

Move to amend Resolution R2003-03

Replace the third, fourth and fifth resolves with:

Resolved that this 129th Diocesan Convention commend our Bishop for his wisdom and foresight in his vote at General Convention regarding the confirmation of Gene Robinson as Bishop Coadjutor of New Hampshire and his prayerful guidance in his pastoral letter of August 10, 2003;

Resolved that we stand with the Primates of the Anglican Communion in affirming that we are a church in communion and that changes in the teachings of the church are not to be done unilaterally but in consultation with and concurrence of the whole of the Anglican Communion, and;

Resolved that this 129th Diocesan Convention affirms the teachings of the Anglican Communion on matters of human sexuality as stated by the Lambeth Conference of 1998; and calls upon all clergy of this diocese to teach the same and;

Resolved that this 129th Convention following the Godly direction of our Bishop in his pastoral letter disassociate ourselves from the divisive actions taken by the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the approval of Resolution C051 in recognizing *"that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions."* and the actions of the House of Deputies and bishops of jurisdiction at the 74th General Convention in the confirmation of Canon Robinson; as well as the Diocese of New Hampshire in electing the same, and those bishops participating in the consecration of V. Gene Robinson as Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of New Hampshire.

Explanation

The Anglican Communion has spoken clearly and decisively on the Church's teaching on human sexuality. The 1998 Lambeth Conference affirmed that the *"In view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage; recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ; while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex; cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions."*

The Primates meeting at Lambeth Palace on October 15 and 16 2003 stated *"At this time we feel the profound pain and uncertainty shared by others about our Christian discipleship in the light of controversial decisions by the Diocese of New Westminster to authorise a Public Rite of Blessing for those in committed same sex relationships, and by the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) to confirm the election of a priest in a committed same sex relationship to the office and work of a Bishop."*

These actions threaten the unity of our own Communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ's Church, our mission and witness, and our relations with other faiths, in a world already confused in areas of sexuality, morality and theology, and polarised Christian opinion, We recognise the sensitive balance between provincial autonomy and the expression of critical opinion by others on the internal actions of a province. Nevertheless, many Primates have pointed to the grave difficulties that this election has raised and will continue to raise. In most of our provinces the election of Canon Gene Robinson would not have been possible since his chosen lifestyle would give rise to a canonical impediment to his consecration as a bishop. If his consecration proceeds, we recognise that we have reached a crucial and critical point in the life of the Anglican Communion and we have had to conclude that the future of the Communion itself will be put in jeopardy. In this case, the ministry of this one bishop will not be recognised by most of the Anglican world, and many provinces are likely to consider themselves to be out of Communion with the Episcopal Church (USA). This will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and further issues as provinces have to decide in consequence whether they can remain in communion with provinces that choose not to break communion with the Episcopal Church (USA).” In this statement the Primates are clear that that the actions of the 74th General Convention are divisive to the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Thompson stated in his Pastoral letter dated 8/10/03 *“I did not vote to consent to Canon Robinson's election, because I believe the Church is still struggling and has not spoken with clarity or finality on the issue of homosexuality. However, I will not associate myself with those who seek to divide the Church over this matter.”*

Impact on God’s Vision in the Diocese of Southern Ohio

These controversial actions are tearing at the very fabric of what it means for us to be the Church. Many have already seen parishioners leave their congregations. Many of our congregations have seen our financial positions decline as parishioners withhold money unwilling to fund something they cannot support. Many of us have been distracted by discussions and arguments over these issues rather than focusing on the mission before us. Rarely does a week go by but that our Church is in the newspapers or on television with a commentary or news story arguing the merits or detriments of these actions. Our witness to the world has become one of a church embroiled in turmoil and controversy. This is contrary to our mission. In this action we will take our stand with the Primates of the Anglican Communion and will ensure our place in the worldwide communion. With this we will be able to refocus our attention on the mission that God has given us knowing that we speak not only for ourselves but for our worldwide Church.

Presented by

The Reverend Ronald L. Baird on behalf of the vestry of St. Matthew’s Westerville

Budgetary Impact

This move will do much to restore our parishioners’ confidence in our diocese and will encourage giving thus avoiding situations where congregations become unable to pay their assessments.

Program Impact

None