THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
AND
THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION:
A STRAINED RELATIONSHIP
“Birth” of the Anglican Communion

• 1789 – Formation of The Episcopal Church
  – American clergy not to acknowledge the supremacy of the British Monarch
  – Adopted Constitution of The Episcopal Church
  – Emphasized spiritual bond to the See of Canterbury

• England’s colonies became independent nations in 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} Centuries. Anglican Churches in those nations became part of the Anglican Communion
  – Today, 38 autonomous national and regional Member Churches + 6 “Extra Provincial” Member Churches
  – www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/member-churches.aspx
The Anglican Communion Described

• A Fellowship, within the one holy catholic and apostolic church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional churches in communion with the see of Canterbury

• http://www.anglicancommunion.org
“Unity” in the Anglican Communion

- **Key** – Spiritual bond with the See of Canterbury
- Preamble to Constitution of TEC: “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church ... is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.”
Other Instruments of Unity

• Lambeth Conference – Every 10 years, all bishops meet at Lambeth Palace. First met in 1867

• Anglican Consultative Council – Formed in 1971; representatives from 38 Member Churches; meets every three or four years

• Primates Meeting – first met in 1978
  – “Primate” – The chief archbishop or bishop of a province of the Anglican Episcopal family of churches
  – Set up as “an opportunity for leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation”
  – Has met 18 times since 1978 (about every 3 years)
Background to the Instruments

• Except for ACC, none has a Governing Charter or authority from any source

• Term “Instruments of Communion” was developed in 1997 in a document called the “Virginia Report”

• In 1998, the Lambeth Conference said it “valued” the designation of Four Instruments of Unity

• Except for the Archbishop of Canterbury, the other Instruments of Unity are “self-declared” authorities
Sources of the Difficulties

• **HOW** The Episcopal Church makes its decisions

• **APPLICABILITY** of TEC’s decisions

• **CONTENT** of the decisions of The Episcopal Church
TEC DECISIONS: MADE DEMOCRATICALLY

• PARISHES
  – Annual Meeting (Elects Vestry and Delegates)
  – Rector (called by Vestry) and Vestry (elected by parish)

• DIOCESES
  – Annual Convention (Elects SC, Deputies to GC, Budget)
  – Bishop and Standing Committee (Canonical Matters)
  – Bishop and Executive Board (Administrative Matters)

• THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
  – General Convention (HOB and HOD; every three years)
  – Executive Council (40 members)
APPLICABILITY of Decisions by TEC

• TEC has 109 Dioceses -- 98 in USA + 11 overseas: members in USA, Puerto Rico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Venezuela, Curacao, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Haiti, Honduras, Micronesia, Taiwan, and the Virgin Islands

• Application of decisions is ONLY to Dioceses in TEC

• Many decisions of General Convention allow local options by Bishops of Dioceses
“Scope” is in the Eye of the Beholder

• Some Member Churches claim that decisions by The Episcopal Church are intended to impose American values throughout the Anglican Communion

• “Rationale” – Because of the international power of the USA, actions by TEC are “colonial” impositions of power

• Many of the Primates are seen as (and see themselves as) “Mini-Popes” who are the Moral and Spiritual Authority in their Provinces -- this understanding is uncritically applied to TEC
DECISIONS BY TEC THAT ARE ISSUES

• 1976 – Permitting ordination of women as priests

• 1989 – Consecration of Barbara Harris as Bishop

• 2003 – Approval of the Election of Gene Robinson (a man in a partnered relationship) as Bishop of NH

• 2015 – Amendment of Canons of TEC to change definition of Marriage to “two persons”
Responses to TEC’s Actions – 1

• Ordination of Women -- 1976
  – Lambeth 1978 set up Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission to examine “unity” issues

• Consecration of Barbara Harris – 1988
  – Lambeth 1988 asked IATDC to “consider in some depth the meaning and nature of communion”
  – Lambeth 1988 established “a Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate”
    • Led to the Virginia Report of 1997 from the Eames Commission which described (for the first time) the Instruments of Unity
Responses to TEC’s Actions – 2

• Consecration of Gene Robinson
  – Covenant had harsh penalties hidden among its terms
  – Covenant not adopted in full by any Member Church
    • GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) – Not tough enough in terms of ability to punish or eject provinces
    • Other Member Churches – restricted autonomy of bishops

• Change of TEC’s Marriage Canons
  – Primates Meeting 2016 – imposed “consequences”
Primates’ Meeting January 2016

• Majority of Primates called for “consequences” for action by TEC regarding marriage
  – Was a “back door” enforcement of Anglican Covenant

• Adopted resolution “requiring that for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us [the Primates?] on ecumenical and interfaith bodies and should not be appointed to an internal standing committee.”

• Defeated a resolution to ask TEC to voluntarily withdraw from the Anglican Communion for 3 years
Other Actions of Primates

• Asked Archbishop of Canterbury ("ABC") to appoint a task group “to maintain conversation among ourselves with the intention of restoring relationship, rebuilding mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognizing the extent of our commonality, and exploring our deep differences, ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ.”

• Archbishop of Uganda left Meeting early because TEC was not going to be punished severely ("discipline and godly order need to be restored")
Reaction of TEC to Primates’ Actions

• Bishop Curry:
  – “Take the Gospel high ground”
  – Saddened by action of Primates
  – Not a change in “doctrine”; TEC committed to an inclusive church; we are one in Christ

• Baptismal vocation to participate in God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation

• Real “instruments of unity” are the countless ways parishes, dioceses, and individuals connect with others in the Anglican Communion
Anglican Consultative Council Meeting
Lusaka (April 2016)

• TEC Representatives participated in the Meeting
• Bishop Douglas of CT continued to serve on Standing Committee, but declined to stand for election as Chair of the ACC
• ACC declined to approve or disapprove the Primates’ Call for “consequences”
• Four Member Churches boycotted ACC because TEC participated and because Bishop Douglas is on SC
• “Received” Report of the ABC on Primates Meeting
Actions by ABC

• Appointed Task Group with “wide representation” including male and female clergy and lay members

• Removed two Episcopal scholars from two ecumenical bodies

• Reported to ACC that the primates “have no legal authority over provinces” and that no Instrument of Communion can make another instrument do or not do something
Confusion about the ACC’s Resolution

• The Resolution said it “receives the formal report of the ABC to the ACC regarding the Primates Meeting of January 2016” (emphasis added)

• There was no debate on the Resolution

• On May 6, 2016, six members of the ACC issued a statement that the Resolution means the ACC neither accepted nor endorsed the “consequences”

• The ABC then said the ACC “accepted” the consequences. On May 8, 2017, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion (from Nigeria) said that “the ACC was clear in its support for the Primates.”
Robert’s Rules of Order

• Makes a distinction between “receiving” a report, and “accepting” or “approving” it

• http://www.constitution.org/rror/rror-09.htm#53
Where are We Now?

- Anglican Communion is a “family” with a “spiritual bond” that connects its Member Churches
  - In non-patriarchal families, you don’t solve intrafamily issues by excluding family members from participating in family affairs

- So far as TEC is concerned: A Tempest in a Teapot
- TEC will stay at the table whenever permitted
- TEC, and its Dioceses and Parishes will continue to partner with other Provinces, Dioceses and Parishes