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I have been invited by Bishop Garth and members of Chapter to reflect on the state of affairs within the Anglican Communion. I shall start by addressing three points – the nature of the Anglican Communion, the Instruments of Unity, and the draft Covenant. Then we will have a time for questions and debate.

Communion and the Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion is a family of 38 Provinces in over 160 countries bound together in covenantal 'bonds of affection.'

The word Anglicanism first emerged in the 1830s, and the phrase 'Anglican Communion' was first used in 1851, and by 1860 was recognised as referring to our fellowship of legally independent Churches, worshipping in the tradition of the Anglican Prayer Book, with a ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and in communion with the See of Canterbury.

In this sense, the 'Anglican Communion' was never established, as was the case of, for example, the Lutheran World Federation. It just emerged, out of the various historic developments that acknowledge some historic link to the See of Canterbury. Provinces themselves also evolved in an ad hoc manner, with no consistency even between founding documents (for example, some refer to the 39 Articles, though we do not, references to the Church of England vary considerably).

Nonetheless, there have always been strong shared bonds, not least in our historic use of the Prayer Book and Ordinal; our commitment to the three-fold ordained ministry and bishops within the historic episcopate; and our 'Catholic-and-Reformed' theological and ecclesiological understandings. We also share a level of engagement with contemporary culture, and an expectation of tolerance, charity, and a gracious magnanimity towards a considerable degree of diversity within our unity.

So, our Communion has 'just grown' and continues to grow, as we find ways to express both our shared Anglican inheritance, and our worldwide communion as God's children. Now, alongside the particular, but undefined, role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, we have the Lambeth Conference, Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' meetings, the Partners in Mission process, and various Gatherings, Networks, Conferences, Committees, Commissions and

Consultations. All contribute texture and depth to our common life, and none have any legally binding remit!

The Birth of the Lambeth Conference

It is worth remembering that our own Province was born in conflict, and it was these problems that led to the very first Lambeth Conference in 1867.

Arriving in the Cape in 1848, Bishop Robert Gray soon found himself in conflict with Bishop John Colenso of Natal. Some of his views would still be controversial today, others we recognise as the necessary pursuit of an appropriately encultured gospel.

In 1863 Bishop Gray deposed Bishop Colenso on the charge of heresy. In 1865, Bishop Colenso appealed to the Privy Council in London, who ruled his deposition was improper and illegal. In 1866 Bishop Gray excommunicated him.

Meanwhile, Bishops in Canada had asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Longley, to call together Anglican Bishops round the world, so that they could talk about this and other issues.

They were concerned that as Provinces developed their own life, they should not inadvertently move apart. They also wanted to avoid giving different answers to controversial questions – concerns that are familiar to us today!

So Archbishop Longley called the conference in 1867. Several senior bishops refused at first to have anything to do with it.

Not only was there concern about the complexities of the Colenso case, there was also fear that all large meetings are bad – bishops are only human, and fall into partisan camps, and large meetings can lead to unedifying behaviour!

Another concern was any attempt to take decisions would threaten Bishops' autonomy within their dioceses.

Others were concerned about the legality, and ecclesiology, of calling bishops together.

So the meeting went ahead, not as a Synod, or a Council, but as a Conference. Bishops were not 'summoned to decide', but 'invited to confer'. It was also made entirely clear that none of the resolutions would have any binding force.

In other words, the Lambeth Conference arose as a response to a messy situation. It was established with a less than satisfactory basis, to meet the particular agendas of particular participants at a particular time – and today we are left with the legacy of that fudge.

Nonetheless, these flexible, and at times usefully ambiguous, understandings of the Communion have helped guide our worldwide relationship through over a century.

The Relationship with the Church of England in South Africa

A more recent example is the status of the Church of England in South Africa in relation to the rest of the Anglican Communion. CESA has maintained very close ties with other parts of the Anglican Communion, notably the Diocese of Sydney in Australia and elements within the Church of England. When the question arose of whether CESA Bishops ought to be invited to Lambeth Conferences, it was felt that this had to be addressed through relationships on the ground here in South Africa.

During the incumbency of Archbishop Phillip Russell, there were discussions between CESA, Sydney and ourselves, over the election and consecration of Dudley Foord to be CESA's Presiding Bishop. After much debate, our Synod of Bishops decided to participate in that consecration in the hope of facilitating reconciliation between our churches.

The then Archbishop of Sydney and I subsequently collaborated on a resolution for the 1987 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, which recognised and encouraged reconciliation between our churches (text follows).

ACC-7 - Resolution 41: The Church of England in South Africa

THAT this Council:

- a. notes that the Archbishop of Sydney consecrated Canon D. Foord on 12th February 1984 on the authority of letters dismissory from the Rt Revd S. C. Bradley;*
- b. further notes a Statement made by the Archbishop of Sydney before the consecration which was a gesture of goodwill and encouragement;*
- c. recognises the Church of the Province of Southern Africa's efforts in seeking reconciliation with the Church of England in South Africa;*
- d. encourages the re-establishment of the Joint Liaison Committee between the Church of the Province of Southern Africa and the Church of England in South Africa and hopes that progress can be reported by the Church of the Province of Southern Africa to ACC-8.*

As you know, that process is still with us. It is a salutary lesson that division may provide an immediate solution to seemingly implacable differences, but in the long term is no solution whatsoever to our call to communion within the Body of Christ.

So let me sum up this section by saying that neither through time nor through contemporary practice across the world, has there been a single answer to how we should understand and express Communion between Anglicans. We talk

about the 'bonds of affection' – and in some ways, trying to regulate affection is about as easy as legislating for love!

But we should take heart, because Communion is God's gift – and it is from our Communion with him that all else springs. Our Church has life, not because of who we are, but because of who God is, and his gift of His Spirit, which sustains us, and leads us into all truth.

The Instruments of Unity

Let me turn now to my second theme, the four Instruments of Unity or Instruments of Communion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

The longest-standing of these is of course the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose historic See goes back to the year 601. Until recently (with the conclusion of various regional agreements) it was the case that it was sufficient to be in communion with the See of Canterbury to be in communion with the whole of the Anglican Communion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury occupies what has been called 'the primacy of honour' among all the Primates, and is described as a 'focus of unity'. He convenes the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meetings (and so decisions on whom to invite are ultimately his – though the extent of his discretion is unclear). He also chairs the Anglican Consultative Council. Historically, Archbishops of Canterbury have often played a leading role in the teaching and the mission of the Communion as a whole. Yet all of this has evolved organically, without legal basis – it is a position of influence and moral weight only.

The Lambeth Conference

The second Instrument to emerge was the Lambeth Conference, which has met approximately every ten years since 1867 – and I shall return to the events of the most recent meeting in more detail in a moment.

The Anglican Consultative Council

One touchstone of Anglicanism has been the involvement of laity in the governing of the Church. We are not ruled from above by a Pope and a Curia of Bishops. Rather, we believe that God's Spirit is at work in all God's people to build up the whole Body of Christ. Paul tells the Corinthian church 'to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good' (1 Cor12:7), For this reason, we describe ourselves as 'both episcopally led and synodically governed'. In our synods, all God's people are represented – Bishops, clergy and laity.

The role of laity grew through the nineteenth century. Recognising this, the 1897 Lambeth Conference established a permanent consultative body, which gradually developed as an advisory body, through to the establishment of the Anglican Consultative Council at the 1968 Lambeth Conference, after consultations within each Province. The ACC meets approximately every three years, with episcopal, clerical and lay representatives from every Province.

It alone of the Instruments of Unity has a formal constitution, which includes among its objectives 'to advise on inter-Anglican, provincial and diocesan relationships ...'

So both by reason of its constitution, and by reason of the theological and ecclesial understandings of what it means to be church which underpin the constitution, my conviction is that this is the Instrument of Unity which should primarily be the place for handling the current difficulties and the inter-Anglican, provincial and relationships that are affected by them.

The Primates' Meeting

Yet it seems that centre stage is increasingly being given to the Primates – and I very much regret this.

The 1978 Lambeth Conference invited the Archbishop of Canterbury to work with his fellow Primates 'to initiate consideration of the way to relate together the international conferences, councils and meetings within the Anglican Communion, so that the Anglican Communion may best serve God within the context of one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.'

Archbishop Coggan called the first meeting. He advocated 'meetings of the Primates of the Communion reasonably often, for leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation ... perhaps as frequently as once in two years.' Again, there was the underlying acknowledgement that they never had more than a consultative and advisory authority.

Archbishop Coggan's emphasis was certainly that the meeting should be rather more a place where the pastors of pastors could pastor one another, than a business meeting.

So, how have these Instruments of Unity dealt with divisive questions in the past?

The Ordination of Women

The most obvious issue is the Ordination of Women.

The 1968 Lambeth Conference resolved that theological arguments for and against women's ordination to the priesthood were inconclusive, and recommended that the advice of the Anglican Consultative Council should be considered carefully. In other words, the Bishops looked to the wider synodical body of the Communion for their views.

The 1970 ACC meeting concluded by a narrow margin, after long debate, that the ordination of women to the priesthood would be acceptable. The 1978 Lambeth Conference then recognised 'the autonomy of each of its member churches, acknowledging the legal right of each church to make its own decisions about the appropriateness of admitting women to Holy Orders.'

A further development came in 1985 when the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) expressed the intention 'not to withhold consent to the election of a bishop on the grounds of gender.' The Presiding Bishop brought the matter to the newly established Primates' Meeting, which asked the Australian Primate, John Grindrod, to head a committee which would prepare a paper for the 1988 Lambeth Conference.

Lambeth 1988 resolved that each Province should respect the decisions of others, and maintain the highest degree of communion possible, and went on to recommend courtesy, respect, and open dialogue with those of differing views.

This rather lengthy explanation illustrates how the Communion can deal with a very contentious issue with maturity, and without division, despite a measure of impairment in relations of Communion.

Human Sexuality

The debate on homosexuality started with similar broad consensus. Lambeth 1978 passed a resolution which affirmed faithfulness and chastity within and outside marriage, and called for a wider theological study of sexuality. Its final clause said, 'While we affirm heterosexuality as the scriptural norm, we recognise the need for deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality, which would take seriously both the teaching of Scripture and the results of scientific and medical research.' It also encouraged dialogue with homosexual people, and affirmed their need for pastoral care.

The 1988 Conference reaffirmed the statement, and called for further study and dialogue.

So, finally we come to the 1998 Lambeth Conference. During the first two weeks of our three weeks together, Bishops spent considerable time working on particular questions. I chaired Section 1, which had the overarching theme of 'Called to Full Humanity'. Some 200 bishops opted for this Section, of whom 60 signed up to consider human sexuality. Let me tell you, these 60 spanned the

broadest spectrum imaginable, from the hardest line conservatives to the most radical liberals!

Someone calculated that we devoted 800 bishop hours to this thorny subject. It was the most difficult group of the whole conference – there was huge pain and division as discussions began. But 800 bishop hours later, we had thrashed out a common position.

The result was the 11 carefully crafted paragraphs of Theme 3 of the Section 1 Report. I am making these available to you, so you can see how we managed to be completely honest about the breadth of views on which we could not agree, and yet also find considerable agreement on wider issues, and on a way to go forward together. We recommended that the Conference Resolution should not go into details, but merely accept and affirm our report, and refer it to the Provinces for discussion. The rest of the 200 Bishops of the Section agreed with this approach, recognising that it resulted from refining in a real crucible of fire.

Now this is where clumsiness prevailed. The Archbishop of Canterbury found himself under considerable pressure for there to be a fuller resolution on homosexuality. Contrary to all the usual normal procedures for handling resolutions, a draft was presented, and then debated and substantially amended in an hour-and-a-half plenary meeting, of over 600 bishops, spouses, observers, guests, and all in the full glare of the cameras.

The result was Resolution 1:10. Though it does commend the report of the subsection, the points that follow did not arise out of the long hard wrestling that we had done, and did not reflect the way that, despite such differences, we had managed to enunciate our differences in ways that allowed us to keep working together. It was as if our 800 bishop hours had never happened!

For all that resolutions are advisory and not binding, some of its clauses, those which 'reject homosexuality as incompatibly with Scripture' have taken on a life of their own. Other clauses, including those advocating continuing listening and also monitoring work in the area of human sexuality – alongside all the rest of the resolutions of the Conference – are given nothing like the same prominence!

What grieves me most, is that through not holding to the internal processes of this Instrument of Unity, we have undermined, and so lost our grip, on the assumptions of unity in communion that underlie our common life.

The Windsor Process

We know what resulted. Acting within the autonomy that is theirs, and after debate over several decades, the American Church elected and consecrated Gene Robinson, a man in a long term relationship with another man. The Primates set up the Lambeth Commission which produced the Windsor Report.

Its recommendations were broadly endorsed by the 2005 Primates' meeting in Dromatine, Northern Ireland, and by the 2006 ACC meeting.

At the Archbishop of Canterbury's behest, the Joint Standing Commission of the Primates and the ACC set up a sub-group, which reflected the full span of perspectives, to report to the Primates in Dar es-Salaam on the American response to Windsor. They judged that the report had been taken very seriously, and that overall the response was positive. They noted that in some areas the General Convention had gone beyond what had been asked by Windsor. They also acknowledged that in other areas the General Convention had not followed the exact letter of Windsor where that did not reflect the internal structures and legal framework, but had instead operated within its own polity to reflect the spirit of Windsor.

Well, as you know, that was not the position that was reflected in the final communiqué. Nor were the internal structures and workings of the Episcopal Church taken into consideration in the new set of demands being made of the Americans (and let us be clear here – though the Primates' meeting legally remains only advisory, these effectively are demands).

Whatever the merits of the various positions on human sexuality, my greatest sadness is that we have allowed ourselves, within the Primates' meeting in particular, to lose sight of what it means to live in Communion.

The Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa

Last September, when our Synod of Bishops met, we had a very full discussion of the whole subject. As you might guess, there is a pretty wide spectrum of views, even if nothing like as wide as within the global Anglican Communion.

However, we were totally in agreement in saying the following:

We know from experience that unity is a divine given but requires constant effort to be realised; a journey that requires tolerance and grace so that no-one should be hurt and all should feel that they belong. Our own journey continues to remind us of the need for a generosity of spirit and the respect for diversity.

We also said

As Bishops, we remain convinced that within the Anglican Communion what unites us far outweighs what divides us.

And we concluded by saying

We urge the Anglican Communion to choose to remain united in accordance with the will of the Triune God whom we seek to serve. We understand that, given the situation in which we find ourselves at present, there is no simple or quick solution to the difficulties we face. We urge

every part of the Anglican Communion to recognise, in one another, our common sanctification in Christ and to seek steps that, in time, will lead to reconciliation and the unity and peace that Christ wills for his Church. We pledge ourselves to continue to pray and work with all concerned for such reconciliation and unity and are ready to assist in this process where appropriate.

Well, this was the message I tried to put forward at the Primates' Meeting, but I fear that there were too many deaf ears.

Nonetheless, I want you all to be assured that at last week's Synod of Bishops' meeting, we remained committed to the need to continue to choose to remain united, and to work together on this basis, by God's grace.

The Draft Covenant

Finally, let me say a few words about the draft Covenant.

Now, it is certainly the case that our current predicament highlights the rather fluid nature of the Anglican Communion as an international fellowship of autonomous Provinces.

It is worth reflecting for a moment on that word 'autonomous'. We do not consider ourselves to be 'independent' Provinces. This would mean a far looser relationship. As the Windsor Report points out, 'autonomy' only exists for those who are in relationship with others – it is about the ability to govern one's own affairs, while being part of a greater community or system (Sections 75, 76).

So the first questions are these: What sort of balance should we have between our autonomy and our common life? Do we have the balance right at present, or have we moved too far in a particular direction?

It is only as we answer that question that we can proceed to the more specific question of what processes or mechanisms or commitments do we need, in order to ensure the effective operation of an appropriate balance.

We certainly want to preserve the greatest strengths of 'unity in diversity' – while at the same time not wanting to jeopardise either appropriate unity, nor appropriate diversity.

It is not a question of setting unity against truth. As Rowan Williams has reminded us, the fullness of unity will be the context for the fullness of truth, and vice versa – and even if these will only be completely realised in an eschatological framework, they are nonetheless the inevitable destination of the journey of all Christians, and the whole Church universal.

The Windsor Report first proposed the idea of a Covenant and now the specially commissioned Covenant Design Group has put forward a first draft.

The Primates are asking Provinces to consider the draft. At last week's Synod of Bishops, we agreed that Dioceses should be asked to study it, and send responses to the Dean of the Province by the end of the year. These will be consolidated and sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A revised text will be sent to the Lambeth Conference of July-August 2008, which will carry out further work. The next revision will then be passed to the subsequent meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. Thereafter, Provinces will be asked to make a formal response – each through their full synodical processes, which for us will mean the Provincial Synod of 2012 or 2015.

Bishop Garth has given thought on how we as a Diocese will engage in discussion of this covenant.

The questions I want to ask of the Covenant are these:

- Is this what the Anglican Communion most needs at this time?
- How great are the dangers merely of producing a text driven by the underlying agenda of tackling a particular problem, without bearing in mind sufficiently the need to preserve the broad riches of Anglicanism?
- Can we produce a text that, rather than constraining, provides a basis upon which global Anglicanism can grow and flourish into this, and even future, centuries?
- Can we produce a text that enhances the life both of Provinces and of the Communion as a whole?
- Are the roles and responsibilities of the various Instruments of Unity accurately described?
- Is the balance right between the various Instruments of Unity?

I will be honest and say that beyond my continuing question of whether a Covenant is really the best way ahead, my serious concern with the current draft is that the ACC is being sidelined, and far too much power is being given to the Primates' Meeting.

I fear we are in danger of setting up something akin to the Roman Curia – and I am especially worried that the Primates, gifted and blessed and called as they are in so many ways, are nonetheless so unrepresentative of the totality of the Body of Christ. Even the representative breadth of the Lambeth Conference is questionable.

My theology continues to tell me that it is in and through our widest councils that we will most fully discern both what we should do, and how we should go about it.

Conclusion

I am an eternal optimist – and not because I am retiring soon and leaving this behind, but because Jesus has risen, and in him we have the victory, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church!

When we look back on the history of the Church, it has always been assailed with divisions to be overcome. The unity of Christ's people is one of the prime targets of the devil, who does not want the world to look at us and say 'See how these Christians love one another!' The devil's purposes are far better served when people look at us and see us fighting and quarrelling, and doing so in ways that fail to reflect the spirit of charity, tolerance and gracious magnanimity that has always characterised the best of Anglicanism!.

So whether it was the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, or the precise understanding of the Eucharist, or the various models of salvation, or slavery, or usury, or contraception, or women's ordination – or even questions over vestments, and whether, and how high, to raise up the bread and wine with the words of consecration – well, God is bigger! And the unity that he grants us is a gift of grace that can overcome all manner of human disagreement.

In March, we hosted the International Anglican Communion's TEAM conference – Towards Effective Anglican Mission. I continue to hear stories about how the experience of participants was that our common life of mission and ministry in Christ bridges our disagreements. It was also evident that human sexuality is not the prime concern for most Christians in their life of faith.

Of course, some may leave the Communion as a result of our current problems. But we must not take ourselves too seriously. As Joost de Blank once said 'God works his purposes out, despite the confusion of our minds.'

I suspect that future generations will see this as something of a storm in a teacup, and certainly not as central to the Christian life.

For the centre of Christian life is Jesus Christ. As I said at the TEAM conference, God's eternal Word did not come as a philosophical concept, nor as a political programme. Nor was the Word made text. But the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

It is not where we stand on this or that particular issue which is definitive for our salvation – nor even our understanding of this or that passage of Scripture. What matters is our relationship with Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross, and who was raised to new life, so that we too might find new life in him.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!