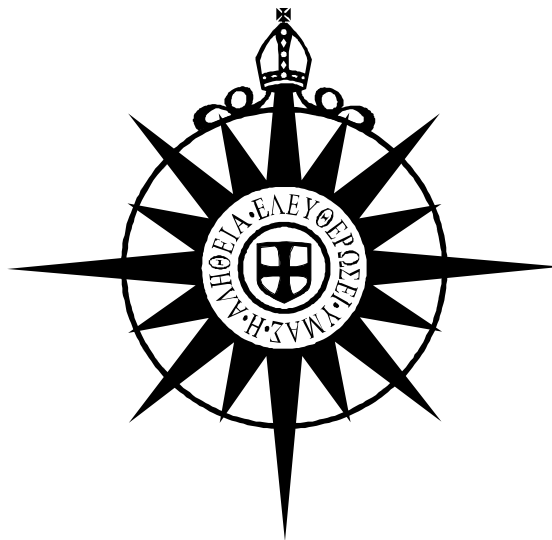


# The Lambeth Commission on Communion

## The Windsor Report 2004



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## FOREWORD

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*The Most Reverend Dr Robin Eames*  
*Archbishop of Armagh, Chairman of the Lambeth Commission*

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What do we believe is the will of God for the Anglican Communion?

That question has never been far from the minds of the members of the Lambeth Commission during the exacting work they have undertaken in the past year.

Since the 1970s controversies over issues of human sexuality have become increasingly divisive and destructive throughout Christendom. Within the Anglican Communion the intensity of debate on these issues at successive Lambeth Conferences has demonstrated the reality of these divisions.

The decision by the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) to give consent to the election of bishop Gene Robinson to the Diocese of New Hampshire, the authorising by a diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada of a public Rite of Blessing for same sex unions and the involvement in other provinces by bishops without the consent or approval of the incumbent bishop to perform episcopal functions have uncovered major divisions throughout the Anglican Communion. There has been talk of crisis, schism and realignment. Voices and declarations have portrayed a Communion in crisis.

Those divisions have been obvious at several levels of Anglican life: between provinces, between dioceses and between individual Anglican clergy and laity. The popular identification of ‘conservatives’ and ‘liberals’, and ‘the west’ as opposed to ‘the global south’, has become an over-simplification - divisions of opinion have also become clear within provinces, dioceses and parishes. Various statements and decisions at different levels of leadership and membership of the Church have illustrated the depth of reaction. Among other Christian traditions, reactions to the problems within Anglicanism have underlined the serious concerns on these issues worldwide. Comparison has been made with the controversies on women’s ordination years ago. But the current strengths of expression of divergent positions are much greater. Questions have been raised about the nature of authority in the Anglican Communion, the inter-relationship of the traditional Instruments of Unity, the ways in which Holy Scripture is interpreted by Anglicans, the priorities of the historic autonomy enshrined in Anglican provinces, and there are also issues of justice. Yet the Lambeth Commission has been aware that consideration within its mandate of any specific aspect of inter-Anglican relationships overlaps and relates to others and has a clear bearing on the sort of Anglican Communion which should enhance the life and worship of our diverse worldwide church family.

What could be termed ‘the human face’ of these divisions has become clear to the Commission. Within provinces, dioceses and parishes, where individual Anglican Christians have experienced degrees of alienation and exclusion due to differences of opinion between leadership and members, there has been much pain and

disillusionment. Further questions have surfaced about episcopal oversight within a diocese where significant groups of Anglicans have become alienated from their bishop. The Commission has seen and heard those emotions.

During its work the Lambeth Commission has recognised the existence within the Anglican Communion of a large constituency of faithful members who are bemused and bewildered by the intensity of the opposing views on issues of sexuality. This group embraces worshippers who yearn for expressions of communion which will provide stability and encouragement for their pilgrimage. At times they have felt their voices eclipsed by the intensity of sounds on opposing sides of the debate.

The Lambeth Commission was established in October 2003 by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the request of the Anglican Primates. The mandate spoke of the problems being experienced as a consequence of the above developments and the need to seek a way forward which would encourage communion within the Anglican Communion. It did not demand judgement by the Commission on sexuality issues. Rather, it requested consideration of ways in which communion and understanding could be enhanced where serious differences threatened the life of a diverse worldwide Church. In short, how does the Anglican Communion address relationships between its component parts in a true spirit of communion?

As the Commission has addressed its mandate the atmosphere in the Anglican Communion has continued to reflect the depth of feeling on these issues. Indeed during the past year events in the Communion have prompted observers to conclude that our work was so overtaken by decisions of some provinces and by words of individual Church leaders that any conclusion reached would be irrelevant. The Anglican Communion appears to such observers to be set on a voyage of self-destruction. I acknowledge the willingness of large sections of the Anglican Communion to permit this Commission space to complete its Report. However, in some instances the request by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates for an absence of developments or pronouncements which would make the work of the Lambeth Commission more difficult has been ignored.

The depth of conviction and feeling on all sides of the current issues has on occasions introduced a degree of harshness and a lack of charity which is new to Anglicanism. A process of dissent is not new to the Communion but it has never before been expressed with such force nor in ways which have been so accessible to international scrutiny. Not all the opinions voiced have been expressed in ways which are conducive to dialogue or the encouragement of communion. Modern methods of communication and in particular the internet have become powerful means of expressing and influencing opinion. This fact requires careful note by the Anglican Communion when consideration is given to its traditional decision-making processes.

The 'bonds of affection' so often quoted as a precious attribute of Anglican Communion life, as well as the instruments of communion and unity, have been threatened by the current divisions. While attention in this regard turns to the developments in the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada it is clear that this threat has been increased by reactions to them.

This Report is not a judgement. It is part of a process. It is part of a pilgrimage towards healing and reconciliation. The proposals which follow attempt to look forward rather than merely to recount how difficulties have arisen. A large majority of the submissions received by the Commission have supported the continuance of the Anglican Communion as an instrument of God's grace for the world.

Throughout the work of this Commission many different views have been expressed by its members. These opinions have been shared openly. We have come to a position which takes our differing views seriously and yet we are able to offer this Report together for the Communion's consideration.

A process for the study of this Report is being established and there will be opportunity for the Communion as a whole to consider its findings. However, if realistic and visionary ways cannot be agreed to meet the levels of disagreement at present or to reach consensus on structures for encouraging greater understanding and communion in future it is doubtful if the Anglican Communion can continue in its present form.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our current difficulties is the negative consequence it could have on the mission of the Church to a suffering and bewildered world. Even as the Commission prepared for its final meeting the cries of children in a school in southern Russia reminded us of our real witness and ministry in a world already confronted by poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, famine and injustice.

As Chairman of the Commission it has been my privilege to lead and co-ordinate the work in fulfilment of this mandate. I pay a warm tribute to the involvement of all members of the Commission who have worked with such commitment at their difficult task and enjoyed genuine Christian fellowship in their work. This task has involved three detailed plenary meetings, two at St George's, Windsor, England and one at the Kanuga Conference Centre, North Carolina, USA, in addition to months of intensive research, debate and prayer as the Commission has considered the problems and reviewed the many submissions from throughout the Anglican Communion and beyond. In addition to oral presentations the Commission is grateful for many written submissions which have been available to all of its members. There has been a genuine search for the will of Almighty God for the Communion. Each meeting has commenced with worship and Bible study. The Commission has been much encouraged by the expressions of prayerful support for its work.

I acknowledge the service and immensely detailed work of the Secretary of the Commission, Canon Gregory Cameron, Director of Ecumenical Affairs and Studies at the Anglican Communion Office in London; the assistance of our legal consultant, Canon John Rees; the secretarial staff at the Anglican Communion Office at St Andrew's House, London; and the Revd Brian Parker, who acted as Media Officer. Dr Albert Gooch, President of the Kanuga Conference Centre in North Carolina, facilitated a full meeting of the Commission and has given much practical assistance in the costs involved on that occasion. The Dean and Chapter of St George's College, Windsor, England, hosted two of our meetings: I express our sincere appreciation to them and the staff at Kanuga and Windsor.

The Lambeth Commission has been conscious of the trust placed in it by the Anglican Communion and, despite the difficulties it has faced, offers this Report in the

prayerful hope that it will encourage the enhanced levels of understanding which are essential for the future of the Anglican Communion. Above all I pray it will be viewed as a genuine contribution to what communion really means for Anglicans.

+Robert Armagh

October 2004

# The Lambeth Commission on Communion

## Mandate

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The Archbishop of Canterbury requests the Commission

1. To examine and report to him by 30th September 2004, in preparation for the ensuing meetings of the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, on the legal and theological implications flowing from the decisions of the Episcopal Church (USA) to appoint a priest in a committed same sex relationship as one of its bishops, and of the Diocese of New Westminster to authorise services for use in connection with same sex unions, and specifically on the canonical understandings of communion, impaired and broken communion, and the ways in which provinces of the Anglican Communion may relate to one another in situations where the ecclesiastical authorities of one province feel unable to maintain the fullness of communion with another part of the Anglican Communion.
2. Within their report, to include practical recommendations (including reflection on emerging patterns of provision for episcopal oversight for those Anglicans within a particular jurisdiction, where full communion within a province is under threat) for maintaining the highest degree of communion that may be possible in the circumstances resulting from these decisions, both within and between the churches of the Anglican Communion.
3. Thereafter, as soon as practicable, and with particular reference to the issues raised in Section IV of the Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998, to make recommendations to the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, as to the exceptional circumstances and conditions under which, and the means by which, it would be appropriate for the Archbishop of Canterbury to exercise an extraordinary ministry of episcopate (pastoral oversight), support and reconciliation with regard to the internal affairs of a province other than his own for the sake of maintaining communion with the said province and between the said province and the rest of the Anglican Communion.
4. In its deliberations, to take due account of the work already undertaken on issues of communion by the Lambeth Conferences of 1988 and 1998, as well as the views expressed by the Primates of the Anglican Communion in the communiqués and pastoral letters arising from their meetings since 2000.

## The members of the Lambeth Commission

---

- ◆ Archbishop **Robin Eames**,  
Primate of All Ireland, *Chairman*
- ◆ The Revd Canon **Alyson Barnett-Cowan**,  
Director of Faith, Worship and Ministry, Anglican Church of Canada
- ◆ Bishop **David Beetge**,  
Dean of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa
- ◆ Professor **Norman Doe**,  
Director of the Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University, Wales,
- ◆ Bishop **Mark Dyer**,  
Director of Spiritual Formation, Virginia Theological Seminary, USA
- ◆ Archbishop **Drexel Gomez**,  
Primate of the West Indies
- ◆ Archbishop **Josiah Iduwo-Fearon**,  
Archbishop of Kaduna, the Anglican Church of Nigeria
- ◆ The Revd **Dorothy Lau**,  
Director of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council
- ◆ Ms **Anne McGavin**,  
Advocate, formerly Legal Adviser to the College of Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church  
*Ms McGavin resigned for personal reasons after the first meeting of the Commission.*
- ◆ Archbishop **Bernard Malango**,  
Primate of Central Africa
- ◆ Dr **Esther Mombo**,  
Academic Dean of St Paul's United Theological Seminary, Limuru, Kenya
- ◆ Archbishop **Barry Morgan**,  
Primate of Wales  
*Archbishop Morgan was unable to be present at the first meeting of the Commission.*
- ◆ Chancellor **Rubie Nottage**,  
Chancellor of the West Indies  
*Mrs Nottage was unable to be present at the second meeting of the Commission.*
- ◆ Bishop **John Paterson**,  
Bishop of Auckland, and Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council

- ◆ **Dr Jenny Te Paa,**  
Principal of College of Saint John the Evangelist, Auckland, New Zealand
- ◆ **Bishop James Terom,**  
Moderator, the Church of North India
- ◆ **Bishop N Thomas Wright,**  
Bishop of Durham, the Church of England.

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*Secretary to the Commission*
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- ◆ The Revd **Brian Parker,**  
Church of Ireland Press Office

## THE REPORT

### Section A : The Purposes and Benefits of Communion

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#### *The communion we have been given in Christ : Biblical foundations*

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1. God has unveiled, in Jesus Christ, his glorious plan for the rescue of the whole created order from all that defaces, corrupts and destroys it. The excitement and drama of that initial achievement and that final purpose pervade the whole New Testament, and set the context for understanding why God has called out a people by the gospel, and how that people is to understand its identity and order its life.
2. In particular, as the letter to the Ephesians puts it, God's people are to be, through the work of the Spirit, an *anticipatory sign* of God's healing and restorative future for the world. Those who, despite their own sinfulness, are saved by grace through their faith in God's gospel (2.1-10) are to live as a united family across traditional ethnic and other boundaries (2.11-22), and so are to reveal the many-splendoured wisdom of the one true God to the hostile and divisive powers of the world (3.9-10) as they explore and celebrate the astonishing breadth of God's love made known through Christ's dwelling in their hearts (3.14-21). The redeemed unity which is God's will for the whole creation is to be lived out within the life of the church as, through its various God-given ministries, it is built up as the Body of Christ and grows to maturity not least through speaking the truth in love (1.10, 22-3; 4.1-16). The church, sharing in God's mission to the world through the fact of its corporate life, must live out that holiness which anticipates God's final rescue of the world from the powers and corruptions of evil (4.17-6.20).
3. The *unity* of the church, the *communion* of all its members with one another (which are the primary subjects of this report), and the *radical holiness* to which all Christ's people are called, are thus rooted in the trinitarian life and purposes of the one God. They are designed not for their own sake (as though the church's in-house business were an end in itself), but to serve and signify God's mission to the world, that mission whereby God brings to men and women, to human societies and to the whole world, real signs and foretastes of that healing love which will one day put all things to rights. The communion we enjoy with God in Christ and by the Spirit, and the communion we enjoy with all God's people living and departed, is the specific practical embodiment and fruit of the gospel itself, the good news of God's action in Jesus Christ to deal once and for all with evil and to inaugurate the new creation. The unity (specifically celebrating the diversity within that unity) to which Christ's body is called, which is brought into being by the work of the Spirit through the gospel, is sustained and maintained through the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching ministries which the Spirit enables. All that can be said about unity and communion assumes this foundation in the gospel itself. It assumes, likewise, that this unity and communion are meaningless unless they issue in

that holiness of life, worked out in severely practical contexts, through which the church indicates to the world that a new way of being human, over against corrupt and dehumanising patterns of life, has been launched upon the world. In other words, unity, communion and holiness all belong together. Ultimately, questions about one are questions about all.

4. These themes are worked out dramatically in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In writing to the very troubled faith community there, he begins his pastoral and restorative ministry (following on from his apostolic and evangelistic ministry, already exercised) by reminding them of the true gift of God that is their identity in Christ. He writes to them in the grace and peace that is "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1.3). The Corinthians, he maintains, are a people who have been "sanctified in Christ Jesus" and are "called to be saints" (1.2). In Christ they are "enriched in every way in speech and knowledge of every kind" and "are not lacking any spiritual gift as [they] await the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1.5-7). Paul reminds them that a faithful God has "called them into the fellowship [*koinonia*, 'communion'] of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1.9). Whatever problems there are in the community – and Corinth had more than its fair share, from personality cults and social divisions to immorality and unbelief – Paul begins by addressing them as those who are, despite some outward appearances, already set apart by and for the love of God. This does not hold him back from administering severe discipline in the case of scandalous behaviour (ch.5); but this too, as 2 Corinthians 2 indicates, is held within the larger context of pastoral and reconciling intent. At the climax of this letter, after dealing with all these problems, we find Paul's longest exposition of what it means to live as the Body of Christ, united in diversity (ch.12), with that unity characterised not by a mechanistic or formal structure but by that all-demanding and all-fulfilling virtue which the early Christians called *agape*, love (ch.13).
5. As we Anglicans face very serious challenges to our unity and communion in Christ - challenges which have emerged not least because of different interpretations of that holiness to which we are called, and different interpretations of the range of appropriate diversity within our union and communion - Paul would want to remind us of the unique source of that unity, our common identity in Christ, and its unique purpose, the furtherance of God's mission within the world. We too have certainly been gifted with the grace of fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We are, by God's gift, in communion with the Persons of the Holy Trinity, and are members of one another in Christ Jesus. We are, in the power of the Spirit, sent into all the world to declare that Jesus is Lord. This grace-given and grace-full mission from God, and communion with God, determine our relationship with one another. Communion with God and one another in Christ is thus both a gift and a divine expectation. All that we say in this report is intended both to celebrate that gift and to answer that expectation.

### *The practical consequences of a healthy communion*

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6. Ephesians insists that the Body of Christ, taking Christ, its Head, as the source of its life, grows and builds itself up in love as each part plays its proper role

(4.15-16). It is appropriate that we ground our report in some reflections on how this has been worked out within the Anglican Communion up to now.

7. Life in the Anglican Communion, as a communion of churches, is indeed nourished by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, building up the body in love. Throughout its history, the Anglican Communion has been sustained by a common pattern of liturgical life rooted in the tradition of the Books of Common Prayer; shaped by the continual reading, both corporate and private, of the Holy Scriptures; rooted in its history through the See of Canterbury; and connected through a web of relationships – of bishops, consultative bodies, companion dioceses, projects of common mission, engagement with ecumenical partners – that are the means and the signs of common life. This continues to flourish in a myriad of ways at the local as well as national and international level.
8. This was given formal expression at the third ‘Anglican Congress’<sup>1</sup> in 1963. Anglican life in communion was there described as “mutual interdependence and responsibility in the Body of Christ”. From that affirmation ten Principles of Partnership were developed by the Mission Issues and Strategy Advisory Group II, which form a valuable foundation to the life of the Communion.<sup>2</sup>
9. When these principles have been lived out and honoured, there have been practical consequences which have advanced the mission of the church and enhanced the life of the people of the Communion and of the world it exists to serve. Though we remain painfully aware of our many failures, we should not ignore the great achievements of our unity and communion. Over the centuries Anglicans have lived out the gift of communion in mutual love and care for one another. We have at times embraced costly grace in standing together in opposition to racial enslavement and genocide. We have reached out and offered aid to one another in combating famine, disease and the chaos caused by natural disasters. In the struggle against apartheid, in common efforts of evangelism and mission, in acts of solidarity with indigenous peoples, in bringing dioceses together from diverse parts of the globe through the communications network and partnership arrangements, in the development of centres of excellence in theological education, in common prayer for those facing persecution, in disaster relief and development projects grounded in the local reality and assisted by the resources of all – in all these things, Anglicans have shared their gift of communion for the building up of the whole and thereby for the advancement of God’s mission.
10. All these examples and many more spring from the organic reality that is life in communion. They are signs of a healthy attentiveness to the needs of other parts of the body and, moreover, of respect for the insights, hopes, beliefs and convictions of others within the Communion (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). We take courage from these signs of God’s blessing upon our common life.

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<sup>1</sup> These occasional gatherings have been held from time to time. The first Congress was held in London in 1908; the second in Minneapolis in 1954; the third in Toronto in 1963. An ‘Anglican Gathering’ is currently in preparation for 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘Ten Principles of Partnership’ are set out in Appendix Three/5.

11. What has been less clear in Anglicanism is exactly how this organic body should be sustained. In acknowledging Jesus Christ as our one and only Head, we are aware that at no point have we found the need to clarify the ways in which, through particular ministries, that Headship is brought to expression within the local and international leadership of the Communion. In recent years, there have been attempts to develop a common mind about how this great Communion might actually function together in those situations in which mutual discernment is necessary to sustain the life of the body. Those attempts form part of the context of our work.

### *Recent mutual discernment within the Communion*

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12. The story of ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate provides us with a recent example of mutual discernment and decision-making within the Anglican Communion.
13. The background to the story was a period of debate and disagreement both before and after the ordination to the priesthood of Florence Li Tim-Oi in 1944. The story gathered pace in 1968, when the Diocese of Hong Kong & Macao brought the question of women's ordination to the priesthood to the Lambeth Conference. The Conference was not ready to respond because, as it stated in Resolution 34, "The Conference affirms its opinion that the theological arguments as at present presented for and against the ordination of women to the priesthood are inconclusive". The Conference recommended that before any regional or national church or province made a final decision to ordain women to the priesthood they should consider carefully the advice of the Anglican Consultative Council.
14. The Bishop of Hong Kong & Macao sought out the advice of the Anglican Consultative Council at its first meeting (in Limuru, Kenya) in 1970. After lengthy debate the Anglican Consultative Council advised the Bishop of Hong Kong & Macao that if, with the approval of his Synod, he were to proceed to the ordination of a woman his action would be acceptable to the Council, and that the Council would use its good offices to encourage all provinces of the Communion to continue in communion with that Diocese. The resolution passed (for: 24; against: 22).
15. What needs to be noted is that Hong Kong did not understand itself to be so autonomous that it might proceed without bringing the matter to the Anglican Consultative Council as requested by the Lambeth Conference 1968. Furthermore, action was only taken with the co-operation of the Instruments of Unity.
16. The 1978 Lambeth Conference addressed a situation where Hong Kong, Canada, the United States and New Zealand had all ordained women to the priesthood and eight other provinces had accepted the ordination of women in principle. In response, the Conference passed Resolution 21: *Women in the Priesthood*, which in part stated, "The Conference also recognises...(3a) the autonomy of each of its member Churches, acknowledging the legal right of each Church to make its own decision about the appropriateness of admitting

women to Holy Orders”. The Resolution also noted that such provincial action “has consequences of the utmost significance for the Anglican Communion as a whole”, and that “The Conference affirms its commitment to the preservation of unity within and between all member Churches of the Anglican Communion”. This resolution passed with 316 for, 37 against, and 17 abstentions.

17. In 1985 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) expressed the intention “not to withhold consent to the election of a bishop on the grounds of gender”. Aware that such a possible action would indeed affect the whole Anglican Communion, the then Presiding Bishop brought the question to the newly established Primates’ Meeting in Toronto, Canada.<sup>3</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury and the primates requested the Primate of Australia, John Grindrod, to head a committee to prepare a paper for the 1988 Lambeth Conference after requesting the opinions of the provinces of the Communion. This report’s first chapter was entitled ‘Listening as a Mark of Communion’.
18. The Grindrod Report presented two options to the Lambeth Conference: first, to counsel restraint in the hope that the moral authority inherent in a gathering of all the bishops of the Communion would find a response at the provincial level. Second, if a province went ahead, persuaded by compelling doctrinal reasons, by its experience of women in the priesthood and by the demands of mission in its region, and with the overwhelming support of the dioceses, such a step should be offered for reception within the Anglican Communion.
19. In response, Resolution 1 of Lambeth 1988 stated: “That each province respect the decision and attitudes of other provinces in the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate, without such respect necessarily indicating acceptance of the principles involved, maintaining the highest possible degree of communion with the provinces which differ”. This long resolution went on to recommend courtesy and respect and open dialogue with those who differ, and asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, in consultation with the primates, to appoint a Commission to ensure the process of reception, to monitor and encourage consultation and to offer pastoral guidelines for the churches of the Communion. This resolution passed with 423 for, 28 against, and 19 abstentions.
20. The Commission on Women in the Anglican Episcopate (‘The Eames Commission’) worked throughout the period between the Lambeth Conferences of 1988 and 1998. A monitoring committee of the Commission made a report to Lambeth 1998.
21. Anglicans can understand from this story that decision-making in the Communion on serious and contentious issues has been, and can be, carried out without division, despite a measure of impairment. We need to note that the Instruments of Unity, i.e. the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates’ Meeting, were all involved in the decision-making process. Provincial autonomy was framed

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<sup>3</sup> A description of the nature and work of the Primates’ Meetings is given below at paragraph 104.

by Anglican interdependence on matters of deep theological concern to the whole Communion.

*Illness: The surface symptoms*

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22. The precedent that could have been set by this procedure has not, unfortunately, been followed in the matters currently before the Communion. This, we conclude, lies at the heart of the problems we currently face. Before we offer some diagnosis of our situation, we must summarise the presenting symptoms.
23. Two sets of interrelated questions have arisen in several provinces of the Communion: whether or not it is legitimate for the church to bless the committed, exclusive and faithful relationships of same sex couples, and whether or not it is appropriate to ordain, and/or consecrate to the episcopate, persons living in a sexual relationship with a partner of the same sex. These matters are highly sensitive and emotionally charged, and come in the wake of various other related debates in the Communion, in relation (for instance) to polygamy and to the remarriage of divorced persons. Experimentation with blessings of same sex relationships had begun as early as 1973 within North America. Granted that local churches are often best placed to respond to pastoral needs within their own context and to understand the issues that arise in their particular culture, no part of the church can ignore its life in communion with the rest. What is done in one place can and does affect all. In March 2003, the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA), when considering the question of the ordination of unmarried, non-celibate persons, heterosexual or homosexual, offered for study and reflection by the Episcopal Church (USA) these words from the report of its Theology Committee:

“Sexual discipline and holiness of life must be very serious considerations for bishops, Standing Committees, and Commissions on Ministry as they discern what constitutes “a wholesome example to all people” (BCP 544). We affirm the responsibility of Dioceses to discern and raise up fit persons for the ministry of word and sacrament to build up the body of Christ in that place. We call on bishops and Standing Committees to be respectful of the ways in which decisions made in one Diocese have ramifications on others. We remind all that ordination is for the whole Church.”<sup>4</sup>

24. The strong reaction across the Communion to synodical decisions taken in the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Canadian Diocese of New Westminster has confirmed the Episcopal Church’s fears, and undercuts any argument that such decisions are purely local.

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<sup>4</sup> The Gift of Sexuality: A theological perspective, Report of the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, offered for study and reflection by the House of Bishops, 18 March 2003, paragraphs 7.0 and 7.1. See <http://arc.episcopalchurch.org/presiding-bishop/pdf/theologycomreport.pdf>.

25. In the context of continuing debate, the Lambeth Conference discussed matters relating to homosexuality and issued resolutions in 1978 and 1988.<sup>5</sup> At the Conference of 1998, extensive study and discussion by one subsection produced a report, following which a resolution was debated and eventually passed by the vast majority of bishops as Resolution 1.10.<sup>6</sup> There has been some controversy about the way in which this resolution was arrived at and voted upon. But the primates unanimously upheld the resolution as the standard of Anglican teaching on the matter in their statement of October 16, 2003:

“We also re-affirm the resolutions made by the bishops of the Anglican Communion gathered at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 on issues of human sexuality as having moral force and commanding the respect of the Communion as its present position on these issues.”<sup>7</sup>

This statement was in harmony with the position adopted by the primates to issues of human sexuality in their Pastoral Letter following their meeting in Gramado in May 2003.<sup>8</sup> This commitment to Lambeth Resolution 1.10 as the current position of the Anglican Communion was also reflected in a letter written to the primates by Archbishop Rowan Williams on the announcement of his nomination to the See of Canterbury.<sup>9</sup> In the years following the Lambeth Conference the Archbishop of Canterbury invited a small number of bishops from around the Communion for *International Conversations on Human Sexuality*, which set a high standard for how these matters could be discussed in charity and with reason.

26. *It should be clearly understood that this Commission has not been asked to continue this conversation, nor comment on or reconsider either the Lambeth Resolution or the Primates’ Statement. Further serious Communion-wide discussion of the relevant issues is clearly needed as a matter of urgency, but that is not part of our mandate.*
27. Nevertheless, the primates singled out synodical actions that have been taken in one diocese and one province which have gone against both the letter and the spirit of the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference, reiterated, as they are, by the Primates’ Meeting. The synod of the Diocese of New Westminster has requested the Bishop to provide and authorise a public Rite of Blessing for same sex unions; the Bishop has complied, and such services have gone ahead. The Episcopal Church (USA) has given its consent to, and proceeded with the consecration of, the person elected as Bishop of New Hampshire, a divorced man openly acknowledged to be living in a sexually active and committed same

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<sup>5</sup> Lambeth 1978, Resolution 10; Lambeth 1988, Resolution 64 – reproduced in Appendix Three/2&3.

<sup>6</sup> The text of the 1998 Resolution 1.10 is included in Appendix Three/6.

<sup>7</sup> The full text of the Primates’ Statement is included in Appendix Three/10.

<sup>8</sup> The relevant section of the Pastoral Letter is reproduced at paragraph 142.

<sup>9</sup> “... the Lambeth resolution of 1998 declares clearly what is the mind of the overwhelming majority in the Communion, and what the Communion will and will not approve or authorise. I accept that any individual diocese or even province that officially overturns or repudiates this resolution poses a substantial problem for the sacramental unity of the Communion.”, Letter to the Primates, Archbishop Rowan Williams, 23 July 2002.

sex relationship, despite the primates describing that forthcoming consecration as one which might “tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level”.<sup>10</sup> The same General Convention which gave consent to this election also decided to allow experimentation with public Rites of Blessing for same sex unions.<sup>11</sup> Many of those which have begun to be celebrated are similar to those authorised in New Westminster. We should also note that, after this Commission had already been set up, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed a resolution affirming “the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same-sex relationships”.<sup>12</sup> Further details of these developments are given later in this Report at paragraphs 137-139.

28. The overwhelming response from other Christians both inside and outside the Anglican family has been to regard these developments as departures from genuine, apostolic Christian faith. Granted, some churches in other denominations have made provision, or are considering making such provision, for the ordination of persons in sexually active same-sex relationships, offering arguments based on modern scientific proposals about sexual attraction, and corresponding, in their proposals, to changes and innovations in civil law in some of the relevant countries.<sup>13</sup> But condemnation has come from the Russian Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, as well as a statement from the Roman Catholic church that such moves create “new and serious difficulties” to ecumenical relationships.<sup>14</sup> Within our own Communion, some eighteen of the thirty-eight provinces of the Anglican Communion, or their primates on their behalf, have issued statements which indicate, in a variety of ways, their basic belief that the developments in North America are “contrary to biblical teaching” and as such unacceptable.<sup>15</sup>
29. Unfortunately, reaction has not been confined to statements of disagreement and opposition. Three elements of the reaction need to be noted as they themselves are now part of the problem we face:
  - (1) Several provinces and dioceses in the Communion have included in their reactions to developments in New Hampshire, either by primatial announcement or by synodical vote, a declaration that a state of either impaired or broken communion<sup>16</sup> now exists between them and those who

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<sup>10</sup> From the statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace, 16 October 2003, reproduced in Appendix Three/10.

<sup>11</sup> Resolution C051 Liturgy/Music: Blessing of Committed Same-Gender Relationships, reproduced in Appendix Three/9.

<sup>12</sup> The full texts of Resolutions A134 *Blessing of Same Sex Unions* and A135 *Blessing of Same Sex Unions - Resources* are included in Appendix Three/12.

<sup>13</sup> Such developments or debate can be found in the United Church of Canada, the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and some Old Catholic dioceses in Europe.

<sup>14</sup> Pope John Paul II’s address to the Archbishop Of Canterbury, October 2003

<sup>15</sup> A summary of some of the earlier statements may be found in footnote 19 of ‘What is the Anglican Communion for?’, a submission made to the Lambeth Commission by Canon Chris Sugden of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, available on the Commission website at

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenical/commissions/lambeth/documents/200402whatisitfor.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> For discussion of the meaning of these terms, see paragraph 50.

have taken the actions in the Episcopal Church (USA) described above.<sup>17</sup> Whilst these declarations may express natural frustrations and conscientious reactions to abnormal circumstances, they have left many Anglicans without a clear sense of who is now in communion with whom (personally and ecclesially). In addition, there are question marks over their ecclesiological legitimacy (for many, they represent an exercise in unilateralism counter to the communion principle of interdependence) as well as the constitutional authority under which some were issued (impaired communion is not a generally recognised canonical category).

- (2) Within the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Diocese of New Westminster themselves, several moves have been made by dissenting parishes and groups to distance themselves, in a variety of ways, from the dioceses, bishops and provinces within which they are geographically located. In some cases this has involved them in appealing for help to the Archbishop of Canterbury; in others, in seeking episcopal oversight by bishops or archbishops from other dioceses and/or provinces. In many cases, it has simply meant bewilderment and uncertainty as to the present and future Anglican status of those who dissent to the innovations.
  - (3) Some Archbishops from elsewhere in the Communion have, both by taking initiatives, and by responding to invitations from clergy purporting to place themselves under their jurisdictions, entered parts of the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada and exercised episcopal functions without the consent of the relevant diocesan bishop. This goes not only against traditional and often-repeated Anglican practice (as reaffirmed most recently by, for example, resolutions at Lambeth 1988 and 1998<sup>18</sup>), but also against some of the longest-standing regulations of the early undivided church (Canon 8 of Nicaea). These actions are not purely reactions to recent events, though that has been their main character. In some cases they build on earlier attempts at unilateral action against bishops whose theology and/or practice was perceived to be out of line with traditional Anglican and Christian teaching, or even to set up would-be “orthodox” structures or “mission churches” for their own sake, e.g. the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA).
30. By whatever route, all these developments have now contributed materially to a tit-for-tat stand-off in which, tragically in line with analogous political disasters in the wider world, each side now accuses the other of atrocities, and blames the

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the declaration by Nigeria of 15 November 2003, “We continue to stand solidly behind the leadership of the Church of Nigeria in breaking relationship, not only with the Diocese of New Hampshire, but with all bishops and dioceses in ECUSA that have joined in this divisive and unscriptural act.”, and the declaration by the House of Bishops of the Church of Uganda on 20 November 2003, “The Church of the Province of Uganda (Anglican) cuts her relationship and Communion with the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA) on their resolution and consequent action of consecrating and enthroning an openly confessed homosexual Gene Robinson as the bishop of New Hampshire Diocese in the Anglican Communion, and with any other province that shall follow suit.”

<sup>18</sup> Lambeth Conference 1988 Resolution 72 *Episcopal responsibilities and diocesan boundaries*; Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution III.2 *The Unity of the Anglican Communion* – reproduced in Appendix Three/4.

other for the need to react further in turn. These are the problems which have presented themselves to the Communion as a whole; which necessitated a special meeting of the primates in October 2003; and which have resulted in the establishment of the Lambeth Commission. We must now probe deeper to discern the symptoms underlying these problems.

### *Illness: The deeper symptoms*

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31. There are six underlying features of our common life which, interacting on one another, together make up the key strands in the story of what has happened and the reasons why the Anglican Communion arrived at the impasse which caused the primates to request the Archbishop of Canterbury to set up this Commission.

### *Theological development*

32. There is, first, *theological development*. Virtually all Christians agree on the necessity for theological development, including radical innovation, and on the fact that the Holy Spirit enables the church to undertake such development. Primary examples include the great fourth-century creeds, which go significantly beyond the actual words and concepts of scripture but which have been recognised by almost all Christians ever since as expressing the faith to which we are committed. At the same time, all are agreed that not all proposed developments are (to put it mildly) of equal weight and worth. Some, in fact, do not develop the Christian faith, but distort or even destroy it. A recent example might be the heresy of apartheid. Healthy theological development normally takes place within the missionary imperative to articulate the faith afresh in different cultures, but (as has become notorious) this merely pushes the question a stage further back: how is the line between faithful inculturation and false accommodation to the world's ways of thinking (note Romans 12.1-2) to be discerned and determined? Christians are not at liberty to simplify these matters either by claiming the Spirit's justification for every proposed innovation or by claiming long-standing tradition as the reason for rejecting all such proposals. The church therefore always needs procedures for discussing, sifting, evaluating and deciding upon proposed developments; in particular, they need to honour the process of 'reception', described in Section B below.
33. The first reason therefore why the present problems have reached the pitch they have is that it appears to the wider Communion that neither the Diocese of New Westminster nor the Episcopal Church (USA) has made a serious attempt to offer an explanation to, or consult meaningfully with, the Communion as a whole about the significant development of theology which alone could justify the recent moves by a diocese or a province.

### *Ecclesiastical procedures*

34. Such a process would require appropriate *ecclesiastical procedures*. Such procedures that do exist have developed within the Anglican Communion over a period of time and in response to particular earlier problems. We have described in the previous section the ways in which they were followed quite carefully in the run-up to the consecration of women to the episcopate. Several recent

Anglican documents, notably *The Virginia Report* (1997), have spelled out explicitly and in detail what procedures could be applied and the way in which they could function, making it clear (among other things) that these procedures are not merely pragmatically determined but express the theology they seek to serve. Furthermore, a special resolution of ACC-12,<sup>19</sup> meeting in Hong Kong in September 2002, called for the observance of such procedures in the introduction of any controversial policies which touched on the wider life of the Communion.<sup>20</sup> True, Anglican structures have sometimes posed problems by their dispersed nature, but this has normally been regarded as a small price to pay for the flexibility for mission which they permit, whilst nurturing the increased sense and strength of *koinonia* that they invite and sustain.

35. The second reason we have reached the present impasse is that neither the Episcopal Church (USA) nor the Diocese of New Westminster, in deciding and acting as they did in 2003, went through the procedures which might have made it possible for the church to hold together across differences of belief and practice.

### *Adiaphora*

36. Such holding together across differences within Anglicanism has made use of the vital doctrine of *adiaphora* (literally, “things that do not make a difference”). This is explained further in section B. For the moment, we simply note that Anglicans have always recognised a key distinction between core doctrines of the church (remembering that ethics, liturgy and pastoral practice, if authentically Christian, are all rooted in theology and doctrine) and those upon which disagreement can be tolerated without endangering unity.<sup>21</sup> Paul urged Christians in Corinth and Rome to recognise some matters in this way (what to eat or not to eat being a prime example). When something is seen in this way, an individual church, at whatever level, can make its own decisions on the matter.
37. The third reason therefore why the present crisis has arisen is that many within the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Diocese of New Westminster hold to the opinion, at least by implication, that the questions they were deciding were things upon which Christians might have legitimate difference, while large numbers of other Anglicans around the world did not regard them in this way.

### *Subsidiarity*

38. This highlights a fourth key strand of our common life: *subsidiarity*, the principle that matters should be decided as close to the local level as possible. *Subsidiarity* and *adiaphora* belong together: the more something is regarded as ‘indifferent’, the more locally the decision can be made. It does not take an Ecumenical Council to decide what colour flowers might be displayed in church; nor does a local congregation presume to add or subtract clauses from

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<sup>19</sup> i.e. the twelfth meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council.

<sup>20</sup> Resolution 34 *Province-wide and Communion-wide consultation*, reproduced in Appendix Three/8.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the line of argument developed in the discursus ‘Of Ceremonies’ in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*.

the Nicene Creed. In part this belongs with the missionary imperative: the church must give its primary energy to God's mission to the world, not to reordering its internal life.

39. The fourth reason for our present problems is thus that it was assumed by the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Diocese of New Westminster that they were free to take decisions on matters which many in the rest of the Communion believe can and should be decided only at the Communion-wide level.

### *Trust*

40. All this points up a more general feature which ought to characterise life within the Communion: *a relationship of trust*. Mutual trust generates, and is in turn reinforced by, mutual responsibility. Ideally, the Communion puts its trust in each province to exercise its autonomy appropriately within our mutual fellowship.<sup>22</sup> This commits each church to a fiduciary duty to honour, and not to breach, that trust. However, where trust has broken down in many areas of life in our contemporary world, it is perhaps not surprising, though it remains regrettable, that trust has been eroded in many areas of church life as well. The language of debate has become adversarial, not to say abusive; recourse has been made to secular courts of law in place of Christian forbearance and charity; undertakings have been ignored; protagonists have acted out of spite rather than the demands of proper administration, and facts have been manipulated to serve party spirit. The major cultural divisions in today's world, not least between the rich nations of western Europe and north America and the poorer nations in other parts of the world, have left their ugly mark on our ecclesial life. Likewise, the deep divide in contemporary American political life has led both to an oversimplification and a polarisation of many issues, as though 'liberal' and 'conservative' opinion were simply a pair of uncomplicated pre-packaged bundles. Despite several wonderful counter-examples, each side has increasingly come to distrust the other, and to accuse the other (not least) of using inappropriate models and methods of reading scripture and reaching decisions.
41. This is the fifth unhappy circumstance (itself catastrophic in terms of our mission which, as we have seen, includes the call to model before the watching world the new mode of being human which has been unveiled in Christ) that has brought us to the present difficulty. We clearly need more mutual exploration and explanation of our theological beliefs, our understanding of the Bible, and of many aspects of our common life and witness. The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, established following the 1998 Lambeth Conference, has made a good start, but much remains to be done.<sup>23</sup> Theological commissions within provinces need to be made more conscious of, and conversant with, Communion-wide dimensions of theological discourse. In particular, we need to develop the habit, and thence the virtue, of that charity

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<sup>22</sup> On the relation of communion and autonomy, see below, Section B : Fundamental Principles, paragraphs 67-96.

<sup>23</sup> For the work of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, see <http://www.aco.org/ecumenical/commissions/iatdc/index.cfm>.

which listens intensely and with good will to widely different expressions of sincerely held Christian theology, at the levels both of method and of content. As a Communion, we need a common forum for debate, a common table to which we can bring our questions for a proper family discussion.

### *Authority*

42. All of this can be summed up in a word which, though often misunderstood, denotes an elusive sixth element which might hold the key: *authority*. The Anglican Communion does not have a Pope, nor any system which corresponds to the authority structure and canonical organisation of the Roman Catholic Church. The Anglican Communion has always declared that its supreme authority is scripture. Later in the report we examine what this claim might actually mean, not least the way in which living under scriptural authority is principally the grounding for the church's mission.<sup>24</sup> In that context, scriptural authority demands, and we believe that in our Communion structures it has begun to receive, appropriately sensitive and fine-tuned systems of decision-making which allow both for the full participation of all members and for an eventual way of making difficult decisions which can enhance, rather than endanger, the unity and communion of our richly diverse family. It is because we have not always fully articulated how authority works within Anglicanism, and because recent decisions have not taken into account, and/or worked through and explained, such authority as we all in theory acknowledge, that we have reached the point where urgent fresh thought and action have become necessary.

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<sup>24</sup> See paragraphs 53-62 below.