

The Bible in the Life of the Church

Based on a proposal drawn up by some Primates, meeting at Coventry Cathedral, England, there was initial discussion at the February 2007 (Dar es Salaam) meetings of the Joint Standing Committee and the Primates of the suggestion that a major three year project should be launched exploring the way or ways that the Bible is used in the life of the Anglican Communion. A more detailed proposal was then presented to the February/March 2008 meeting of the Joint Standing Committee, which agreed to 'welcome the initiative, and ask the Secretary General and Director of Theological Studies to develop the proposal in the light of the discussion at this meeting, and to commend it to the Lambeth Conference and ACC 14.'¹

So the proposals being brought to the current meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council have been drawn up on the basis of previous discussion at both the Primates' Meeting and the Joint Standing Committee. Discussion about Scripture at the Lambeth Conference 2008 has also fed into the development of the proposal.

The essential question that needs to be addressed by 'The Bible in the Life of the Church' project is, 'What do we mean when we say that we are a Church that lives under Scripture?'

The following is a suggested structure for the project:

1. The project will be formally accountable to ACC, although it is expected that the Primates' Meetings will also be interested to hear of the progress of the work.
2. We envisage that the project will be of three years duration and will report to the next meeting of the ACC in 2012. This does not rule out further work that might develop out of the project, relating to other aspects of the Church's life in the modern world, but it is too early at this stage to make detailed proposals about such further work.
3. It will be essential to ensure that the project involves wide, regionally based, grass roots, participation from around the Communion, as well as drawing on the work of academic biblical scholars/theologians. It will also be important to find ways to take seriously the Anglican experience of diversity, as well as drawing on previous work done in this field by the Anglican Communion, by individual Anglican Churches and by some of our ecumenical partners.
4. There will be a Steering Group established containing approximately 10-12 members. The Chair of the Steering Group will be a person with credibility internationally, ecclesiastically and academically.
5. The majority of the work however will be done by 5-6 regionally based groups. These would seek as far as possible to use infrastructure which already exists e.g. theological educational institutions to develop the regional focuses.
6. The convenors of each of the regional groups will be members of the Steering Group, to ensure that regional insights are represented.
7. The project will be supported by the Department of Theological Studies. However, ideally, assuming that funds allow, there will be a part-time dedicated project manager who will have the particular responsibility of supporting and encouraging the work of the regional groups and their convenors. The project manager will also have the responsibility (along with the Steering Group as a

whole) of ensuring that the outcomes of the project are made available and publicised in appropriate ways.

8. The project would operate in two or three phases (this would be a decision for the Steering Group). In each phase the regional groups would be asked to address how the Bible is used in relation to a specific issue. These might include e.g. Creation; Communion; Sexuality. It would be hoped that out of the exploration of such 'case studies' in the regional groups some principles about the way(s) Anglicans read scripture would emerge.
9. It is intended that the 'outcome' of the project would not be (simply) a formal report, but would include practical tools for the theological education of both clergy and laity. It may well also be that material from the project could be presented to the newly established Faith and Order Commission.
10. While progress of the project is subject to the availability of funding, it is envisaged that an initial meeting of the steering group will happen before the end of 2009.

The members of ACC are invited to discuss the proposals for this project, and, if they are so minded, to pass the resolution which will formally establish it.

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¹ Resolution 5 of JSC March 2008 : *The Faith Of The Church And The Life Of The Modern World*. The project was also discussed and commended at the Primates' Meeting held in Alexandria in February 2009.