



COMMUNION MATTERS:
A STUDY DOCUMENT FOR THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH



PREFACE

The Theology Committee of the House of Bishops has been asked to prepare this study document as a resource for the bishops, dioceses, and people of the Episcopal Church in considering the Communiqué of the Primates' Meeting of the Anglican Communion.

As most Episcopalians know, issues of human sexuality recently have threatened to impair our relations with other Anglicans. To seek godly wisdom and prevent further damage to our bonds of fellowship, we have been engaged in a global conversation involving back-and-forth position papers and dialogue that are both prayerful theology and ecclesial diplomacy.

The most recent statement in this ongoing process is the *Communiqué of the Primates' Meeting of the Anglican Communion* issued in February 2007 from Tanzania. The Communiqué addresses our 2006 General Convention response to the requests of the *Windsor Report on Communion*, and makes additional requests of our House of Bishops. It asks for a response by September 30, 2007.

The Communiqué needs to be seen as a part of the ongoing Windsor process, “a pilgrimage towards healing and reconciliation,” as the preface to the report described it in 2004. This study document summarizes this process, describes why such a process is important, and examines aspects of the special character of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican tradition. It also poses questions for our corporate reflection to assist the bishops as they prepare for the fall meeting of the House of Bishops, which will include conversations with the Archbishop of Canterbury, members of the Standing Committee of the Primates' Meeting, and members of the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council.

Constraints of space and concerns about maintaining easy readability prevent us from recounting all the important details of the conversation taking place in our church and Communion. We hope that we have faithfully described the essentials. For more information, consult the “Resources” section at the end of this study document, which compiles links to electronic versions of pertinent documents published since 2003. These documents may also be accessed by visiting www.collegeforbishops.org.

St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2:4–7). We offer *Communion Matters* as a contribution to the discernment of this church as we seek the mind of Christ and endeavor to be faithful to our calling as members of the Anglican family in the world.

— Pentecost 2007

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PART I

RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION MATTER

The Anglican Communion is composed of churches autonomously governed and joined together in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ, in communion with the See of Canterbury, and committed to the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.¹ These constituent churches, called provinces, share a common tradition rooted in the life of the English Church, the heritage of the Book of Common Prayer, and the catholicity of the Church. The Episcopal Church is a constituent member of the Communion.

In these challenging times, why does the Episcopal Church care what other members of the Anglican Communion think of its actions? What are our responsibilities as members of this fellowship of churches?

At each celebration of Holy Baptism, we recall the words of the Epistle to the Ephesians, “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all” (Ephesians 4:5). We rejoice that within the Anglican Communion we have been given an international network of relationships in Jesus Christ. Across the Communion we are all enlarged by the faith and mission that we share with others from many lands and cultures and languages. The world knows that we follow Jesus by the love with which we relate to our brothers and sisters in Christ (John 17:21).

The Communion matters because in this fellowship all give and receive many gifts.

Thousands of parishes and most dioceses in the Episcopal Church have vital partnerships with sisters and brothers around the world. Each week, visits are exchanged, resources shared, and faith mutually strengthened. During the fifty years of civil war in Sudan, for example, the most important thing to sisters and brothers there, besides physical survival, was that somebody knew they existed and would be their advocates. At the same time, Episcopalians who have visited with Anglicans in troubled places uniformly come home with a new understanding of what joy in the Lord and powerful faith under persecution look like. Episcopalians have benefited from the witness, teaching, and energy of partners on six continents of the globe.

The Communion matters because it enables us to be disciples in a global context.

Anglicans form the third largest body of Christians worldwide. Those who have visited around the Communion in person or electronically know the breadth of expression that the Body of Christ can take in liturgy, governance, and parish life. As part of the Anglican Communion, we live more fully into our catholic identity as members of the One, Holy,

Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Encountering this broad diversity testifies to what connects us: our historic confession of Jesus Christ and shared tradition of episcopally-led communities preaching the Word and celebrating the sacraments as they engage in God's mission. This is the historic Faith and Order as described in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadriateral (BCP, pp. 876–877). In our diversity of form and uniformity of witness to the historic creeds, governance, and heritage of the Church, we have a global voice with which to tell the love of Jesus and seek the justice of God.

The Communion matters because we have sought it for many years.

Historically, the Communion developed in large part because U.S. Episcopalians and Canadian Anglicans experienced themselves as isolated. In the mid-1800s they took steps to reconnect with the churches in the British Isles and the slowly emerging churches in other parts of what would eventually become the British Commonwealth of Nations. As the post-World War II years saw the provinces of the Communion begin to grow in numbers and in formal organization, the Episcopal Church took the extraordinary step of amending its constitution in 1967 with a preamble reflecting our investment in the gifts of fellowship, witness, and mission that a global connection offered.

The maintenance of mutuality and trust within the Communion effects future mission opportunities.

The opportunity of the present moment is to speak a clear word to all of our global partners in response to the questions put to us by the primates in the hope of deepening the unity in diversity that has been the hallmark of our fellowship of churches. We respect their concerns and value their contributions to our dialogue and discernment. We pray that greater clarity and candor, together with increased desire to deepen reconciliation, will mark our conversations in the coming years.

PART II

OUR SPECIAL CHARISM AS ANGLICAN CHRISTIANS

Episcopalians have long prized the *via media*, the middle way between polarities, as a faithful theological method. That distinction has often been misidentified as an expedient compromise, one which might endanger essentials. For Anglicans the *via media* is an approach that acknowledges paradox and believes even apparent opposites may be reconciled or transcended. Moreover, many within our church believe this is a good thing and a major charism (gift).

This belief finds expression in the Collect for Richard Hooker's Day (November 3): "O God of truth and peace, you raised up your servant Richard Hooker in a day of bitter controversy to defend with sound reasoning and great charity the catholic and reformed religion. Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace, but as a comprehension for the sake of truth." As Anglicans we assume the truth is always more comprehensive than our current thinking, too complex to be fully stated by any one person or faction. This is a statement of humility mindful of the words of the Apostle Paul, "Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (I Corinthians 13:12b). The mid-twentieth-century missiologist Max Warren has observed: "It takes the whole world to know the whole Gospel." Ultimately the "mind of Christ" is perceived in community through prayer and dialogue, as Scripture is studied and interpreted and as reason and tradition inform that interpretation.

Our tolerance for difference finds antecedence prior to the sixteenth-century Reformation. Moderation and pragmatism, so essential to Benedictine spirituality, coupled with an accent on the centrality of common prayer, enabled our spiritual forebears in the British Isles to find their true unity through worship and sacraments. Elizabeth I found herself in the awkward position of having to keep both Protestant reformers and Catholic traditionalists within one church. The ensuing "Elizabethan Settlement," it may be argued, was an accident of history since religious pluralism was unimaginable. For many Anglicans it has seemed providential. Ever since, we have been a church and now a Communion of churches struggling to hold together persons of substantial theological and liturgical difference in one Church. One Anglican writer describes it as follows:

The Anglican vocation is to create a spiritual liberty in which individuals may bear witness to the truth as they see it, submitting themselves to the criticism of their peers without fear of ecclesiastical censure or censorship, the only condition being their continued voluntary participation in the worshipping life of the Church and outward profession of the fundamental baptismal faith.²

"Comprehension for the sake of truth" has served us well. Perhaps it is our unique and essential charism as a Church.

² Paul Avis. "What is 'Anglicanism'?" *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes & John Booty. SPCK. 1978.

Of course, in almost every age since the sixteenth century there have been those within and outside of Anglicanism who pressure the Church to be more decisive, less tolerant of differences. Such pressure is helpful to the extent that it keeps us from relativism, but it is deeply injurious if it causes separation and division among those for whom Christ died. In our own day, we especially need to preserve this special Anglican charism, not only for our own Communion but for all Christians. By doing so we bear concrete witness to the truth that our greatest unity cannot be measured by intellectual assent to doctrine as much as a spirit of charity which fulfills the second part of our Lord's Great Commandment and is essential in the body of Christ.

PART III

THE COMMUNIQUÉ AND ITS CONTEXT

Globalization has brought into sharp contrast the different theological and cultural perspectives of the churches of the Anglican Communion. Because the Communion has no central constitution and no form of synod or council beyond that of each province, issues of authority and conciliarity can present acute challenges for the maintenance of communion. Within our tradition of dispersed authority, it is challenging to address local issues in ministry while maintaining catholicity.

Nothing has highlighted this challenge in recent years more than issues surrounding human sexuality. For some forty years the Episcopal Church has been addressing concerns about the pastoral care and full inclusion of homosexually oriented persons in the life of the Church. The Anglican Church of Canada has found itself addressing similar issues, as have other churches in the worldwide Communion.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference discussed these matters and produced a report that reflected the different views present among the bishops, and a subsequent resolution, Lambeth I.10. The report recognized that there was not a consensus in the Communion on the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of persons in such unions, and affirmed the Church's teaching on marriage. The bishops urged that a Communion-wide "listening process" be launched to consider the pastoral needs of gay and lesbian persons and called "all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn the irrational fear of homosexuals."

A critical point was reached in 2002 when the Canadian Diocese of New Westminster voted to authorize public rites for the blessing of same-sex unions. Another occurred in 2003 when the Diocese of New Hampshire elected a gay man in a committed same-sex relationship as its bishop, an election later ratified by the Episcopal Church.

Some have welcomed these developments as prophetic actions for the full inclusion of gay and lesbian persons in the Church and consistent with the loving and just witness enjoined upon us by Christ. Others have viewed them as contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture, "the primary authority" for Anglicans (1998 Lambeth Resolution III.1), and have cited 1998 Lambeth Resolution I.10, which stated that we "cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions."

The Primates' Meeting in the fall of 2003 described these actions as having "jeopardized our sacramental fellowship with each other" and said that if the consecration of the Bishop-elect of New Hampshire took place, it "will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level." The New Hampshire consecration went forward in accordance with the canonical procedures of the Episcopal Church.

The Archbishop of Canterbury appointed the pan-Anglican Lambeth Commission on Communion to assess these developments and seek a “way forward which would encourage communion within the Anglican Communion.” The commission published the *Windsor Report on Communion* in October 2004. The commission’s mandate was not to resolve issues of human sexuality, but to focus on what communion really means for Anglicans and to consider “ways in which communion and understanding could be enhanced where serious differences threatened the life of a diverse worldwide Church.”

The Windsor Report extensively describes the character of the “fellowship (*koinonia*) ecclesiology” of the Anglican Communion. The Church is “an anticipatory sign of God’s healing and restorative future for the world.” The Communion is an association and fellowship of independent churches bound together by their love of the Lord and participation in God’s mission.

Anglican churches are autonomous, the report affirms, but “autonomous in communion.” There must be room for new understandings and theological development in the provinces. Yet autonomy “denotes not unlimited freedom but what we might call freedom-in-relation, so it is subject to limits generated by the commitments of communion,” obliging each church “to have regard to the common good of the global community and the Church universal.”³

While there is no magisterium or overarching jurisdiction beyond the individual province, all the Anglican churches are bound together by “bonds of affection,” mutual responsibility and interdependence, and by a commitment to catholicity and mutuality as part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

The Windsor Report characterizes the actions of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Westminster as inconsistent with the expected path of consultation and fellowship in the Communion. It also describes the actions of other Anglican bishops that have intervened in provinces, dioceses, and parishes other than their own as violating the bonds of affection and of catholic order.

A series of recommendations are made, some to the Episcopal Church and the Church of Canada specifically, others to the intervening bishops and provinces, and still others to Anglicans generally. Each recommendation is offered as a way to help restore communion where it has been strained.

The Episcopal Church is asked to supply “an expression of regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached.” Both the U.S. and Canadian churches are asked to effect “a moratorium on the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same gender union until some new consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges.” It also asks for a moratorium on the authorization of public rites of blessing for same gender unions (although we note that our General Convention has not explicitly authorized such).

³ Sections 71 – 86 of the Windsor Report are essential reading on these points.

The Report calls for everyone to undertake a pan-Anglican “listening process” on issues of same-sex relationships, and declares that “any demonizing of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment, is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care.”

Finally the report calls for a moratorium on further interventions by bishops in dioceses other than their own, and recommends the development of an Anglican Covenant to enrich our Communion and enable us to address differences and conflicts in a more intentional and constructive manner.

In their role as chief pastors and teachers, the House of Bishops initially responded to the Windsor Report with an expression of regret at the special meeting in Salt Lake in January 2005. At the spring meeting two months later, the House of Bishops produced its *Covenant Statement*, which agreed to further restraints as an expression of the bishops’ commitment to work with recommendations of the Communion. The House of Bishops also adopted a plan for Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO), which allowed for the appointment of an alternate bishop to minister to parishes in conflict with their own bishop.

Additionally, the Executive Council responded to the request that our church’s members of the Anglican Consultative Council voluntarily withdraw from the meeting in Nottingham, England. They attended only as observers. The Presiding Bishop responded to the Windsor Report’s request that the Episcopal Church present a theological explanation of its actions by commissioning the writing of *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, which was presented to the ACC meeting and detailed the engagement of our church with issues of human sexuality across the past forty years.

In the spring of 2006 the deputies to the 75th General Convention received the widely regarded report of the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, *One Baptism, One Hope in God’s Call*. Finally, in June 2006 the Episcopal Church as a whole responded to the requests of the Windsor Report in several resolutions adopted by the General Convention in Columbus, Ohio. These are available on the study document web site, along with other documents cited herein.

It should be noted that one of these resolutions affirmed the Episcopal Church’s commitment to the Anglican Covenant development process in the Communion, to be monitored by the Executive Council. In May, the Council published a study guide to aid in this process.

The Primates’ Communiqué

Since the first Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1867 the two principal means of maintaining the unity and bonds of affection among the Anglican churches have been the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, meeting every ten years, and the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury as *primus inter pares*, first among equals. In 1968, after 71 years of study, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) was established to include lay persons and other clergy in the process of consultation and mutual ministry.

In 1978 the Lambeth Conference called upon the primates to meet periodically. The resulting Primates' Meetings have seen the development of this consultative element in the Communion. In 1998 the Lambeth Conference commended to the primates a further responsibility of "intervention in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces, and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and in loyalty to our Anglican tradition and formularies." However, this innovation has not found universal acceptance around the Communion, especially within the governing bodies of the Episcopal Church, who believe that its established polity does not allow for such intervention from outside. It should be noted that the Windsor Report urges that the role of the respective Instruments of Unity be clarified by the churches.

At the most recent Primates' Meeting in Tanzania, the sub-committee of the Joint Standing Committee of the Primates' Meeting and the ACC, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, evaluated the responses of the 2006 General Convention of the Episcopal Church to the Windsor Report. Their report, received by the primates early in their meeting, was generally positive. It observed that the Episcopal Church had carefully and conscientiously responded to the requests, but noted the need for more clarity in some instances.

Nevertheless, the Primates' Meeting made several further requests, among them that the bishops of the Episcopal Church "make an unequivocal common covenant that the bishops will not authorize any Rite of Blessing for same-sex unions in their dioceses or through General Convention" and "confirm that the passing of Resolution B033 of the 75th General Convention means that a candidate for episcopal orders living in a same-sex union shall not receive the necessary consent; unless some new consensus on these matters emerges across the Communion." The Communiqué asked for a response to these requests by September 30, 2007.

The primates also presented a "Pastoral Scheme," which included the appointment of a primate vicar and the formation of a pastoral council, composed of appointed primates and others, to act on their behalf in consultation with the Episcopal Church, and to work with the Presiding Bishop to insure the necessary structures for pastoral care of those in the Episcopal Church who are disaffected with their bishops or the Presiding Bishop. The council would "facilitate and encourage healing and reconciliation within the Episcopal Church and between the Episcopal Church and congregations alienated from it, and between the Episcopal Church and the rest of the Anglican Communion."

The Response of the House of Bishops to the Communiqué

At its spring meeting in Texas in March 2007, the House of Bishops began discussion of the Communiqué. The focus was the pastoral council as presented. There was also considerable discussion of the "ultimatum" tone of the Communiqué and its request for a response by the bishops rather than the Episcopal Church in General Convention.

Three resolutions were adopted by the bishops. First, they affirmed “our passionate desire to remain in full constituent membership in both the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church,” yet the bishops also expressed concern that the proposed pastoral council is incompatible with the polity of the Episcopal Church and urged the Executive Council to decline to participate in it. The primary concern was that such a plan would bring extra-provincial bishops into the oversight of this church, contrary to Anglican practice. Hope was expressed of “meeting the pastoral concerns of the primates that are compatible with our own polity and canons.” Secondly, the bishops requested a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Their third and final resolution offered a reflection on recent events, including the identity and polity of the Episcopal Church, the preservation of our catholic and reformed Anglican heritage, and their desire to move forward in the mission of Jesus Christ. Concern was expressed about the inherent danger to the character of Anglicanism from attempts to centralize authority within the Communion.

The further requests for a moratorium on same-sex blessings and a clarification of resolution B-033 remain to be addressed. These items raise significant issues about the role of the primates in the Anglican Communion, Anglican ecclesiology, and the role of the House of Bishops in the Episcopal Church:

- Are such requests appropriately addressed by the bishops as chief pastors and teachers, or more representatively by the General Convention?
- How best may theological and mission development take place in churches which are “autonomous in communion”?
- How can the Communion appropriately consult about important matters such as these without a centralization of authority that is unknown to Anglicanism?

The ongoing Windsor process involves us in questions such as these, not just issues of human sexuality. The above narrative witnesses to the commitment of Episcopalians and Anglicans throughout the world to God’s work in our fellowship of global churches. It is important for us to address questions such as these and to express our mind on these communion matters. We invite you to engage them as we continue to receive the gift of communion given to us in Christ and in the unfinished work of the Anglican Communion.

PART IV

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

We began this study by recounting the value and importance of being members of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Many of us have a personal experience of the Communion through mission trips, companion relationships, and the presence of our sisters and brothers from other parts of the Communion who now live in our midst.

■ **How can the Episcopal Church affirm and strengthen these precious bonds?**

We affirm that communion is not something we achieve; rather it is God's gift to us through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost united many tongues in the confession of one faith, manifesting an even deeper unity in the midst of wide diversity.

■ **How is the gift of communion manifested through diversity today?**

We know the joy of full communion with our sister and brother Anglicans around the world. We know, too, the pain of separation resulting from divisions in the Church, both historically and in the difficult times in which we now live. We affirm that unity does not mean rigid uniformity, but a communion that includes differences, analogous to the union of distinct persons within the triune God.

■ **Can we find in the midst of our current diversity of theological and cultural “language” a deeper unity in Christ—not “a compromise for the sake of peace, but a comprehension for the sake of truth”?**

A recurring and prevailing motif in the history of the Christian tradition, particularly with respect to the interplay of evangelistic proclamation and gospel reception in diverse cultural settings, has been the gracious adaptability of the good news of Jesus Christ in the midst of challenging cultural norms and mores. Customs and/or practices deemed at first glance to be “foreign” to the gospel message often were eventually incorporated into the life of the emerging Church in such a way that the fundamentals of faith were not deemed to be compromised.

■ **What makes it possible for us to live with differences and maintain the Anglican “middle way”?**

■ **Is it possible that our witness today might be to hold to the *via media* and remain in communion despite what at present seem diametrically opposed positions? Might our gift to the world be the ability to embody Paul's word to the Corinthians: that one part of the body cannot say to the other, “I have no need of you,” nor can one part say “I am not needed”?**

The Book of Acts perhaps offers an example. Admission of Gentile believers to Table fellowship and incorporation into the covenant community of the baptized appeared at first to many apostolic communities to be at odds with God's Word. However, over time and with mutual forbearance, Paul's vision ultimately prevailed across the diverse spectrum of New Testament Christianity.

- Are we called to live in mutual forbearance in the midst of similar differences long enough for the faith community to discern God's will?
- Some suggest we have reached an impasse, with seemingly "irreconcilable differences." If so, how then might we live together confident of Jesus' promise that the Church will endure for eternity?

Here the wisdom of Bishop Stephen Fielding Bayne is worth recalling. Bishop Bayne was the first Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion and most instrumental in the development of an Anglican Communion consciousness through, among other things, the 1963 Anglican Congress and the *Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ (MRI)* document. He once observed that the Church often has been torn apart by honest convictions, held by conscientious persons aligned against each other, certain that "what each sees to be right must be maintained inviolate. And how often afterwards, when we look back on that history, we see how wide of the mark both sides were... But we do not come to this wisdom by simply abdicating our convictions. Rather we are led to it by the Lord who gently guides and teaches us as we are quiet and prepared to be taught, and prepared to keep the [fellowship] inviolate," leaving room at the Table for those on both sides.⁴

- How might we live this wisdom in the life of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion in this moment?

Conclusion

As bishops we are charged in ordination to guard the faith and unity of the Church. Being charged with this task does not mean it falls to us alone. This study document is written to allow us to hear and receive the response of the whole of this province so that together we might respond faithfully as a constituent member of this great Communion.

We ask your prayers as we remember you in ours.

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error; direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen.

⁴ Stephen F. Bayne. *An Anglican Turning Point*, p. 177. Church Historical Society, 1964.

RESOURCES

Click on the name of the resource below in order to access an electronic version of the document. Note that you must be connected to the Internet to be able to navigate to these links directly from the electronic file of *Communion Matters: A Study Document for the Episcopal Church*.

These resources, as well as a downloadable version of this study document, can be accessed at any time by visiting www.collegeforbishops.org.

The Windsor Report

The Primates' Meeting Communiqués:

- Lambeth, 2003
- Dromantine, 2005
- Tanzania, 2006

Lambeth Conference 1998: Resolution I.10

House of Bishops' Responses to the Windsor Report and Primates:

- Texas, 2004: "Caring for All the Churches"
- Texas, 2004: "Mind of the House" Resolutions
- Salt Lake City, 2005: "A Word to the Church"
- Puerto Rico, 2005: "A Report to the Church"
- Texas, 2007: "Mind of the House" Resolutions

"One Baptism, One Hope in God's Call: Report of the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion" (Blue Book, 2006)

To Set Our Hope on Christ (English)

To Set Our Hope on Christ (en español)

"The Challenge and Hope of Being an Anglican Today" by the Archbishop of Canterbury

Report of the Sub-Group to the Anglican Communion Joint Standing Committee of the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council

General Convention Resolutions regarding the Windsor Report:

- A160: Expression of Regret**
- A165: Commitment to Windsor and Listening Processes**
- A166: Anglican Covenant Development Process**
- B033: On Election of Bishops**