

Baptism as Full Initiation & Recommendations to the 75th General Convention

July 2006

The Council of The Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission, meeting at the Day Spring Conference Center in Ellenton, Florida, receives with gratitude the report of the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion as well as resolutions on Baptism as Full Initiation, passed unanimously by the conventions of the dioceses of Northern Michigan, Connecticut and California. We concur with the Special Commission's acknowledgement that baptism forms the foundation for all Christian unity, including that within our Anglican Communion, as previously noted in the widely adopted language of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*:

“Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity. We are one people and are called to confess and serve one Lord in each place in all the world. The union with Christ which we share through baptism has important implications for Christian unity. ‘There is...one baptism, one God and Father of us all...’ (Eph. 4:4-6). When baptismal unity is realized in one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the healing and reconciling love of God. Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship.”[1]

We underscore the Book of Common Prayer's assertion that “The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.”[2] Additionally, the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation meeting in Toronto adds:

"Through baptism with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Christ unites us with himself in his death and resurrection, seals us with the Holy Spirit, and incorporates us into his body the church...Baptism is the sacrament of once-for-all admission into membership in the catholic church, a particular expression of which is the local eucharistic community..."[3]

Given the broad acceptance of these statements within both the Anglican Communion and the Church catholic, we call attention to the fact that Baptism into our one Lord, and the regular renewal of that covenant in Holy Communion, form the basis for all communion within the Body of Christ. Thus “bonds of affection” are properly understood as the fruit of this very real unity, rather than the essential sign of, or basis for communion among Anglicans.[4] Baptism is the sole basis for communion among Anglicans.

ACTIONS RECOMMENDED TO THE 75TH GENERAL CONVENTION

Grounded in this conviction, we commend the passage of C020, the “Baptism as Full Initiation” resolutions of the above named dioceses.

We further urge the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church to adopt A167 “Full and Equal Claim” for all the Baptized. The Special Commission did well in connecting the statements of three previous General Conventions meeting over the past 30 years which noted that “our baptism into Jesus Christ is inseparable from our communion with one another.” In light of this we offer the following recommendations to the convention on the remaining resolutions proposed by the Special Commission.

ADOPT—A163 *Pastoral Care and Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight*

ADOPT—A168 *Human Rights for Homosexual Persons*

ADOPT—A164 *Continued Attention to the Millennium Development Goals*

ADOPT—A160 *Expression of Regret*

We recommend the adoption of this resolution in support of the “Covenant Statement” made by the House of Bishops, only as the Covenant Statement applied to the time period leading up to the 75th General Convention. We urge both houses to work together in creating a new statement which will give the mind of the Episcopal Church with regard to the Windsor Report.

ADOPT WITH AMENDMENT—A159 *Commitment to Interdependence in the Anglican Communion*

This resolution is impractical, and further in the Anglican Consultative Council, we have adequate expression of our mutual governance. We can support the first two resolves and call for the deletion of the third and fourth resolves, unless reciprocal provisions are made for similar participation by members of the Episcopal Church in the synodical bodies of other provinces.

ADOPT WITH AMENDMENT— A162 *Public Rites of Blessing for Same-Sex Unions*

We recommend the deletion of the words “private” and “individual” within the first resolve as keeping that language could lead to the creation of private rites and a culture of secrecy. We further advocate the deletion of the remaining resolves.

ADOPT WITH AMENDMENT— A166 *Anglican Covenant Development Process*

The covenant we Anglicans share is the covenant of our baptism. We recommend amendment of the first resolve to replace the words after “support” with, “the process of living more deeply into the covenant of our baptism, the source of our unity in faith, order and common life in the service of God’s mission; and be it further”

We further recommend replacing “an Anglican Covenant” in the second resolve with “living into the covenant of our baptism” and in the third resolve, substitute “The Anglican Covenant Development Process” with “the process of living into the covenant of our baptism.” Finally, we recommend the addition of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation to the list of bodies named.

DEFEAT—A161 *Election of Bishops*

We acknowledge the challenges that actions of the General Convention have created for members of some provinces within the Anglican Communion. But as the starting point for all Christian unity is baptism, it would be inconsistent to apply the standards of this resolution to the Episcopacy only. Consistency and faithfulness to our baptismal theology would call for refraining from baptizing, communing, confirming, receiving, licensing as Title III ministers, as well as ordaining to the diaconate, priesthood and episcopacy “any person living openly in a same-gender union,” or anyone “whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church.” While this would be logically consistent, it would be counter to resolution A167 and the previous actions of General Conventions over the past 30 years. Therefore, we urge defeat of A161.

DEFEAT—A169 *Amend Canon III.1: Quadrilateral and Exercise of Ministry*

We readily affirm the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as a historical document which has proved fruitful in ecumenical dialogues. However, this resolution is a novelty within Anglican polity and offers no means for adjudicating which “theological opinions” are appropriate. We urge defeat of this resolution.

[1] Taken from section B6 in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper No. 111), World Council of Churches, 1982.

[2] *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), p. 298.

[3] “Walk in Newness of Life: The Findings of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation Toronto 1991,” Section One, #1, Anglican Consultative Council, 1991.

[4] This relationship of baptism as foundational and peace as the desired fruit is the one we find in Ephesians 4, as Paul relates “bonds of peace” in verse 3 is something we “make every effort to maintain” knowing the deeper reality that there is “one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”