

Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans

Wales Newsletter
May 2010

This is the first Newsletter that we have produced since we first circulated copies of the Jerusalem Declaration, inviting people to sign and show solidarity with GAFCON and the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

It is intended to be a means of keeping people in touch with what is happening in the wider Anglican world and to be an encouragement both to be faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and loyal to the Church in Wales.

Anglican Covenant

Members of FCA Wales drafted a response in November to the proposal for a Covenant for the Anglican Communion.

The Covenant as a faithful expression of Anglican identity

We recognise sections 1-3 of the Ridley draft Covenant as a faithful expression of Anglican identity. There may be the occasional phrase in which we would prefer a different nuance or emphasis, but we welcome the focus in the Covenant draft on the foundational role of Scripture, Creeds and historic formularies. This places the centre of Anglican identity where it should be. The theological principles of the first three sections the Ridley draft express what should be obvious to any Anglican with an awareness of our historic practice of the Christian Faith.

The Covenant as a commitment to scriptural catholicity

The key ecclesiological question facing us as a Church is the nature of what it means to be Catholic as confessed in the historic creeds. The FCA would like to recall the roots of the word in the sense of 'according to the whole'. We value universality in both the geographical and the historical sense. Universality is also eschatological in the sense that we are shaped today by what is promised in the consummation of the Kingdom. Universality is therefore a vocation as well as a present and historical reality.

Crucial to catholicity is the aspect of mutual accountability and responsibility within the universal church. In recent years some branches of Anglicanism have claimed that their current cultural context is decisive in determining ethical and doctrinal questions. Their current context appears to have a greater interpretative authority than the consensus of the church universal and its understanding of Scripture. This claim has been most noticeable in North American Anglicanism,

but it has by no means confined to that part of the world.

Any claim of authentic contextuality and approach to mission has to be tested against catholicity. This catholicity is always predicated on Scripture as affirmed in §1.2.1 of the Ridley draft. Section 4 of the Ridley draft offers a reasonable proposal of how this might be done. There is room for negotiation over whether the Joint Standing Committee is the most appropriate body to test a church's faithfulness to the vision articulated in this Covenant, but the point is not fundamental. Far more important is agreement **that** it should be done.

Obligations and sanctions as a necessary part of true Covenant

We are aware of the accusation that Section 4 of the Ridley draft has to do primarily with ecclesio-political manoeuvring, and as such is distasteful and irrelevant. But the word *covenant* should, against the great Biblical background of divine engagement with Israel and the Christian Church, signify something truly solemn and binding, involving mutual commitment expressed in concrete obligations. A so-called Covenant with no obligations and no sanctions would scarcely be worthy of the name.

The Covenant as an expression of commitment to historic Anglicanism.

We are called to live and work within the Anglican family; as FCA members we are glad to do so and affirm our commitment to historic Anglicanism. Inasmuch as we recognise this same concern in the Covenant we urge the Church in Wales to adopt it. Given the rapid centrifugal forces currently acting on the Communion, we would further urge the Church in Wales to make that adoption urgent and wholehearted.

*Revd Dr Andrew Johnson, Chancellor Peter Russell Jones,
Chancellor Dr Tudor Griffiths, Ven Dr William Strange*

Book Review

Being Faithful – The shape of Historic Anglicanism Today: A Commentary on the Jerusalem Declaration

Being Faithful gives a concise and very accessible commentary on the 14 clauses of the Jerusalem Declaration that came out of the GAFCON conference in June 2008, and is intended to give a basis for fellowship in a common identity and faith.

The book explains why many Anglicans (predominantly from the Global South), came together to declare a common understanding of what contemporary

Anglicanism stands for, and just as importantly, on *what* it stands. Biblical Authority and Human Sexuality are strongly covered from an orthodox Anglican perspective, and contrasted with current liberal teaching and practice, particularly from the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada.

As well as the commentary, the publishers have included Archbishop Peter Akinola's preparatory document for GAFCON, entitled "*The Way, The Truth and the Life.*" This is helpful as it shows the key historical and doctrinal issues that were considered to be at stake.

Throughout the book, the authors express clear reasoned arguments and a determination to be faithful primarily to the authority of the plain

reading of Scripture, and secondarily to the 39 Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal; declaring them to be the Anglican "authoritative standard of worship and prayer" (Clause 4&6). Discussions on the Anglican sacramental and liturgical heritage as an expression of the gospel are discussed and valued in a way that underlines the non-schismatic desires of the declaration's signatories.

However, the commentary could have been stronger in acknowledging the Reformation heritage of the Anglican Communion. In particular, having a stronger emphasis on being "justified by grace alone, through faith *alone*," and outlining a more detailed framework for Anglican interdenominational work with the Roman Catholic church.

I believe this book will prove to be an important exploration of the line drawn in the sand by the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans today. Time will tell if this re-statement of the essential tenets of Anglicanism will truly shape the future expression of our shared faith and worship.

In a culture where pluralism, secularism and Pick-&-Mix religion are the very air we breathe, this book provides a welcome tonic to help us re-assert those foundational truths in both our Church and private spheres.

Rev Peter Owen Jones, Hubberston

News

The consecration of Mary Glasspool in Los Angeles on May 15th raises the stakes once more, making us wonder whether the Covenant can be more than a well-meaning effort to stem an inevitable tide. We shall see and we shall pray. Anglican Mainstream released the following statement on the same day:

In her letter to the Primates, the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church (TEC) Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, confirmed that the consecration of the openly gay Mary Glasspool is not a random event but comes from the settled mind of her church. Sadly, this shows that TEC has now explicitly decided to walk apart from most of the rest of the Communion.

Since that decision by TEC has to be respected, it should result in three consequences. First, TEC withdrawing, or being excluded from the Anglican Communion's representative bodies. Second, a way must be found to enable those orthodox Anglicans who remain within TEC to continue in fellowship with the Churches of the worldwide Communion. Third, the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) should now be recognized an authentic Anglican Church within the Communion.

Dr Philip Giddings, Convenor, Canon Dr Chris Sugden Executive Secretary, Anglican Mainstream

The full video recording of the consecration service is available on several websites including Anglican Mainstream. It is worth watching because, for instance, it opens with a Native American religious ceremony during which Bishop Bruno of LA engages in ritual practices of Native Americans and prays for their (and his) ancestors. It goes on like that. The video reminds us that the issue is not just sexuality, but a far more general abandonment of the unique lordship of Christ.

Stay faithful and please stay in touch.

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