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Response by the Church in Wales to the Windsor Report

Questions for Consultation formulated by the Primates' Standing Committee

1. *What in the description of the life of the Communion in Sections A and B can you recognise as consistent, or not, with your understanding of the Anglican Communion?*

(a) The Anglican Communion is one that witnesses to the Kingdom of God.

Our discussion of the Communion was based on the wide experience of members of the working party. One member had taught in Bangladesh, and one in Uganda, while the ministry of the members covered a variety of different parishes. We also had a Bishop and a member of a theological college. The working party saw the primary reality of the Communion as eschatological, or in the words of the Windsor report (henceforth WR, with the number referring to the paragraph) “an anticipatory sign of God’s healing and restorative future of the world” (WR2). We had experienced in various ways examples of community development, evangelism, participatory education and the building up of the community of men and women. We had also seen the Church in Wales move to the acceptance of the ordination of women to the priesthood which would have been unthinkable fifty years ago. In all this we found signs of the in breaking of the kingdom well described in WR 55: “God’s sovereign, saving, redeeming and reconciling rule over all creation” We, like the report, would find in this reality the source of our authority to speak of the mission of the Church, or “the dynamic life of the Spirit”. This leads us to believe that the reality of the Anglican Communion is a dynamic one. As WR 3 says, unity, communion and holiness are never there for their own sake but serve the mission of God to the world. In this we were guided by an unpublished paper from Professor Dan Hardy which he wrote for especially our consultation. We are grateful to him for this contribution. His insight has enabled us to see the issues with particular clarity.

The Windsor Report is a document which in our opinion is a milestone in Anglican ecclesiology. It seeks to develop an understanding of the Church as an embodiment of God’s purposes. It is not simply a human construction. Instead it is how God seeks to heal and restore the world for his kingdom (WR2). The report also sees our unity as being founded on

Christ. It is a unity for the sake of God's mission in the world (WR 5). One implication of making this claim is that our common unity is not based solely on shared experience or on obedience to moral prescriptions. We believe that the report takes an important step forward in seeing the autonomy of provinces and dioceses as placed within the needs of the Communion as a whole. This in turn means that it is crucial that a climate of trust is created. Part of this climate of trust can be built by mutually respectful exploration and explanation (WR41, 67-68). At the moment ways of reading Scripture, of explanation, and of behaviour, are often divisive.

(b) The dynamic nature of the Anglican Communion

WR 9 expresses the care of Anglicans for each other, and we would want to add for the world. Over the centuries Anglicans have opposed slavery and genocide, struggled against famine and disease, fought against apartheid, carried out mission and evangelism, stood in solidarity with indigenous peoples, enabled communication across the globe and built up centres of excellence in theological education. . This is a proud record, and one which theologically means that we see the Communion as carrying within itself the ability to transcend and overcome crises. There have been many challenges to injustice, in ways which combine an ecclesiological reality of our common life with a challenge to oppressive political or social practices. It is not at all as though we are confronted with a static institution which has suddenly been destabilised by the actions of a few of its member churches. One of the ways in which that dynamism is expressed is the existence of inter cultural dialogue. One member of our working party who has worked in Uganda said:

In Africa the particular history and context of the contemporary Anglican Church has shaped and continues to shape its approach to ethical matters. In Uganda the issue of homosexuality is bound up with the troubled history of relationships with Moslems. It is important to recognise that these cultural factors of themselves neither validate nor invalidate traditions of Scriptural interpretation. None of us can or should offer a reading of Scripture free from cultural values. What is important is that the willingness to acknowledge these values.'

Another who had worked in Bangladesh also commented:

Though in the debate the "western" world is often set against the "non-western world", neither are homogenous monoliths. The Asian experience is significantly different from the African. In Bangladesh, for example, the Church, as a very small minority, tends to emphasise its distinctiveness from Islam, and often defines its role as an irritant, challenging the majority culture in a radical way, particularly on social

issues, and as an agent of change. It has been a stout defender of the marginalised and those without a voice in society. The recently retired Moderator of the Church of Bangladesh would have said that the ethical issues which were crucial as tests of the Church's faithfulness to Scripture were to do with structures of power, distribution of wealth and violence [for example in genocide and endemic war], and found it very difficult to understand that an issue like that of homosexuality, on which the Bible said so little, had acquired the defining role it had.

(c) The authority of Scripture in the Anglican Communion.

It was also the conviction of our group that it was important to see ethics in an eschatological way. The example of Paul's letter to Philemon on slavery is a good example of what we mean by eschatological ethics. Although slavery was accepted in the ancient world, and Christians would have owned slaves, nevertheless Paul appeals for Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave; as a dear brother..as a man and a Christian." (Philemon 17). This understanding of ethics accepts the reality of social norms and institutions but sees them as able to be transformed by the power of the Spirit. We would argue that gender and sexual cultural norms and values can also be transformed in a similar manner. We therefore are glad to recognise in the report an affirmation of the importance of authority of scripture for Anglicans.

WR 67 makes the point that it is by reading Scripture too little that we have drifted apart. We strongly agree with this view. The authority of Scripture for Anglicans is that it points to the reality of the eschaton. However we felt that WR 61 in its description of shortcomings in Scriptural interpretation becomes a caricature of itself. We do not believe that those who have pressed for change have sought "to sweep away sections of the New Testament as irrelevant". We also feel that WR 62 is too comfortable a view of the reading of Scripture. We point to the recognition by many church historians, and to the writings of Professor Stephen Sykes, about the reality of conflict in theological debate. Conflict is a reality in theological disputation, but the task for Anglicanism is to resolve such divisiveness by building trust and by the way in which the power of the Holy Spirit in worship can overcome division. It is worth quoting Professor Sykes on this point: "Only in the phenomenon of Christian worship could the conditions of vigorous argument be regarded as a constructive contribution to the performance of Christian identity in the modern world." It is also worth remembering that the Virginia Report spoke of Anglican unity as made up of diversities held in tension.

We affirm the role of Bishops in interpreting Scripture (WR 5 8) but stress that such interpretation is one that has as its task also the maintenance of unity in the midst of disagreement. There is also the important issue of inculturation (discussed briefly at WR 85) when considering the interpretation of Scripture. One feature of the African reading of the Bible is a greater confidence in offering interpretations at variance with those in the Western Church. It is clearly important

within the Anglican Communion that both African and Asian readings are heard respectfully and accorded the dignity of being received as valid contributions to theological discussion. There remains the question of what are the most appropriate vehicles for cross-cultural learning within the Anglican Communion. Traditionally the Western church has set the theological agenda. That this is being challenged is a welcome sign of Anglican vitality.

A similar comment can be made about the reading of Scripture on the Indian continent. The Indian Church's reading of the Bible has often been bold and creative. It has recognised the necessity of expressing Biblical truth in the language of the philosophical categories and thought forms inherited by almost all Indians from Hinduism. Far from being a defender of "traditional" readings of Scripture against liberal innovation, Indian Christianity can challenge too easy an acceptance on the part of the Western church of its own tradition of interpretation, and encourage it to see things anew

(d) The Anglican Communion is one bound together by bonds of affection

We affirm much of what is said in WR 45-51 and are glad to see that the importance of mutual relationships is brought out in WR 49. There is a helpful article by Dr. Lorraine Cavanagh in *Theology Wales: The Church and Homosexuality* which speaks of "the kind of solidarity which is acquired through free exchange of honour and human affection between people." However we dissent from the telling of the story in WR 12-21 about the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion. We believe that this section offers too rosy a view, especially in WR 13 and 16. There was unilateral action both in Hong Kong and in the United States in a manner which is not brought out in the report. This action was driven by pastoral need, and it could be argued that this is also the situation in North America today on the issue of sexuality. It is certainly the case that the unilateral action on the ordination of women then produced constitutional discussion and eventually a change in the polity of those provinces that ordained women to the priesthood, and to the episcopate. While we recognise the importance of WR 50 on the pain caused by impaired communion, it was also the case that on the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood that experimentation produced changes, which the Communion later came to accept. The sensitive discussion of autonomy in WR 72-86 was one that we would wish to affirm, and we felt especially that WR 76 on autonomy-in-communion was a fruitful concept for future discussion. This reaffirms the Anglican understanding of conciliarity, well described by Paul Avis in his paper for the Commission as contrasted with a monarchical, or hierarchical, understanding of Anglican polity. Nevertheless there are times when we feel that the Report tends to equate diversity with opinions,

rather than a diversity of people, forgetting how the Report addresses this issue when discussing inculturation at WR 85.

2. In which ways do the proposals in Section C and D flow appropriately from the description of the Communion's life in Section A and B?

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

We answer these two questions together because we believe that the answers are inseparable.

We are concerned about the expansion of the authority of the Primates in WR 104. We feel that the call in *To Mend the Net* for enhanced responsibility in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters, which takes up earlier proposals in the 1988 and 1998 Lambeth conferences, is a suggestion which is made with inadequate theological justification, such as the section on theological development (WR 32-33) calls for. Indeed we would point out that the Report says that the Episcopal Church has not given sufficient justification for the election of a Bishop in a same sex relationship, but the same could well be said for the enhancement of Primatial authority in the Report. WR 65 does no more than repeat the calls made in Lambeth Conferences for the Primates to take on more responsibility. Indeed the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission itself said in a statement in 2003 referred to in WR 65:

A word of caution here. It is not envisaged that the first 'port of call' for disputed matters in the Communion would necessarily be the Primates. Rather, historically Anglicans have dealt with their conflicts in consonance with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed, Anglicanism has a natural inbuilt reticence to 'stealing' from lower levels the decision-making responsibilities that are properly theirs. So it is not the case that strong action from above in a particular case would become the Anglican norm for settling disputes

We believe that there is a great danger that the Primates move the Anglican Communion much closer to a hierarchical polity, monarchical in nature, and in fact rather like the Roman Catholic Church. However WR 70 explicitly distinguishes the Bonds of Unity in the Anglican Communion from the ones working in the Roman Catholic Church. The reason given in WR 70 is because of the power of the Pontiff, but we believe that this only conceals a deeper disagreement which is between the monarchical nature of the Roman Catholic Church and the conciliar nature of the Anglican Communion. There is a real danger that for essentially pragmatic reasons the Primates are being given in this Report the power of Cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, as said

above, no real justification is offered. We wonder why Primates should be said to speak for their province, rather than serving as a focal point of reference.

We note that the authority of Lambeth Conferences in WR 102 is earned and not inherent. It has held a functional authority because of the value of these gatherings in bringing Bishops together. It is another matter if Lambeth resolutions have inherent authority in a binding way. We regret the tendency in WR 106 to see the Lambeth Conference as the ultimate governing body, and the Primates' Meeting as a standing committee. It is true that there is a lack of clarity, as noted in WR 105, but the answer to this confusion is not by arrogating powers to some of the constituent bodies within Anglican polity.

We also believe that the Council of Advice would again strengthen the power of the Archbishop of Canterbury in ways that are unhelpful. There are enormous questions about who would choose the membership, how they would be transparent and accountable, and how they would be financed. Again it seems as if a magisterium is being created by default. This is not a mechanism for building trust among the Communion.

Primal authority in the Church in Wales is very much one of *primus inter pares*, with the Archbishop not giving a blessing in a diocese different from his own in the Province if the diocesan bishop is present. Members of the group who had worked elsewhere in the Anglican Communion valued the personal role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in other provinces, and his constitutional role there. However if this role were enhanced further there would have to be a large expansion of the staff at Lambeth Palace at a time when the Anglican Communion faces severe financial constraints. Furthermore it is not as though the Archbishop of Canterbury is chosen by the whole of the Anglican Communion. However great the crisis in the Communion over the last two years we do not accept that this is a reason for changing the fundamental nature of the place of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican Communion. We believe that the belief in WR 109 that such a person should "speak directly to any provincial situation" is ill advised, and inherently impractical.

What then do we recommend? We affirm the value of the Anglican Consultative Council, which is a properly synodical body. We also believe that further discussion between the provinces, and inter cultural dialogue, is what is needed at this critical junction. It is by a process of mutual need. We also affirm the value of the Anglican Covenant, which we discuss below. The Sinai Covenant was a robust one, in which Moses kept God to His promises. It is a conversation between God and humanity. A covenant is therefore a safe place to have an argument, whether with God or the other members of the Anglican Communion. We do not say this in jest, for the Jewish importance of asserting oneself before God, while recognising his sovereignty, is crucial. What we do ask is how the Covenant should be related to canon law. Within a marriage relationship there is a covenant

without necessarily a law binding the parties. Perhaps the Covenant is more about principles, and in this way it can strengthen existing relationships in the Communion. We affirm the arguments in WR 119, and believe this could mitigate conflict if they were adopted. In particular we see the Covenant as expressing the centrality of Article 10 on page 83 of the Report. The value of a Covenant is that it could change a culture and express the importance of relationships. It is about building holy trust, between the parties, which is refined in the willingness to expose oneself to discussion within the Communion. Nevertheless the importance of autonomy in WR 117 should not be forgotten. WR 119, bullet point 3, is for us a primarily theological statement. We feel that the drafting of a Covenant should first be given to the ACC.

The working party was not united in its discussion of Section D. However we agreed that in WR 125-127 there is once again a covert pragmatism which comes into the Report. It is by no means clear, theologically or in terms of relationships between Provinces, why the issue of appointing a Bishop who has been through divorce and remarriage is not a “crucial criterion.” The appointment of a Bishop in these circumstances was clearly unacceptable during the past history of the Communion, and indeed for much of the history of the Church of England and the Church in Wales. If it is now acceptable for Bishops in some parts of the Anglican Communion to be appointed after divorce and remarriage (WR 125 speaks of the issue being unthinkable in some provinces but in others notes that these factors are a secondary issue) then we must ask why WR 127 takes a very different line on the ordination of those in same gender unions. There is no discussion of scripture at this point, or even of the appropriate hermeneutic for interpreting scripture. Yet if it is acceptable for bishops to be appointed in some places and not in others, without the report giving theological reasons for this diversity, it is not good enough for the report simply to note that the acceptance of diversity means that the fact of divorce and remarriage “would therefore not seem per se to be a crucial consideration”. Our earlier comments on the relationship of ethics and eschatology apply at this point. What is needed is an extensive theological discussion of how scripture is interpreted on such issues, and how interpretations can change.

WR 134 was a difficult section for our working party. Some felt that the Bishops in North America who had followed due ecclesiastical process had nothing to apologise for. Nor was there any reference to the hurt caused by the statements made by some Bishops. These are plainly quite incompatible with WR 146 that speaks of the “demonising of homosexual persons “ as being against basic pastoral care. Other felt that WR 134 and 135 should be combined into a single section. This might well be the best way forward for it would incorporate any expression of regret into a constructive theological process by which the Episcopal Church (USA) explained why it

considered that a person in a same gender union could be considered eligible to lead the flock of Christ.

It is worth reflecting, whatever view is taken about whether apologies should be given, and by whom, about the experience of the German Church from 1934-1946. After the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) reunited in 1946 (following the secession of the Confessing Church in 1934 and the Barmen Declaration attacking those who accepted Hitler as head of the Church) an apology was issued by all parties. It was not as those who had supported the Nazi party were put in the wrong, and those who had opposed Hitler were praised. Rather all sides in the German Church after the end of the Second World War admitted their mutual responsibility. Something like that seems to be called for on this occasion.

Nevertheless we accept that the future of the 2008 Lambeth Conference is now in serious doubt. We accept with regret that there should be withdrawal from representative functions in the Communion by those who participated in the consecration of Gene Robinson.

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

We welcome the articulation of the Covenant and feel that it offers a helpful way forward. As is clear from our submission we wish to separate the Covenant from the enhancement of the power of the primates, or the Archbishop of Canterbury. We therefore dissent from Article 24-2 and 24-5. We also wonder whether Articles 25-27 jump the gun, because we believe that the Covenant should first be agreed before these implications are worked out. These seem to be a creeping assertion of hierarchical power which we do not agree.

Nevertheless, having said this, we wish to be very positive about the idea of a Covenant. There are many sections of it which we like very much. We welcome the Anglican appeal to tradition and reason as tools for interpreting Scripture in Article 4 -4 which we see as an echo of Richard Hooker. Article 6-3 is a very strong statement of communion: we wonder how this sits with the break with the Roman Catholic Church at the Reformation? The answer can only be by appealing to the eschatological nature of communion in Article 8-1, and to the restraint called for in Article 9-1. The experience of the Church in Wales when proposals were put forward for an ecumenical Bishop shows that the procedure recommended in Article 17-2 is helpful. Once again we emphasise the importance of context in Article 22-2, and we believe this Article should set the tone for the future direction of the Anglican Communion.

Our Final reflections on the report as a whole

Anglicanism in our view is a dynamic Communion by which people move to serve God's purposes. That purpose is the fulfilment of society in the ways which God wills. In other words the goal of the Anglican Communion remains the in-breaking of the kingdom of God which we journey towards. This means that as a Communion we need to move global society nearer and nearer to that goal. We are very appreciative of the report and feel that it serves the Anglican Communion well, especially in its ideas for a covenant and for greater provincial interdependence. Out of a crisis has come a great resource for Anglican ecclesiological development. Such a resource should be met by a deep expression of gratitude. Nevertheless we also wish to add that we see a danger in the report. Put simply the danger is that the report seeks to repair the damage done by schism. That is understandable but it can lead to most attention being given to recovering the conditions for a stable, interdependent Communion than to social change. The burden of proof here is always on those who wish change (WR 135, WR141); and the danger is always that Anglicanism can only change at the pace of the slowest. The future of the Anglican Communion will include both social change and growing interdependence. We wish to affirm both realities as vital as we journey to the kingdom.

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