

Assessment of the response the House of Bishops of TEC to the Windsor Report and  
Dar El Salaam recommendation

First, I would like to thank the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church in America (TEC) for her kind invitation and for the great hospitality we enjoyed while we were in New Orleans. I am also grateful for the opportunity I was given to address the House of Bishops (HOB).

It is very unfortunate that not all the members of the Joint Standing Committee (JSC) were present when a response to the HOB of TEC was drafted. The lack of discussion and interaction will not produce a report that expresses the view of the whole committee.

The response of the House of Bishops of TEC represents a **superficial shift** from their previous position; the fact remains that their position since 2003 has not changed. The House of Bishops has not responded positively to either the Windsor Report or the Dar El Salaam Primates recommendation.

Therefore **I strongly disagree** with the report of the JSC which states that *"We believe that the Episcopal Church has clarified all outstanding questions relating to their response to the questions directed explicitly to them, and on which clarifications were sought by the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, and given the necessary assurance sought of them."* The reasons for my disagreement are as follows:

**On Public Rites for Blessing of Same-sex Unions**

The statement of the House of Bishops in New Orleans did not meet the request of Windsor Report that the *"Bishops must declare a moratorium on all such public rites"*. It also failed to meet the request of the Primates at Dar El Salaam that the Bishops should *"make an unequivocal common covenant that the Bishops will not authorize any rites of blessing for same-sex unions in their Diocese."*

They did not declare a **moratorium** on authorization public rites of the blessing of same-sex unions. Instead the House of Bishops **pledged** not to authorize any public rites of blessing of same-sex unions. I understand moratorium as "cessation of activity". In the explanatory discussion they mentioned that "the **majority**", **not all**, of Bishops do not make allowances for the blessings of same-sex unions. This means that a number of Bishops will continue to make allowances for the blessing of same-sex unions. I see this as an **equivocal and unclear response**.

While the House of Bishop's response means that 'authorization' of the rites will not take place, but it also stated that some will continue to *"explore and experience liturgies celebrating the blessing of same-sex unions"*. The exploration of liturgies celebrating the blessing of same-sex unions, keeps a window to continue such

blessings under another title!! This unashamedly disregards the standard teaching of the Anglican Communion which is still torn over this issue.

### **On the elections non-celibate gay and lesbian persons to the Episcopate**

Those who read the whole response of the House of Bishops of TEC, not only parts of it, would find the following.

- The House of Bishops clarified Resolution B033 of the General Convention 2006 in such a way that *"non-celibate gay and lesbian persons are included in the restraint"*. But in the same response we find them saying *"We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ all God's children, including gay and lesbian persons, are full and equal participants in the life of Christ's Church."* What does this mean? This statement **contradicts** their explanation of B033 which put a *restraint* on electing and consecrating *non-celibate gay and lesbian persons* to the Episcopate Order, as it restricts them from full participation in the church.
- The request of the House of Bishops to the Archbishop of Canterbury to explore ways for Gene Robinson to fully participate in Lambeth Conference demonstrates clearly that they see that the manner of life of Gene Robinson, as a non-celibate gay, *does not present a challenge to the wider church and will not lead to further strains on the Communion*. This again **contradicts** their clarification of General Convention Resolution B033 that it does indeed refer *"to non-celibate gay and lesbian persons"*.

### **On the Pastoral Scheme**

In regard to the recommendation of Dar El Salam Primates Meeting, for the establishment of a Pastoral Council "to act on behalf of the Primates in consultation with the Episcopal Church", the House of Bishops did not respond positively. Their excuse was that *such a pastoral scheme would compromise the authority of the Presiding Bishop, and place the autonomy of the Episcopal Church at risk*.

The House of Bishops came up with another internal plan that allows the Presiding Bishop to appoint Episcopal visitors for Dioceses that 'request' alternative oversight. This is completely different from the Pastoral scheme recommended by Dar El Salam. The composition of the recommended pastoral scheme has the ability to stop the interventions of outside Provinces because it represents TEC, the Primates, and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

## **Suspending all Legal Actions**

The Primates in Dar El Salaam urged the representatives of TEC and of those congregations in property disputes with TEC to suspend all legal actions against each other. The House of Bishops did not address this issue.

## **Conclusion**

The House of Bishops did not respond meet the recommendation of Windsor Report and the Dar El Salaam Primates Meeting Communiqué. Instead they used ambiguous language and contradicted themselves within their own response.

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