). A smaller minority of reports felt that the recommendations would strengthen the life of the Communion.

“The recommendations, if followed by all parties, could well be a way in which the communion could move forward together. No one wants the Anglican Communion to dissolve, and the moves suggested could signal to all parties enough good will on both sides that the next step would be possible.”

Many were concerned about the provision of delegated episcopal oversight.

“The whole idea of bishops entering the jurisdiction of another bishop is contrary to Anglican tradition and practice, and is a threat to the authority of the bishop in his/her diocese. While it has been tried in the Church of England, there has been no evaluation as to how this has worked. Did the Church of England seek the approval of the Communion before instituting what is clearly a departure from customary Anglican practice?”

Some wonder how the situation can be resolved in the light of our history.

“The result of proceeding in the fashion set out in the Report is just as likely to be destructive as constructive, since some parts of the Communion are entrenched in their positions on either side of the current question. Rocks have been thrown from both sides, and this could well intensify. The Instruments of Unity have already spoken clearly on this issue over a period of decades, and their statements have not been awarded the weight due to them, so how are further consultations and pronouncements likely to resolve the issue?”

“The discussion of procedures gives me pause. There is a danger that legalisms and systems will take precedence over open theological discussion. There is the danger of a bureaucratic approach which can kill the spirit – “for the letter kills but the spirit gives life.”

There were not many comments on the moratoria. From some, there was affirmation of the call for moratoria.

“We approve of the moratoria suggested (143), will observe them ourselves, and commend them to others. We will not pass motions that will challenge the spirit of them.”

Some expressed relief that the synods of Toronto and Niagara did not proceed to implement a resolution on the blessing of same sex unions. A few felt that the moratoria on the blessing of same sex unions did not go far enough. They felt that there was no point in asking for expressions of regret from those who were not sorry for their actions. A few felt that there should be no moratorium on the intervention of bishops in other jurisdictions.

“The call to bishops who have intervened in other jurisdictions to express regret, affirm their desire to remain in the Communion, and effect a moratorium on further interventions (155) is an insult to those orthodox leaders who have come to the aid of clergy and parishes who were indeed

in situations of extreme breach of trust and saw this action as a last resort (151).”

On the other hand, questions were raised about the definition of a moratorium. Is there a time limit? Some thought that a moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions would be a step backward.

“While I respect the mandate of the Windsor Report to focus on “understandings of communion and practical recommendations for maintaining communion,” there are parts of our communion that have seemingly been ignored. First, our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters were beginning to experience a sense of hope. Now, by suggesting putting a moratorium on blessing same-sex unions we are asking many to take a step backwards.”

“The request for a moratorium should be carefully considered, but I would suggest that it would only be appropriate if there is evidence that it would serve a purpose, specifically if there were evidence of a real willingness on all sides to use the time for dialogue and learning.”

**4. How would you evaluate the arguments for an Anglican Covenant (119)? How far do the elements included in the possible draft for such a covenant in Appendix Two of the Report represent an appropriate development of the existing life of the Anglican Communion?**

Again, there was a variety of opinion. Some felt that the Covenant was a good idea.

“The idea of Covenant is a good one which needs to be carefully worked out within the context of a global Anglican Communion.”

“It seems to us that the argument for an Anglican Covenant is very strong. We agree that the Anglican Communion, even if it were to survive this crisis, would not likely survive many further such crises, and so there needs to be a voluntary expression of the will to maintain the bonds of unity. The agreement proposed is a good starting point. However, we are dubious that any such agreement could be reached without first finding a more concrete and detailed unifying statement about the authority of Scripture to be a part of it.”

Some referred to our Covenant with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada as a model. Most in responding felt that the Covenant proposed in the Windsor Report is too detailed in its proposals and feared the development of a complex bureaucratic structure that will stifle change.

“The proposal for a Covenant is good in principle, but all depends on how directive the content is, and where its main focus lies. It seems to many of us that a simple Covenant, affirming and exploring our desire to live and

work together, would be more acceptable than the detailed ‘legalistic’ document suggested, which may not give room for the Holy Spirit to work. There is a general feeling among us that the five-part outline of the suggested Covenant is acceptable, but that the actual suggested wording is far too complex and indigestible. It should be drastically shortened and simplified.”

“The draft in appendix 2 is unacceptably proscriptive and envisages a highly centralized Communion under the direction of the “Instruments of Unity” which now include the “Council of Advice”. The Primates’ Meeting ‘monitors global developments and exercises collegial responsibility in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters’. (Article 24) Clearly this leaves room for only very limited provincial autonomy.”

“There is a risk that such a covenant could be used as a tool for “cutting off” dissenters when major disagreements arise.”

Some responses suggested that a wider range of opinion be sought.

“Such a document needs to be discussed and approved by more than just the Primates’ Meeting. Input from laity and non-episcopal clergy is required. An Anglican Congress, consisting of bishops, clergy, and laity would be a more appropriate context in which to draft a Covenant.”

A contradiction was noted in 118, 119 about the authority of the covenant.

“There are contradictions in the Report regarding the role of the Covenant. For example, in Para 118, we read that “of itself . . . it would have no binding authority,” yet in Para 119 churches are told that “the solemn act of entering a Covenant carries the weight of an international obligation so that . . . [a] church could not proceed internally and unilaterally. Which is true?”

There was a recognition that we already have ways of consulting within the communion, and we have agreed statements such as the Lambeth Quadrilateral. There was opposition expressed about a perceived trend towards increased centralization. Is the proposed structure intended to foster consultation or to block decisions?

## Themes

- It was clear from the responses that Canadian Anglicans want to discuss issues of **homosexuality**, and are anxious that their opinions be heard. Although the Windsor report does not address this issue directly, it is clear from the number of responses that more discussion needs to happen. Many different points of view were expressed, covering the broad range of opinion in the Canadian church.

- Another clear theme was issues of **authority** and how it is expressed. There was a strong emphasis on the authority and interpretation of scripture, again with views covering a broad spectrum of opinion. The discussion of the structures of the Communion also revolved around issues of authority and power.
- Many responses raised questions about the **structures of the Communion** and the way it operates. There were concerns that the Windsor Report assumes a level of interdependence and centralization that are well beyond our current practice. There are differences in canonical structures and governance across the Communion – for example, in the relative authority of primates, bishops, and synods to make decisions in the life of a Province. Some responses felt that cultural differences and differences in the way Provinces make decisions were not considered.
- There is anxiety about the increasing **centralization of authority** in the proposed Council of Advice and the increased role of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The anxiety was expressed in both ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ responses. Who gives this authority, and how is it to be accountable? There is concern also about the increasing authority of the Primates’ Meeting and a fear that this might be at the expense of the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council. Some felt that we already have what we need for communion without adding more structures. There is concern that the voice of the laity is not well represented in the councils of the Church.
- There is concern that the life of the Communion will become bogged down in **rules of procedure**, rather than in expressing the bonds of affection in consultation, dialogue and face-to-face relationships. Will all decisions need to be brought to the Communion before a Province can act? The need to ensure that episcopal candidates are acceptable to other Provinces (131) caused particular concern.
- There is a need to examine **unity** more closely. What does unity mean in terms of Trinitarian theology, an expression of diversity in unity? Is unity an over-riding value, to be sought at all costs? What is the place of mission and justice in our search for unity?
 

“God is understood in # 2 primarily in terms of unity; the oneness of God then becomes the primary orientation point for the organization of the community, where unity is given primacy. One might contrast this with an approach beginning with the Trinity, in which unity is defined not in terms of sameness, but in terms of reconciliation of diversity.”
- There was a concern about the use of **“illness”** as a metaphor for the life of the Anglican Communion.
 

“I regret the use of “illness” as a metaphor for the life of the Communion at present. This seems to me to prejudice the issue – people raising questions

about inclusivity are seen as causing trouble for others. Is it not possible that our disagreements are a sign of health and growth?"

On the other hand, there were comments which suggested that the current situation can be seen as a gift, giving us an opportunity to explore more deeply God's call to us as a Communion.

"This crisis ought to be viewed as a gift from God. It should not be feared. Rather, it should be embraced."

"Christianity is meant to be a stretch, a huge one, taking us where we would rather not go, beyond our comfort-zone, beyond our own kind, beyond the like-minded. In fact, one sign of health in our community is that such debates can occur."

- There is in the responses a strong **pastoral cry** from people on both sides of the homosexuality issue. Each side to some degree feels abandoned by the church.  
"I am deeply saddened that our church has taken a step away from the clear biblical foundations of the Anglican tradition. It is apparent to the people that I serve that Bishops are not defending the faith or banishing false doctrine. Please rise to the occasion and take us back to where we should be."

There is a perception that the needs of gay and lesbian people are not being listened to.

"[The document] is pastoral towards persons whose consciences are bruised by the conflict but has little pastoral heart for gay and lesbian people."

"I am very concerned that Windsor has shifted the focus in such a way that unity, seen as international hegemony, is being considered in a manner which makes gay and lesbian people expendable. . . . By all means let us work for unity, but let's do so by keeping gay and lesbian people openly at the table. Where were they in the Windsor process?"

A number of responses asked the question why the issue of homosexuality is the one which seems to be driving us apart, when we have debated other equally divisive issues over the years.

- We sensed a deep pastoral need for **listening, dialogue and pastoral care**. People are searching for scriptural teaching and pastoral support. There is a concern particularly about the pastoral care of gays and lesbians in conservative dioceses and Provinces. Previous **Lambeth resolutions** have called on bishops "to end any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation" (1998) and called each Province

“to reassess . . . because of our concern for human rights, its care for and attitude towards persons of homosexual orientation.” (1988)

- Questions were raised about the **reception of reports** such as the Windsor Report. How do Primates and bishops engage their Provinces in receiving the recommendations of international Anglican documents and reports? To what extent have documents like the Virginia Report been considered by Provinces?
- There is a concern that much more attention was paid to decisions in New Westminster and New Hampshire than to the role of **intervening Primates**.

There are a number of comments on the intervention of bishops in the life of other Provinces. This practice is certainly a major departure from Anglican tradition.

### **In conclusion**

With regard to the question of the **breaking up of the Anglican Communion**, most respondents hoped that the communion would be able to stay together. Continuing dialogue and study, a willingness to meet and to talk, a focus on mission and justice, were seen to be key to this process. A small number, at either end of the spectrum, saw the breakup of the Communion as a real possibility. Here is a sampling of comments.

“The sooner we learn to walk apart the better for all of us.”

“Were Augustine alive today he would not, I think, approve the blessing of same sex unions, but his advice would be now as it was then – live with our differences in charity and God will sort it out in the eschaton.”

“We need to realize that this [the colonial] period has passed and that now the various churches of the Anglican Communion are evolving in ways which are appropriate to their particular cultures but which differ significantly from one another. In some cases provinces will continue to have close and comfortable ties with each other but in other cases there will be a relationship which may more closely resemble the ecumenical relationships which Anglicans enjoy with other Christian denominations. This loosening of our ties would be preferable to a tightly controlled centralization and would allow us to turn our time and resources to the mission of the Church rather than to arguing with each other over structures and legislation.”

“We are encouraged by the call (145) for all parts of the Communion to engage in continuing biblical study and theological reflection around same gender relationships.”

“We need to learn to live with tension, rather than finding ways to avoid it. To express one’s disagreement with another part of the Communion by voting with one’s feet (or one’s wallet) is sin. ECUSA and New Westminster are challenging us by their actions, and we need to live with that tension and engage in discussion, rather than waiting for some curia or individual to tell us what to do. At times, we need to be able to do things one way in one place and another way somewhere else and yet stay together in love and fellowship.”

“It would be desirable if there could be a middle way – that individual communions could agree to disagree but still value their commonalities.”

#### **Appendix 4 Shared Episcopal Ministry**

##### ***Shared Episcopal Ministry***

This model recognizes the reality that one Canadian diocesan synod has and that in the future others may also deal with the question of whether to allow the blessing of same sex relationships to take place within the parishes of their dioceses. In the event of a diocesan synod and bishop agreeing to such blessings we believe that it is important that a binding conscience clause for parishes and clergy be available. Regardless of the outcome of those Synods some parishes may feel disenfranchised and vulnerable, and therefore desire to seek Shared Episcopal Ministry, where the diocesan bishop would share his/her episcopal oversight with another bishop. When a diocese is considering the question of blessings, we believe that the same synod should consider a motion that would allow Shared Episcopal Ministry in their diocese. Such a resolution should include the provisions outlined at para 3) and 4) below.

##### ***The Process of Shared Episcopal Ministry***

1. The Metropolitan of each Province would be responsible for assembling a list of current and retired bishops in good standing in the Canadian Church and who would be willing to participate in providing Shared Episcopal Ministry within the province. The provincial house of bishops must approve the list. The Metropolitan will not be included on the list for his/her Province. It would be important to have a number of bishops from different theological perspectives so that all parishes requesting Shared Episcopal Ministry might be served. A bishop from another province of the Communion would be eligible to be on the Metropolitan's list with the assurance that he/she would participate under the terms of these arrangements as outlined. The bishop would be designated as an episcopal assistant to the Metropolitan.
2. When a diocese has agreed to Shared Episcopal Ministry through a synod resolution the costs of that ministry, like all episcopal ministry is deemed to be an expense of the diocese. A suitable budget must also be agreed to between the individual parish and the diocese for the provision of Shared Episcopal Ministry.

3. If the incumbent and members of the parish believe that they cannot work with their bishop in the light of the current disagreements on issues of human sexuality, the rector and the canonically designated lay leadership shall meet with the bishop in a spirit of openness to seek reconciliation. After such a meeting, it is hoped that a mutually agreeable way forward can be found. If it is not a parish may elect the option of Shared Episcopal Ministry by a resolution passing with a 2/3 majority of those present and voting at a duly constituted parish meeting [1]. The incumbent must also concur with the decision.
4. In order for the parish resolution to become effective the following provisions are to be followed:
  - a. The parish and the diocesan bishop would choose a suitable bishop from the provincial list to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry taking into account such things as theological perspective and proximity to the parish. Their decision will be conveyed to the Metropolitan who may be asked to assist with the process.
  - b. The parish would retain its voice and vote at synod and would be free to participate in the councils of the Church at all levels.
  - c. The parish must maintain its current and future financial commitments to the diocese.
  - d. The parish would be free to undertake new Church developments subject to diocesan procedures.
  - e. Both the parish and the diocesan bishop would review the decision every three years or earlier if desired.
5. The duties of the bishop involved in Shared Episcopal Ministry takes as its point of origin the example of dioceses where there is/are suffragan bishop(s). He or she would not have jurisdiction but would be part of the process on appointments, episcopal visits, confirmations, pastoral care of clergy, advice on potential ordinands and participate in ordinations. This model would honour the process of appointment that each diocese currently follows. The diocese would insure that wide ranges of theological perspectives were represented on the committee dealing with postulants for ordination.
6. In the event that the parish seeking Shared Episcopal Ministry is in the diocese of the Metropolitan the senior bishop by date of consecration would fulfill the role given to the Metropolitan.

The model described above is designed to deal with the circumstances in which all sides acknowledge that there is a level of dissent between a parish and their diocesan bishop, however negotiated oversight is feasible ***Shared Episcopal Ministry*** as defined can provide a means of episcopal pastoral care and direction for the parish.

### **A Process in Circumstances requiring Conciliation**

What follows is designed to deal with the circumstances in which all sides acknowledge that there is such a level of dissent and /or distrust between a parish and their diocesan bishop that negotiated oversight is not feasible To overcome

the obstacle posed by such a high level of dissent, some means must be identified to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry from outside of the diocesan structure. The parish or the diocesan bishop may appeal to the Metropolitan using the following process.

1. The Metropolitan of each province would be responsible for assembling a list of current and retired bishops in good standing in the Canadian Church and who would be willing to participate in providing Shared Episcopal Ministry within the province. The provincial house of bishops must approve the list. The Metropolitan will not be included on the list for his/her Province. It would be important to have a number of bishops from different theological perspectives so that all parishes requesting Shared Episcopal Ministry might be served. A bishop from another province of the Communion would be eligible to be on The Metropolitan's list with the assurance that he/she would participate under the terms of these arrangements as outlined. The bishop would be designated as an episcopal assistant to the Metropolitan.
2. If the incumbent and members of the parish or the diocesan bishop believe that they cannot work together in the light of the current disagreements on issues of human sexuality , the rector and the canonically designated lay leadership shall meet with the bishop in a spirit of openness to seek reconciliation. After such a meeting, it is hoped that a mutually agreeable way forward can be found. If it is not, a parish may elect the option of Shared Episcopal Ministry by a resolution passing with a 2/3 majority of those present and voting at a duly constituted parish meeting [\[2\]](#). The incumbent must also concur with the decision.
3. The diocesan bishop would seek the consent of his/her diocesan council (or equivalent) to implement Shared Episcopal Ministry. The parish or the diocesan bishop would advise the other party that they were petitioning the Metropolitan to appoint a bishop to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry.
4. The Metropolitan shall meet with all involved to endeavour to resolve the outstanding issues. The Metropolitan may request two others who are acceptable to both parties to join him/her to review the situation, to consider the appeal, and to make recommendations to all parties.
5. Prior to implementation the Metropolitan will have ensured that there is an agreement between the Parish and the diocese on how all costs related to Shared Episcopal Ministry will be borne, including diocesan assessment.
6. With the consent of the Diocesan Bishop and of the parish, the Metropolitan will appoint a bishop to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry from the list approved by the provincial house of bishops. The Metropolitan would take into account the question of reasonable proximity to the parish and diocese and the theological position of the parish .
7. The parish would retain its voice and vote at synod and would be free to participate in the councils of the Church at all levels.

8. The parish would be free to undertake new Church developments subject to diocesan procedures.
9. Both the parish and the diocesan bishop will review the decision every three years or earlier if desired.
10. The Duties of the bishop involved in Shared Episcopal Ministry takes as its point of origin the example of dioceses where there is/are suffragan bishop(s). He or she would not have jurisdiction but would be part of the process on appointments, episcopal visits, confirmations, pastoral care of clergy, advice on potential ordinands and participate in ordinations. This model would honour the process of appointment that each diocese currently follows. The diocese would insure that wide ranges of theological perspectives were represented on the committee dealing with postulants for ordination.
11. In the event that the parish seeking Shared Episcopal Ministry is in the diocese of the Metropolitan the senior bishop by date of consecration would fulfill the role given to the Metropolitan.

### **Conclusion**

Shared Episcopal Ministry provided under either circumstance is based on a spirit of reconciliation, co-operation and goodwill. In order not to institutionalize schism it is always to be understood as a temporary arrangement directed toward reconciliation between the parties. . Changes in parish or diocesan leadership are appropriate times for renewed efforts towards the ultimate goal of full restoration of the relationship between the parish and its bishop.

### **Endnote**

The document says that

“The Duties of the bishop involved in Shared Episcopal Ministry takes as its point of origin the example of dioceses where there is/are suffragan bishop(s). He or she would not have jurisdiction but would be part of the process on appointments, episcopal visits, confirmations, pastoral care of clergy, advice on potential ordinands and participate in ordinations. This model would honour the process of appointment that each diocese currently follows”.

In reference to Suffragan bishops and appointments there are a variety of models that are followed across the Canadian Church

- In **Huron** the suffragan appoints and the diocesan signs the license
- In **Nova Scotia and PEI** the diocesan appoints and signs the license
- In **Toronto** the Area (or suffragan) signs the appointment letter and co-signs the license with the diocesan.

We would recommend that the diocesan bishop and the bishop involved with Shared Episcopal Ministry clarify the process they will use prior to the bishop beginning his/her ministry in a parish.

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[1] Whenever the term parish meeting is used in this document it refers to the full members of the parish that have the right to be present and to vote at its annual meeting as defined by the canons of the diocese

[2] Whenever the term parish meeting is used in this document it refers to the full members of the parish that have the right to be present and to vote at its annual meeting as defined by the canons of the diocese