



# Contend for the Faith

For over 400 years the Anglican Church has preached the message of eternal life through the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Indeed the historic creeds of the church, the prayer book, and the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion have kept us true to our gospel calling to go and preach good news to the world. Not just any news, but the 'good news' of the gospel, the same news that was preached from the earliest days of the church, from the apostles onwards. Of course that isn't to say that the church has always got it right, as the early church Fathers and later church councils can attest. There have always been times when the gospel has been challenged, either by some errant interpretation of scripture, or by the prevailing attitudes and mores of the surrounding culture. Nevertheless the gospel of Jesus Christ has always won the day, so to speak, the truth cannot be denied, even if it is held back from time to time.

Today, in the face of mounting opposition and criticism of Christian values and teaching, we find ourselves once again in a position of having to defend what the Anglican Church has always believed. In the West there are growing calls for the church to bless same sex marriages, to endorse the ordination of those in a same sex relationship, and to view the scriptures as merely 'informative' but not necessarily 'authoritative' for Christians. It wouldn't be so bad if those calls were only coming from outside of the church, but they aren't, worryingly they come from within its ranks too. Even our own church here in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia faces those same calls.

Over the last year motions have been passed in the synods of Dunedin, Auckland and Waiapu, calling for the church to endorse those very things that have split the church in other parts of the Anglican Communion. Most notably this has happened in The Episcopal Church USA (TEC) and the Anglican Church of Canada. In those provinces parishes and diocese have split from each other and from the national church resulting in litigation through the courts and the loss of millions of dollars on both sides. Most tragic, however, is the loss of credible witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ when the church behaves in this way. In both those cases those who have felt the pressure to leave the

mother church have done so on a matter of gospel truth. They have neither sought to split the church nor preach some new doctrine, rather they have only wished for the church to hold fast to the good news of Jesus Christ as taught by the apostles and contained in the scriptures. Unfortunately the action of their governing bodies have made it impossible for them to stay.

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But all is not lost. As you can read later in this issue of Latimer Focus there is a growing body of Anglican provinces around the world who have said that we cannot go on acquiescing to the prevailing decadence of Western culture any more. The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA), which represents over half of all the world's Anglicans, is a Fellowship which seeks to support churches going through difficulties like those mentioned here. Now that the Anglican Covenant has failed to gain assent in a majority of our own diocesan synods it seems most likely that it will be rejected at General Synod in Fiji in July. Where does that leave us? It may be the FCA is the only credible cab left on the orthodox rank.

This poses an interesting question for all of us who wish to remain faithful to the scriptures and to remain true Anglicans. What if our own church in New Zealand votes to endorse those very things that have caused so much strife and division around the world? All will no doubt come to a head when the General Synod meets in 2014, but in the mean time we must take seriously what the writer says in the letter of Jude: "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." And indeed we must continue to do so at every opportunity.

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