

## **Global Anglicanism – Where to From Here?**

*EFAC Presentation, July 22 2008*

*St George's Magill, Adelaide, South Australia*

My goal in this talk is to outline the circumstances and events that led up to the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) held in Jerusalem June 22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2008 and look at its implications for the Anglican Church globally and locally.

### **What Happened?**

Firstly, it was a great privilege to be invited to attend GAFCON 2008. Lee-Ann and I were invited with a number of others from Australia to attend. We were the only SA delegates.

It was an 8 day conference in Jerusalem, with 1148 lay and clergy participants, including 291 bishops from across the globe! Many of those participating were from Africa. While numbers aren't everything the estimate is that those at the conference represent 70% of the world's Anglicans.<sup>1</sup>

The conference had a packed programme – there were plenary sessions where the reason we had gathered, the current global context of the Anglican Church and the need for change was outlined. There was repentance for the part that we may have played in compromising or not standing up for the gospel. There were services and Biblical exposition on key texts, connecting us to God's purposes to fulfil his covenant - through Abraham and finally in the Lord, Jesus Christ. It was great to read passages about the New Jerusalem (Rev 21&22) while meeting in the earthly Jerusalem and be reminded that our final destination in Christ is the heavenly city!

There were seminars on Anglican heritage, history and theology as well as sessions that looked at HIV/Aids and situations in the two-thirds world.<sup>2</sup> In that sense the Conference covered wider concerns than some may have thought.

There were small groups where we studied the Bible, prayed for each other, our churches and the Anglican Church. These small groups also wrote down their thoughts and desires for GAFCON which were passed on each day to the drafting committee. The drafting committee produced the *Jerusalem Declaration* which was presented in draft form to regional groups (Australia-NZ in our case) and modified. A final version was delivered and received with applause (and singing!) on the last day of the conference.

There was a sense that this was an historic time in God's plan for his church. There was the recognition that there was a steadfast need to reclaim and reproclaim the authority and truth of the scriptures, as the true ground for Anglican formularies and practice. There was a sadness that GAFCON was necessary.

The service times were great occasions of praise and Biblical reflection with liturgies used from across the globe - an amazing mix of African singing and dancing and South American charismatic-high-church expression (as well as good old restrained evangelical fervour!).

A highlight for me was conference participants standing on the original steps that would have led up to the temple in Jesus' day (possibly where Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost) singing God's praises with Christians from around the world. Singing "To God be the Glory" was amazing. It felt like a second Pentecost!

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<sup>1</sup> "The Africans coming here represent more than 70 percent of the entire Anglican Communion. The 300 or so bishops are from the provinces of Nigeria (25 million), Uganda (10 million) Kenya (4.5 million) and Rwanda (1.2 million)" cited from <http://www.virtueonline.org/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=8469>

The number of Anglicans globally has been estimated at 55million.

While numbers are not a test of orthodoxy and people need to be careful of hubris, by comparison The Episcopal Church USA has 800,000 practicing Episcopalians. The centre of Global Anglicanism has certainly shifted towards the "Global South".

<sup>2</sup> Including ways of funding and supporting projects that can make a difference in that needy part of our globe - for eg. Micro-credit and setting up your own bank!

There were a number of trips to sites around Jerusalem and Israel to remind us of the birth of the Christian faith, the ministries of the early church and of course our Lord, Jesus Christ. Reading Matthew 5 on the Mount of Beatitudes was a profound moment. There was even a BBQ for us 1200 people near the Jordan River in 40 degree heat amongst the dust and huge gum trees – the only thing missing to make it an Aussie BBQ was the flies!

We heard of the persecution and attempted murder of African Bishops seeking to proclaim Christ in Muslim regions (there were security guards for a number of the speakers). We heard of the ruthlessness of the Episcopal Church in crushing opposition to their liberal agenda.

There was also the privilege of sharing meals with people from other nations and hearing their stories. The growth of the church in Africa is extraordinary – they are opening new churches every day. A Rwandan Bishop told me that unlike westerners, Africans don't need to be convinced of their sin nor do they need to be convinced about the existence of God – they believe both. He also said the challenge for Christian faith in Africa is that it has the danger of being a mile wide but only an inch deep. They need support for theological education and training for their growing number of pastors and churches.

Another highlight for me was the way the Africans joyfully and openly express their faith in Christ and seek every opportunity to share that faith. The comment is made "Westerners have watches but Africans have the time".

This video of an African Bishop leading someone to Christ while delayed at the airport was a wonderful example of their expectation that God is in every moment. It can be found at -

[http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/images/uploads/video/Interview\\_with\\_Nigerian\\_Bishop\\_DV.mp4](http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/images/uploads/video/Interview_with_Nigerian_Bishop_DV.mp4)

It was a good reminder that it was for this reason that we had gathered – that the decisions we were making were set within an eternal perspective.

### **Why GAFCON? What got us to this point?**

For some people GAFCON's timing before the Lambeth conference and indeed its very existence is divisive, so an explanation of why GAFCON happened may be helpful.

In the *Jerusalem Declaration* reference is made to Resolution 1.10 from Lambeth, 1998. This is a turning point for global Anglicanism for it was this resolution that outlined clearly and sensitively the Biblical foundation on human sexuality (see appendix at the end of this paper) and led to the current crisis.

#### *Lambeth 1.10 and the Following Consequences*

This resolution holds to the orthodox view of scripture on matters relating to human sexuality, appeals for pastoral sensitivity towards those who experience same-sex orientation and calls on those who disagree within the Anglican Communion to not pursue the blessing of same sex unions or accept homosexuality as right for Christians.

Large swathes of the Anglican Church in the USA (TEC – The Episcopal Church) and Canada have variously ignored this resolution, gone ahead with the blessing of same sex unions, the ordination of practicing homosexual priests and consecrated a homosexual Bishop *in direct defiance of resolutions from various Anglican bodies requesting them not to do so*<sup>3</sup>.

While the "Instruments of Communion"<sup>4</sup> – various groups and bodies within worldwide Anglicanism used to focus the Anglican denomination – called on TEC and the Episcopal Church of Canada to repent or hold back on these decisions they have, after a "period of reflection", declared their intention to do no such thing. They have ignored directives to change their decisions, were warned that they could not expect to be invited to Lambeth (but still

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<sup>3</sup> Gene Robinson was made Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003 and Jeffrey John, another gay cleric, was about to become Bishop of Reading in England but under pressure was made to step down.

<sup>4</sup> The "Instruments of Communion" were created to assist Anglican unity – they include the ACC (Anglican Consultative Council), Primates Meetings, Lambeth Conferences and Archbishops of Canterbury. They have been largely ineffective as they have been ignored by TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada.

were), while orthodox bishops who have offered alternative Episcopal oversight to orthodox Anglicans have been refused an invite to Lambeth.

They have then gone on to persecute (not too strong a word) those orthodox clergy, parishes and dioceses who have disagreed with their decisions. Their intention is to crush opposition through any means possible, including suing parishes who wish to have alternative Episcopal oversight as well as suing individually priests who have disagreed and have sought alternative leadership to the liberal bishops over them.

These actions through the secular courts are designed to bankrupt both parishes and individuals and warn those who might be thinking of taking a similar course of action. We heard anecdotal stories of many Americans in particular who are fearful of stating views contrary to those held by the TEC leadership for fear of retribution.

It is these **final** actions, after years of debate and warnings, after directions and decisions by Primates Councils and the Instruments of Communion, which have created the current crisis within Anglicanism. **They** have created the rift and division. Worldwide Anglicanism **is** divided over fundamental issues and it is naïve to suggest otherwise.

GAFCON is a response to a system that has not worked and is not working. The implication of this system not working is a dilution of the gospel message. So action must be taken.

Please note that GAFCON has come about after 10 years and more<sup>5</sup> of talking!

I'll now hand over to Lee-Ann for her insights and she can tell the story of the Canadian minister in her group financially destroyed and personally dispirited by their actions.

### **Its worse than you think!**

The problems are greater than structural issues, they also run to the deep corruption of the faith that is destroying people's faith.

While we were in Israel at the headwaters to the Jordan River we saw an old temple area dedicated to the worship of Pan and Zeus. We saw in other places mosaics thousands of years old depicting the god of wine – Dionysius – and the drunkenness that went with it. We saw an amazing Roman temple in Jerash in Jordan built to the glory of Artemis – mentioned in Acts 19 as a fertility goddess of the Ephesians.

We saw a modern-day syncretistic religion in Haifa in Israel in a beautiful and massive garden and temple built by the Bahais, ironically on the same mountain, Mt Carmel, where Elijah battled with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18.

But amidst the reminders of pagan worship and the multiple gods of the Romans, amidst the reminders in Jordan of Moses' call to the Jewish nation to truly follow God, the worst, the absolute worst example of a people who had rejected the God who revealed himself to them, were the stories coming out of the Anglican western church in our day!

They were stories of ungodliness, syncretism and capitulation to the world. They were stories of a denomination (in part at least) that had lost its way, and was now abandoning the faith "handed down"<sup>6</sup> from the apostles and prophets. One American bishop has famously said - "the church wrote the Bible, we can change it any time we like".

Not quite the worst story, but close to it, was the story of an Anglican priest in the United States who when celebrating communion, puts a little statue of the god **Isis** on the communion table.

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<sup>5</sup> More like 20 years if you consider the precursors that led to Lambeth 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See Luke 1:2

*Isis is a goddess in Ancient Egyptian mythology and is celebrated as the ideal mother and wife, patron of nature and magic; friend of slaves, sinners, artisans, the downtrodden, as well as listening to the prayers of the wealthy, the maiden, the aristocrat and emperor. She is also connected to fertility cults.*<sup>7</sup>

There is, according to their views, not much that we can know much about God or Jesus with any certainty. The scriptures, while given lip service, are ignored or reduced to mythical stories, illustrative, but not authoritative. So, they turn to alternatives, or mash beliefs about Christ in with other beliefs in attempting to make the faith more accessible and more meaningful to our modern world. They must, in all conscience, reject the creeds that speak so definitively of what we believe (although they say they do not), for these church leaders and churches espouse not certainty, but ambiguity about morality and the things of Christ or of God. They view the 39 Articles as documents so historically conditioned that they do not apply.

Nothing could break the first commandment more obviously than a statue of a pagan goddess in a Christian service. Yet our own Adelaide Cathedral in 1992 allowed an exhibition to the Hindu goddess Kali to be displayed in the church. Altars of seed pods in the shape of vaginas were spread throughout the building in name of an art exhibition. And the then Archbishop and Dean of the cathedral saw nothing wrong with it and were astounded and annoyed by criticism of their ungodliness. Our current Dean has invited John Spong to preach in the Cathedral in the past, continues to deny the reality of Jesus' miracles and numbers of our clergy do not believe in the clear Biblical witness that Christ is the only way to the Father. They preach and teach these things in our pulpits Sunday by Sunday.<sup>8</sup>

These are not just problems in North America.

These events, both globally and locally, are a capitulation to our age, show a loss of confidence in truth, stunt and blunt our evangelism and are a betrayal of God's words to us.

I'd like now to respond to some specific objections that I have heard raised about GAFCON.

### **Objections to GAFCON**

#### ***The Bishops Should Not Boycott Lambeth***

GAFCON included lay people and clergy, not just bishops – one of its strengths from my point of view! It enabled lay and clergy to have a voice that Lambeth does not give. Some bishops have gone to both. It was clear that each group, diocese, region or bishop (depending on their authority structures and relationships) would make up their own mind about what action to take.

Lambeth is making no resolutions this year. More talking, no action, was the view of many. While Gene Robinson has not been invited he has said he is still going and will promote his cause on the fringes of Lambeth. Consequently the expectation is that media reports will speak of "conservative bishops and their homophobia" and Lambeth will not be an opportunity to help the church grow in proclaiming the gospel. Many orthodox bishops (especially those from Africa) see Lambeth as a waste of their precious resources better spent on gospel ministry. Remember these dioceses have few resources and what they have is being poured into the incredible growth of God's church in their locations.

To go to Lambeth would give it an authority and credibility they believed it does not deserve. They are tired after so much talking when the TEC has made it clear it will not change its actions and has ignored previous resolutions and calls for change that have come from Anglican bodies. GAFCON was a positive alternative, focussed on reaching the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### ***It was all about sexuality***

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<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>8</sup> For an insight into liberal theology's view of scripture as ambiguous in finding truth about God and their dilution of its authority, Google "Progressive Christianity Network" and look at their statement of belief. This is a group openly promoted in our diocese by clergy.

There was very little comment about homosexuality publicly. It was mentioned only twice in my memory in the main sessions. The reason we gathered was the slow but steady dilution the place of the scriptures have in the life of the church, especially in western churches.<sup>9</sup>

In our regional meeting a person from the Melbourne group made the point that it was to our shame that it took the ordination of a practising homosexual bishop for us to act. We should have acted 20 years ago when clergy and bishops across the Anglican Church started denying the divinity of Jesus, his uniqueness, his bodily resurrection. The diminution of the authority of the scriptures, their revision and at times wholesale denial, should have led to robust dispute and objections before now. But we talked, and we have acted only now. It was this slow chipping away at Biblical authority that is the core issue, not the issue of human sexuality. The lack of moral courage of the western churches is only a symptom of a much deeper problem connected to the scriptures that must be directly addressed. We should give thanks for the African's steadfastness and leadership in this regard.

It is unfortunate that the focus has come down to human sexuality, as there are also other areas of sinful behaviour for which the Western church, including us, should repent (materialism for example). The distinction in this particular issue is that sexually immoral behaviour is not considered sinful by large swathes of the Anglican Church. The North American churches that have been blatant and unashamed about rejecting this Biblical truth. Note that this change in attitude has occurred in less than a generation – how quickly the slide can happen.

It is likely that this slack view on sexuality is more widely held, but not declared publicly, by Bishops, Clergy and lay people in the Anglican Communion including in our local parishes in Adelaide.

GAFCON calls people back to orthodoxy.

### ***They are Anti-Women's Ordination***

There was a mix of points of views on women's ordination amongst the people that attended GAFCON although it was not publicly debated. There were women priests at GAFCON and they on occasion participated in the public services. I spoke to one of them and asked how they felt and she said "we have been treated with nothing but respect here".

The Jerusalem Declaration says at point 12

We celebrate the God-given diversity among us which enriches our global fellowship, and we acknowledge freedom in secondary matters. We pledge to work together to seek the mind of Christ on issues that divide us.

That no doubt includes this issue as well as others. They are considered secondary matters to the core truths that called us together.

### ***GAFCON is Triumphant, Arrogant and Divisive***

One of the things that surprised and pleased us was that there was none of the triumphalism that we feared might mar the conference. Speakers were humble, sad and repentant over the state of the church. There was a time of reflection and repentance before our Lord as it is partly our fault that things are as they are in the Anglican church. There was a sense of responsibility amongst the delegates and leaders for our past and a resolve to stand firm in the gospel for the future.

There was a confidence yes, but not in ourselves. GAFCON as a movement will only be successful in God's eyes if we continue to honour Him. It is full of fallible, sinful people and any structures set up can still be beset with the same failures of past groups.

All these things are recognised and understood. Vigilant commitment to prayer, the reading of God's word and honest worship are ongoing priorities, and we should recommit ourselves to these too. We were called to be leaders "from the knees up".

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<sup>9</sup> This applies across denominations, as the issues raised are not unique to Anglicans.

There has been some criticism - especially from Bishop NT Wright (an evangelical in Britain) and the Archbishop of Canterbury - that GAFCON is saying unless you agree to the *Jerusalem Declaration* or support GAFCON you are not orthodox. This is not so.

While we believe that the *Jerusalem Declaration* **is** a restatement of orthodox, biblical belief, and ask people to reaffirm it, just because someone doesn't or doesn't want to join the GAFCON movement, doesn't mean they are not faithful, biblical-based Christians.

In responding to the Archbishop's criticism in this regard the GAFCON Primates Council<sup>10</sup> said

"We are however concerned that he should think we assume that all those outside GAFCON are proclaiming another gospel. In no way do we believe that we are the only ones to hold a correct interpretation of Scripture according to its plain meaning. We believe we are holding true to the faith once delivered to the saints as it has been received in the Anglican tradition. Many are contending for and proclaiming the orthodox faith throughout the Anglican Communion. Their efforts are, however, undermined by those who are clearly pursuing a false gospel. We long for all orthodox Anglicans to join in resisting this development."

### **What Now?**

One of the outcomes of GAFCON is that a structure is now developing that will offer those who are being persecuted by TEC and the Episcopal Church in Canada a viable, orthodox, alternative structure within the Anglican Communion. As such it is not a split, and GAFCON is clear that it is within the centre of mainstream Anglicanism, with a clear commitment to scripture, the creeds and orthodox faith. We hope that GAFCON's proposed future structures and Biblical orthodoxy will give heart to those who feel the need to move away from their current Episcopal leaders to seek alternative Episcopal oversight. We hope GAFCON will give moral support and encouragement to those in mixed dioceses to hold firm to the faith "handed down" (Luke 1.2).

What the future holds is uncertain. Various bodies now exist within the Anglican Church for those who have sought alternative leadership - some are now connected to dioceses in Africa, some connected to the Southern Cone (South America). Some are fighting in the courts for access to and use of their church facilities, others have left their church properties and are meeting elsewhere and may come back under an orthodox Anglican umbrella. Some are in a "wait and see" mode observing what will happen before taking any action.

The GAFCON movement is still working through the most effective way to proceed, although an alternative to Lambeth such as a Primates Council as a point for Anglican association is clearly one of the options (see the *Jerusalem Declaration*). Some English critics are dismissive of the GAFCON statement that they can be Anglican without a connection to the See of Canterbury. GAFCON's Primate's Council contends that it is not necessary to continue that connection to Canterbury to define itself as Anglican.

It is not expected that Lambeth, currently meeting while we speak, will progress any of the existing issues of division towards a resolution.

The truth is Anglican's worldwide weight (in terms of numbers at least) has shifted towards African, Asia and South America – the "Global South". Estimates of GAFCON are that the dioceses attending represent between 35-40 million of the 55 million practising Anglicans worldwide.

It may not be long before missionaries come to the West from these areas!

### **What About Australia?**

There are uncertainties about what the direction the Australian Anglican church will take. There is no doubt some Anglican Church and leaders have the same core beliefs (or lack thereof) about scripture as the TEC and would like to pursue the same direction on human sexuality. Possibly they are waiting to see what will happen before following that path. Some already promote a liberal view of the scriptures and will continue to exercise their authority and influence in that direction with all its consequences.

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<sup>10</sup> The primates' council will initially be formed by the six Anglican primates participating in GAFCON. They are Peter Akinola, Nigeria; Justice Akrofi, West Africa; Emmanuel Kolini, Rwanda; Benjamin Nzimbi, Kenya; Henry Orombi, Uganda; Greg Venables, Southern Cone. Also the Anglican Church of Tanzania delegation to GAFCON is in agreement with the statement but will need the endorsement of their House of Bishops before their archbishop join the council.

### **What Should We Do?**

It is my view that we must take action. We must set a Biblical agenda for our church and call our church leaders to do the same. The idea of an infinitely stretchable elastic band of Anglicanism does not work – it is at breaking point!

I think there are a number of steps that we can take.

#### **One: A Restatement of the Truth**

We need to re-state and reassert the truth about the scriptures as the foundation of our faith and the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many of our leaders have moved away from orthodoxy.

Many in our pews do not understand how eroded orthodox belief has become.

We cannot take for granted that these truths are understood or agreed upon.

Restating confidently what we believe is a helpful step.

*Restate the scriptural teachings about Christ and holiness at every opportunity – in small groups and in discussion, in your churches and homes. Do not take for granted they are believed.*

#### **Two: A Call to Reaffirm the Truth**

The warning has been sounded about the corrupting influence of liberalism.

GAFCON's call to reiterate and reaffirm orthodox scriptural truths that stand at the heart of Anglicanism has reminded parts of the church just how far they have moved or are in danger of doing so. The *Jerusalem Declaration*, while not a perfect document, does this concisely and helpfully.

Our church leaders need to be reminded what they have signed up to in our Anglican formularies. While this should not be necessary, it is.

We need to ask them whether they believe what the church has believed for generations. While this is controversial and seems confronting there comes a point in our faith when we need to stand up for what we believe. Is it wrong to ask, particularly our church leaders, where they stand?

*Please sign your assent and support for the Jerusalem Declaration.*

*Ask others to consider doing the same.*

#### **Three: Turning Back the Tide**

There is a need to act rather than be passive in the face of militant liberalism or its collaborator - "a slow, creeping liberalism".

We must stand firm against liberalism and push back against their revisionist and destructive agendas. They are killing the church and leading God's people back out into a faithless desert.

Doing nothing is not an option! Polite disquiet will be ignored. It has been so far.

This is a crisis and it requires action. The threads of the problem are clearly evident in our own church in Australia and New Zealand. We cannot think this is a uniquely American phenomenon.

Action can happen in many forums.

Privately and publicly, in writing, in conversation, in our church forums and synods, in EFAC meetings and clergy gatherings, we need to speak humbly but confidently, and joyfully(!), about our Lord Jesus Christ and his offer of salvation to our world. We need to respectfully challenge those who do not preach faithfully. We need to study the Scriptures and pray for wisdom, boldness and godliness.

*Turn back the Tide – speak the truth in love and challenge those who teach heresy.*

#### **Four: Support for Those Persecuted**

A new Anglican model is being set up to allow those persecuted by TEC and the Anglican Church in Canada to remain Anglican but under alternative oversight that will be more effective in our witness of Christ to the world.

It seems unlikely, arguably, at this stage that dioceses or churches in Australia will need to follow a similar path. But it may not stay this way. Other options may be needed if the Anglican Church in different in Australia parts promotes a more overt liberal agenda than it already has. Some clergy are already under extreme pressure by Bishops pushing a liberal line.

I believe that EFAC's role in supporting and promoting gospel ministry will become even more strategic in these areas.

*Can I invite and urge you to sign up to be a member of EFAC? It can be a strategic voice in our diocese and help support those in other dioceses who are under pressure.*

#### **A Note of Caution?**

As I finish, let me now sound a note of caution.

I have already said that GAFCON does not presume that if people do not sign up to GAFCON or the *Jerusalem Declaration* they are not by virtue of this not orthodox.

Our goal is not to be divisive. If there is division may it truly be over the things that matter to God.

There is no conflict between strong, passionate dispute and respectful treatment of the party we disagree with. We must act in a Christ-like manner towards those whom we oppose. Dishonour is done to Christ if we do otherwise. I do not want to see an ungodly excitement of potential conflict or Australian anti-authoritarianism to detract from our core message.

So there is no contradiction in holding firm to Scriptural truth with confidence and loving those who disagree – 2 Timothy 2: 24-25

*24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

*25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

*Contend boldly, faithfully, lovingly, prayerfully for the faith*

#### **Conclusion**

GAFCON was a Conference that was profoundly spiritually based. It was grounded in the reading and exposition of God's word and focussed on seeking to honour our Lord. It sought to work through how to be a more effective witness to Him where that witness has been blunted and marginalised in our world. That was and continues to be its goal.

It was concerned to be "a movement not just a moment" so that it can continue to have an **ongoing** impact on gospel ministry across the world.

It will take some time to sort out, but it is our prayer that the result will not be just a reorganising of Anglican structures (do we need more of those?!) but a refreshed and more faithful gospel proclamation to a world that needs to hear of the love and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Under God's hand I pray that it will be so.

To Him be the glory.

*Rev Paul Hunt*

## **Lambeth 1.10**

Lambeth is a conference for Bishops in the Anglican Church worldwide held every 10 years in England. Amidst the issues discussed at the last Lambeth Conference in 1998 was the issue of human sexuality. The resolution 1.10 was one of the resolutions made at this conference:

### **Lambeth Conference 1998: Resolution 1.10 Human Sexuality**

This Conference:

1. commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
2. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
3. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
4. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
5. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
6. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
7. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

## **Windsor Report**

The Windsor report was commissioned and called in light of the conflict the ordination of Gene Robinson caused. You can read its contents on

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/index.cfm>

## **ACC-12 Resolution 34 Province-wide and Communion-wide consultation**

This Anglican Consultative Council, being concerned about a range of matters of faith and order which have arisen since we last met, and having in mind the constant emphasis on mutual responsibility and interdependence in the resolutions of successive Lambeth Conferences, from the call in 1867 for "unity in faith and discipline ... by due and canonical subordination of synods" (1867, IV) to the call in 1998 for a "common mind concerning ethical issues where contention threatens to divide ..." (1998, IV 5 (c)) calls upon:

1. dioceses and individual bishops not to undertake unilateral actions or adopt policies which would strain our communion with one another without reference to their provincial authorities; and
2. provincial authorities to have in mind the impact of their decisions within the wider Communion; and
3. all members of the Communion, even in our disagreements to have in mind the "need for courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect and prayer for one another" (1998, III.2 (e)).

## **Some Websites for more information and to connect with the debate**

[www.gafcon.org](http://www.gafcon.org)

[http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/sydneystories/young\\_delegate\\_calls\\_for\\_gafcon\\_support/](http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/sydneystories/young_delegate_calls_for_gafcon_support/)

<http://www.virtueonline.org/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=8633>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/17/religion>

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1871>

## The Challenge for Anglicanism

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As I write the media images of the last week have been of an Anglican Church seemingly ready to tear itself apart over the issue of Women Bishops and Human Sexuality. Priests are planning to leave (and some have) over both issues, congregations have split, sought alternative leadership and parts of the church in North America are suing each other over property.

Having just returned from an amazing Global Anglican Future Conference in Jerusalem I am absolutely certain there will be changes in the way the Anglican Church is structured. What that will look like however is not so clear. Be prepared for a messy time ahead.

Whatever the case is it my genuine prayer and hope that the result will be a more Biblically based, evangelistically focussed church – for that should be the goal of any Christian group or organisation. Our purpose is to share and live the Good News.

Various described we could say our purpose is:

- To tell others that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners
- To live a life that reflects the free gift of grace from God
- To rejoice in knowing God's love for us and share that with others
- To look forward to Jesus' return and live our lives in light of that.

Being “distracted” by church structures or church politics is not helpful to these goals. We do need to refocus our energies on gospel priorities.

But that is not to say the issues confronting the Anglican Church are marginal ones. While the media likes the controversial aspects of human sexuality and conflict between “traditionalists” and others, the issues come down more fundamentally to the place and authority of the Scriptures, the Bible.

The reason the battle lines have been drawn is that the Anglican “elastic band” has been stretched to breaking point. People sometimes say they love the “breadth” of the Anglican Church. In that they believe there is a graciousness for people to have doubts and struggle with issues of faith – that is a good thing. But in large swathes of the church this has led to a “you can believe what you want”! This is not true Anglicanism, which has in its formularies, commitment to the creeds and in its liturgy a clear scriptural base.

There has been a slow but steady loss of confidence over the last 20 years or more in the capacity of the Bible to speak to our age. This has percolated through our Theological Colleges to our clergy, who in many cases seem to spend time in their sermons “de-bunking” the Bible's stories, explaining why the plain meaning of the words can't be believed and using the “culture” of the writer who has written the words in the Biblical texts to ignore, for example, clear calls to live moral, godly lives.

This also evidences itself in finding alternative explanations for things such as the miracles of Jesus, his bodily resurrection and (surprisingly to my view) “re-mythologising” the Bible's accounts of God's great acts in history - take the Creation and the Exodus as examples.

The Anglican Church in many areas of the western world has lost confidence in evangelism. This is a clear consequence of loss of confidence in Scripture. Many clergy now openly say they do not believe Jesus is the only way to God. They ignore Jesus' very clear words in John 14:6 and the plain declarations of the speeches in Acts. It was in response to these early sermons which led to many people being converted and where the church first began.

The blunting of our gospel imperative comes from such views. If Jesus is not “Lord of All” or “the one who comes to judge the living and the dead” how can we call others around the world, from no faith or other faiths, to repent and believe in him?

Believers of other faiths find it laughable that we do not hold strongly to our own beliefs. They are seeking to convert others to their “faith system” – why is that we do not? The early church would never have moved beyond 11 passionate followers of Jesus if they had taken on the philosophical views of much of today’s church and the views of its leaders.

The early church’s declaration that “Jesus is Lord” was not considered arrogant, but a wonderful and joyful declaration of the certainty of salvation that can come to all, as “all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved”.

My prayer then is that as the reorganisation of the Anglican church continues there will be a recommitment to the Scriptures as our authoritative source for the promises of God – promises that hold out real hope, real transformation, as we embrace Christ and all he did for us on the cross. The only other way is, despite what the liberal post-modern agenda tells us, irrelevance to our world. It is also a failure to honour God.

The greatest relevance we can have it to clearly, confidently and joyfully proclaim the great news of God’s offer of salvation through Christ. Anything else is a distraction from our main purpose as God’s people.

Let’s get on with it!

***Paul Hunt***  
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