



Rev. Dave Clancey

Editorial

The past thirty years of Anglican life have been dominated by issues of human sexuality. While the Lambeth Meeting of 1998 affirmed that homosexual acts are incompatible with Scripture, in 2002 the Diocese of New Westminster permitting the blessing of same-sex unions, and the following year Gene Robinson - a man in a same-sex relationship - was consecrated Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire. These events tore the fabric of the Anglican Communion, and despite the breaking of fellowship and the repeated calls for Dioceses and Provinces to relent from blessing such relationships and ordaining those in same-sex relationships, many parts of the Anglican world have insisted on progressing this agenda. Many parishes and dioceses who have sought to remain faithful to traditional Christianity within those dioceses and Provinces have at times been treated poorly and paid deeply (in losing property and finances) as they have stood for the faith entrusted once for all to the saints. In 2008 the formation of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA) at the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) marked the gathering together of Anglicans who sought to remain faithful to the faith entrusted to us in Scripture and explained in the Prayer Book, Ordinal, and 39 Articles.

The most recent event in the myriad of meetings and reports was the gathering of Primates (senior archbishops of each of the 38 Provinces) in January this year. Two features of this meeting were notable. Firstly, Rev. Dr. Foley Beach was invited. He is the Primate of the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA). Historically, The Episcopal Church (TEC) has been the recognised group of Anglicans in North America. ACNA was formed as parishes and diocese stood firm in North America and gathered together as a way of remaining Anglican. They are recognised by GFA and therefore the majority of Anglicans internationally as being genuinely Anglican. For Beach to have been invited to that meeting was a remarkable step. Equally remarkable was the statement made by that meeting. For they expressed a desire to walk together, and the majority of them upheld the traditional doctrine of marriage as being between

a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union. And recognising this, they saw the unilateral action of The Episcopal Church as 'a departure' from what it means to be part of the Anglican Communion, and required that The Episcopal Church...

"...no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity."

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This was a strong statement which both expressed that Anglicans continue to hold to what the Bible teaches (and Anglicans have always believed) regarding human sexuality, and are willing to ensure that parts of the Anglican Communion hold to that. While some thought it was too little and too late, many others rejoiced that the majority of the Anglican world was standing firm. However, it has become apparent that the requirement of the Primates is unlikely to be met. At least two members of TEC who serve on the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) - one of the Anglican instruments of communion - have said that they will attend its April meeting despite the Primates requirement. This includes one member who is elected on its Standing Committee. Additionally, the Chair of the ACC has said that TEC will be at the meeting and will exercise their right and responsibility to vote. It appears that those spoken to most directly by the Primates requirement are not listening. Others may be, though. The Canadian House of Bishops met in

late March and affirmed that they were unable to come to a common mind regarding what the Spirit was saying to the Church regarding same-sex marriages, and therefore recognised that it was highly unlikely that the Anglican Church in Canada would proceed with formalising such marriages. Such a move would have placed the Canadians in the same situation as TEC, and presumably made them open to the same response of the Primates.

With this going on around us the release of *A Way Forward* - the report of the Way Forward Working Group - was eagerly anticipated by Anglicans in these Islands and further afield. The report is considered in this edition of Focus, but it is clear that it proposes a way forward for New Zealand which sees the blessing of those in same-sex civil marriages. It suggests that those in such relationships which are blessed by the church would be able to be considered for ordination. It asserts a questionable distinction between civil and church marriages, and seeks to walk a tightrope between upholding a traditional doctrine of marriage and recognising the full legitimacy of same-sex unions, all of which can leave readers with far more questions than answers.

Should our General Synod pass the recommendations of the Report it's unlikely that this Province will immediately find ourselves in the same situation as TEC. But we would be seen by the Anglican world as determinedly walking in the same direction. Is this what we want, or how we believe God is leading his people?

It is in this context that the Latimer Fellowship are full and firm supporters of the recently formed Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (New Zealand). Having New Zealanders form such a group provides for clear alignment with the majority of

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the world’s Anglicans whatever our General Synod might do. It recognises that those who need to (or are forced to) stand firm as they remain faithful to Scripture and historical Anglicanism have a new way of being Anglican - something which we delight in for Executive member Rev. Michael Hewat and the Anglican church in West Hamilton. Yet while the Latimer Fellowship welcomes FCANZ to the playing field that is the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, we continue to seek to encourage our members to stand firm within our denomination. Why not communicate your feelings about *A Way Forward* to your Bishop or to General Synod Standing Committee directly? Urge them to hold to the faith they have declared to protect and maintain. Attend the Anglican Future Conferences to show your solidarity with all Anglicans who believe that essential to our faith is belief in the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And join with us in praying. Praying for God to reform and revitalise his church. Praying that the glorious, life-changing gospel of Jesus might be heard from every Anglican pulpit in these Islands. Pray for the work of the FCANZ, and for the Latimer Fellowship. And pray that God might glorify his Son in and through us all, using us in small and little ways to have a great influence on his world.