



There's no denying it Anglicans are facing a tense time. As I write, the meeting of Archbishops has just ended; the Americans have made it clear that they intend to go ahead with the Ordination of Canon Gene Robinson as Bishop and the conservatives are threatening dire consequences.

The Archbishops proclaim their "...firm desire to remain part of a Communion..." but they declare that the actions of two parts of the Anglican Communion "...threaten the unity of our own communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ's church..." Those two parts are of course the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada which has approved blessing services for same sex partnerships and The Episcopal Church of the United States which has confirmed Canon Robinson's election a Bishop of New Hampshire. The Archbishops go on to affirm the allegiance of all of them to the authority of Scripture whilst acknowledging "...a legitimate diversity of interpretation..."

They reaffirm the resolution of the 1998 Lambeth conference which committed them to listen to the experience of homosexual people and to assure them of God's love and of their full membership of the body of Christ. The resolution rejected homosexual practice and same sex blessings.

The Archbishops go on to say that the "...deeply regret..." the actions of the Churches in North America; they make it clear that these actions have not altered the position of the Anglican Communion on these

matters and they warn that these actions "...jeopardise our sacramental fellowship with each other" and that they "...tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level..." They say that if Canon Robinson's Ordination as a Bishop goes ahead the Anglican Communion will have reached "...a crucial and critical point..."

These are pretty strong statements and there have already been other strong statements from liberals who are disappointed and conservatives who are content. Mercifully the Archbishops also urge provinces not to act precipitately and they commit themselves to prayer, reflection and further work on the issues.

Clearly the Anglican Communion is, to put it mildly, in a serious position and I'm not writing about it in order to express an opinion. This is a time of listening and praying, and I hope that you may offer the prayers and engage in the listening commended by the Archbishops. I hope that our friends in the Methodist and United Reformed Churches will join us in those prayers. I like to think that Anglicans have, in the past, set the other traditions a good example of maintaining unity with diversity but it's under strain at the moment.

*Michael Camp*

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GROUND

In this edition Michael Camp writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC