

THE ANGLICAN VOICE

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A Most Agonizing Journey towards Lambeth 2008 A historical summary by the Most. Rev. Peter Akinola, Nigeria

Ed. Note: The attempts by the London Church Times and national Episcopal Church to cast doubts on who authored this paper are spurious. The Province of Nigeria confirmed Dr. Akinola's authorship and signature on 8/26/07. My notes in italics. C. Wetzel

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:1,3)

We have been on this journey for ten long years. It has been costly and debilitating for all concerned as most recently demonstrated by the tepid

response to the invitations to the proposed Lambeth Conference 2008. [Ed. Note: 200 responses from 800 invitations were received – a startlingly low number.] At a time when we should be able to gather together and celebrate remarkable stories of growth and the many wonderful ways in which our God has been at work in our beloved Communion ...there is little enthusiasm to even meet.

There are continual cries from TEC for patience, listening and understanding. And yet the record shows that those who hold to the faith once and for all delivered to the saints have shown remarkable forbearance while their pleas have been ignored, their leaders have been demonized, and their advocates marginalized.

Hope for a unified Communion is not any brighter than it was seven months or ten years ago. Rather, the intransigence

of those who reject Biblical authority continues to obstruct our mission and it now seems that the Communion is being forced to choose between following their innovations or continuing on the path that the church has followed since the time of the Apostles.

The leadership of The Episcopal Church USA (TEC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) seem to have concluded that the Bible is no longer authoritative in many areas of human experience especially in salvation and sexuality. They claim to have progressed beyond the clear teaching of the Scriptures and they have not hidden their intention to lead others to these same conclusions. They have even boasted that they are years ahead of others in fully understanding the truth of the Holy Scriptures and the nature of God's love. Now we confront a moment

of decision. If we fail to act we risk leading millions of people away from the faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures and also, even more seriously, we face the real possibility of denying our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ...

Scorned Opportunities

The journey started in **February 1997** in Kuala Lumpur. The 2nd Encounter of the Global South Anglicans issued a statement about the setting aside of biblical teaching by some provinces and dioceses. We pleaded for dialogue before any part of the Communion embarks on radical changes to Church discipline and moral teaching.

We made a deliberate, prayerful decision at **Lambeth in 1998** with regard to matters of Human Sexuality. It was supported by an overwhelming majority of the bishops of the Communion.

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A Word for the People of God in TEC from Archbishop Gregory Venables, ACN Meeting July 30-31, 2007

Monday afternoon, July 30, 2007

About 80 people were gathered at St. Vincent's Cathedral, Fort Worth, TX for the Anglican Communion Network annual meeting. The

featured speaker was the Most Rev. Gregory Venables, Archbishop of the Southern Cone (South America). A plane delay put this address at the late afternoon. I found the words of this Godly, gen-

tle Englishman – who went to South America 30 years ago as a missionary priest with a wife and three children – to be full of life and hope and peace. Below are my favored excerpts from three wonderful Bible stud-

ies presented July 30 and 31.

Settling into the podium, the archbishop began with prayer and then greeted the eager crowd.

"Briefly a few words

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Journey to Lambeth, continued from pg. 1

[*Resolution 1.10 that homosexuality is incompatible with Scripture was approved 526 to 70.*] And yet it has been ignored and those who uphold it derided for their stubbornness...

In **2001**, the Primate's meeting in Kanuga, North Carolina issued a pastoral letter acknowledging estrangement in the Church due to changes in theology and practice regarding human sexuality, and calling on all provinces of the Communion to avoid actions that might damage the credibility of the Communion.

The Primate's **April 2002** meeting at Canterbury further issued a pastoral letter recognizing responsibility of all bishops to articulate the fundamentals of faith and maintain Church truth.

In deliberate defiance the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada voted in **June 2002** to approve the blessings of same-sex unions with the enthusiastic support of their Bishop Michael Ingham.

The **October 2002** Anglican Consultative Council 12 meeting in Hong Kong approved Res. 34 urging dioceses and bishops to refrain from unilateral actions and policies that would strain communion.

In **July/August 2003**, ECUSA met in General Convention in Minneapolis. ...They chose to reject Res. [B001] affirming the authority of Scripture while approving the election as bishop someone living in an unashamedly homosexual relationship...

The **October 2003** emergency Primates meeting at Lambeth Palace issued a pastoral statement condemning TEC's decisions at General Convention as actions that threaten the unity of our own Communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ's Church, our mission and witness... The primates also

declared that if the consecration proceeds the future of the Communion itself will be put in jeopardy... They called on the provinces to make provision for Episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities [*DEPO*]... ECUSA responded by proceeding with the consecration of Gene Robinson and forcing Nigeria along with many other provinces to sever communion with ECUSA.

Earlier, in **June 2003**, we in the Church of Nigeria cut our links with the diocese of New Westminster and sent a clear warning of reconsidering our relationship with ECUSA should Gene Robinson be consecrated. As always, we were ignored.

During **2004** there was a growing number of blessings of same-sex unions by American and Canadian priests even though the Windsor Report released in **September 2004** reaffirmed, "*One consequence of this continuing intransigence by ECUSA was the alienation of thousands of faithful Anglicans...*" The attempts by the Primates to provide for their protection through the Panel of Reference proved fruitless.

In **February 2005** the Primates met in Dromantine, Northern Ireland, and advised the withdrawal of both delegations from TEC and Canada from the Anglican Consultative Council meeting that summer. They attended anyway, and their continued influence on the Communion and their renewed efforts to make others adopt their intransigent line frustrated any genuine reconciliation attempts. The agonizing journey towards unity and faith seemed unending.

The failure of resolve by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the unwillingness of the other Instruments of Unity [*The Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meetings*] to effect discipline on those who had rejected the mind of the Communion prompted the Church of Nigeria to effect a change in her constitution in **September 2005**,

[*permitting mission actions in other geographic areas including the US.*]

In **October 2005** The Third Anglican South-to-South Encounter in Egypt issued a very strong indictment of TEC and Canada and called for a common Anglican Covenant among churches remaining true to Biblical Christianity and historic Anglicanism.

Ignoring all the calls for repentance, homosexual unions and nominations for episcopacy continued in TEC with the Archbishop of Canterbury expressing deep unease with such actions in **February 2006**. A much-awaited TEC General Convention in **2006** proved to be a disappointment as resolutions expressing regret for the harm done to the communion were rejected. Approved were resolutions promoting homosexual relationships as well one apologizing to homosexuals for the Anglican Communion following Biblical principles. The agony of a frustrated communion was visible worldwide...

In **June 2006** Nigeria proceeded with the election of and the **August 2006** consecration of the Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns to give Episcopal oversight in the USA.

In **August 2006** the Nigerian House of Bishops declared a reluctance to participate in the 2008 Lambeth Conference with an unrepentant ECUSA and Canada.

In **September 2006** The Global South Primates meeting in Kigali, recognizing that ECUSA appears to have no intention of changing direction,... gave yet another strict warning; again it was ignored.

In **February 2007** The Primates meeting in Dar es Salaam reaffirmed the 1998 Lambeth resolution and called on TEC's House of Bishops to consider three definite actions, which could heal the communion... Those ideas have been rejected.

All journeys must end someday
We want unity but not at the cost of

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Journey to Lambeth, cont. from pg. 2

relegating Christ to the position of another wise teacher who can be obeyed or disobeyed. We earnestly desire the healing of our beloved Communion but not at the cost of re-writing the Bible to accommodate the latest cultural trend.

We Anglicans stand at a crossroads. The first road, the one that follows the current path of The Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada, is one that we simply cannot take... We dare not sacrifice eternal truth for mere appeasement; we can-

not turn away from the source of life and love for a temporary truce.

The other road is the only one that we can embrace. It is not an easy road because it demands obedience and faithfulness from each one of us...requires a renewed commitment to the Historic Biblical Faith. For... TEC and Canada, it requires repentance, a reversal of current policies and credible assurances concerning such basic matters of faith, such as the Trinity, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sanctity of marriage

and teaching about morality that is rooted in the Bible.

John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrims Progress*, describes the Christian life as a journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. On his journey, Pilgrim is confronted by numerous decisions and many crossroads. The easy road was never the right road. This is our moment of truth. ++ **Peter Abuja**

The Most Rev. Dr. Peter Akinola, Archbishop, Province of Nigeria, Anglican Communion

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from my heart. It is an enormous joy to be with you at this very special time. Greetings from your brothers and sisters in the Southern Cone.

"I came here from the North of Argentina, a vast desert area where no one wants to live. There are 130 communities in there. It took a 2 ½ hr flight from Buenos Aires and 12 hours on dirt roads to get there. The communities are all indigenous Indians. When I arrived, the local clergy said, 'Can we do confirmation before you go to bed?' We went to church and sang and then confirmed 25 lovely people.

"The next day, I drove another 8 hours. They walked 50 miles to come to that service in freezing cold winter weather. They are proud to be Anglicans who believe what their grandparents believed. Sat worshiping until late at night in the open air. It was freezing. There is no church building there and we slept out all night. I slept with all my clothes on and a down sleeping bag. I still froze.

"Then up at 6 to do another confirmation of 125 people. Very poor church with just a concrete altar with picture of Jesus with the sacred heart. When I talked about Jesus, they point to the picture.

"I put my cope over my overcoat and 45 clergy stood up and put their ponchos on over their coats. I discovered on this

trip that they all have families and children. But, none of them is married. I have to work on that when I get back, and I honestly don't know where to start on this one.

"The gear box in my rental car broke 2 hours in to the trip back. I made it to the airport and actually got a flight. Yesterday we celebrated the 40th anniversary of a parish in Buenos Aires. Late in the day, I got on the plane for Texas.

"It is a great joy to be with you but a great responsibility. My dear friends this is a crucial moment. I see many faces I have shared many crucial moments with over the years.

"Over recent months, things have become much more obvious. I have lived in South American for 30 years and gone to great lengths to maintain my English accent. One of the expressions they use in London 'how do you know?' They say: "**S'obvious.**"

"If you take one word from this time, take that word, "**S' obvious.**" In recent months it has become even more obvious. The picture is sharper than ever. It has become even more obvious, because people are becoming more obvious of what their statements and actions mean. In my years with the Lord, I have found that as you walk in faith, the road divides before you and

things become clear. As you walk in faith, doing what Jesus calls you to do, what is happening is obvious. Jesus walked into the Temple and started speaking and he was offensive. The minute Jesus opened his mouth, he divided the crowd into two. That's why they crucified him.

"If you want a Christian church you will suffer. I don't mean that lightly. Do you want a Christian church or a comfy church?"

"We are examples of God's grace. There is only one gospel. And it divides the world into 2 parts. Three were crucified. One mocked him and one clung to him. It is a tragedy when the church denies Christ, but it is not new. What we are facing has been coming since the beginning of the church.

"Now, we know how to read the Bible, right? Have you ever doubted the Word of God? Satan has always cast doubt on God's word. Genesis 3: the serpent said, did God say...??? And the battle is always over the Word of God. I still believe that. When some people say in church, "This is the Word of the Lord" they must have their fingers crossed behind their backs. If you want a comfortable church, don't read the Bible.

"The primates have said several times to you all over the years, 'don't hold back. Please. Don't hold back.' I have dealt

Archbishop Venables, continued from pg. 3

since 2001 eyeball to eyeball with the leadership of ECUSA. Don't have any illusions that you can change them. The non-Gospel swallows the Gospel. They preach the non-Gospel. Don't pretend that it will work out. It won't. It can't. A lot of the dialogue is to keep people at the table until we get totally worn down.

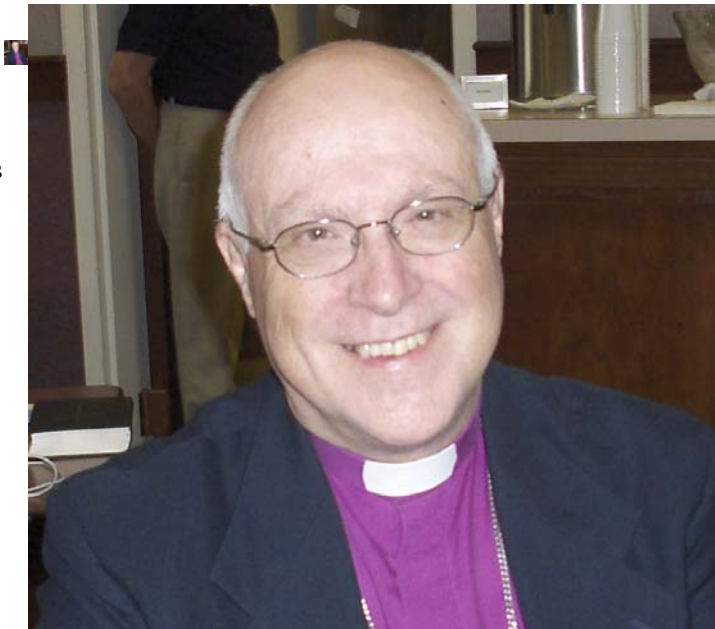
"Let me just give you a simple example to pray about before you sleep tonight. The classic man of faith in Scripture is Abraham. Genesis 12: vs 1: 'Go from your country and your kindred, your father's house and your country.' It is God who is calling us to GO. It is not our idea. God told Abraham to leave.

"Where is God calling you to go? Why? Because God wants to do something better.

"What were those famous words from Al Jolson, 'You ain't seen nothing yet.'

"If God says leave something behind, its because he has something better to give you.

"Stop pointing the finger at them and start looking at Jesus. Jesus said, 'Shake the dust off of your feet.' Don't look back. Go forward. Don't imagine it means stopping being Anglicans. We believe God cares about the Anglican Church. And it ain't us who left it. WE are the Anglicans. Cranmer must be saying, 'Keep in there'. You may have to leave the land, your kindred and your father's



Archbishop Gregory Venables, from The Southern Cone, (South America).

The Archbishop lives in Buenos Aires with his wife Sylvia. They left England 30 years ago— with 3 small children - to be missionaries in South America.

Photo by C. Wetzel © 2007

house. Become holy; not holier than thou.

"Say to God, 'I'm with you.'

"Marriage is God's idea and it is holy. You can't bless something that is not holy. One man, one woman: that's God's plan. We do marriage with all the human realities and still believe in holy marriage. My indigent priests deserve to be married. God's sacraments are for all of His people, not just a few. But, it has to be done His way, not ours. Pray for me on this one, ok?

"Give all other things up. Go into the unknown. Go where you only have Jesus. Not Jesus and your health, or Jesus and your money, or Jesus and your status, or Jesus and your temperament. You can trust him a lot when He is all you have. You have to step into the unknown.

"Looking back you can see how God was faithful every step of the way. It's always life or death: that's what Jesus calls you to. Baptism is not just a nice

symbol. It's dying. Dying to the old life and then arising, saying, 'Not my way but your way.'

"Maybe it means leaving your land. Maybe it means giving up Ishmael. He was the human solution to Sarah and Abraham's lack of a child. Genesis 17: God said we'll do it my way, and Sarah got pregnant. Abraham fell on his face and Sarah did too, laughing. God called you to let Him do the impossible and says you choose: in order to do it God's way, you have to let go of your way. Whatever happens, it doesn't have your name on it but God's name. He gets the credit. He gets the glory.

"Mary said, 'That's impossible.'

"The angel said, 'Yes, it is.' And then it happened God's way.

"Think about Ishmael. He's your way. Let go of it.

"Genesis 2: tells us that sometimes, you might even have to let go of that miracle child, Isaac. What is Isaac? He is our hopes and dreams. Abraham thought it was all about Isaac and God knew it was all about Jesus. That's was going on at

that mountain. God looked forward to something much more than Isaac. You have everything pinned on Isaac. But it's not about him. It's about Jesus. Jesus is far more than we can imagine. [Ed. Note: *There was absolute silence in a room formerly filled with very fidgety people. No turning pages, no coughing or sneezing. The only sound beyond Archbishop Venable's soft, magnetic voice was the ceiling fans.*]

"You have to think about that and make decisions. We're all praying for you. The whole rest of the Communion is praying for you. You have to make decisions. Things appear to be muddier and muddier. But the Primates see things clearer and clearer.

"Let's close with prayer. Lets ask the Holy Spirit do what He needs to do so we can walk forward. So we can see Your way, Lord, and Your Name will be glorified. Have mercy on us Lord, and help us. AMEN.

I will be in New Orleans Sept. 20-25 for the House of Bishop's meeting. Remember to call or send in your Email address for the House of Bishops Daily Emails. I bid you Hope and Peace in what God is doing! Cheryl M. Wetzel,