

# General Synod Archives



## Authority in the Anglican Communion

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- Date:** 1988 February 8-12
- Source:** House of Bishops. Minutes
- Record Type:** Resolution 7-2-88
- Mover:** Bishop Bothwell
- Seconder:** Archbishop Hambidge
- Prologue:** In response to the request of the Anglican Consultative Council that each Province in the Anglican Communion examine authority in the Anglican Communion, a task force was established in Canada. The members are: Bishop John Baycroft representing the House of Bishops; The Reverend Michael Ingham representing the National Executive Council; and Mrs. Patricia Bays who is a member of the Anglican Consultative Council. The report of the Canadian Church is to go to the Anglican Consultative Council before the end of March.
- Mrs. Bays, Bishop Baycroft and Mr. Ingham each addressed the House.
- Appendix A [Appendix A consisting of 7 pages of text is NOT included in the electronic database.]
- Mrs. Bays distributed a summary of the Bishops' discussions of the previous day. Questions and discussion followed on what should be done with the document.
- These centred on the following issues:
1. Economic considerations - if the structures are increased, then increased costs will ensue. What then, can be subtracted from the structures and still maintain the work that has to be done ?
  2. Some discomfort was felt about the possibility of "drifting into Primacy".
  3. Should we increase the complexity of our structures ? Could areas use their own moderator ?
  4. Where does this document go ?
- It was pointed out that National Executive Council asked the House of Bishops to look at this issue, and the Anglican Consultative Council asked the same of Synods and Standing Committees.
- Text:** That we receive the document "Authority in the Anglican Communion" developed through discussion and consideration, and offered as an expression of the opinion of the House of Bishops on this subject;
- That it be forwarded to the National Executive Council and, if appropriate, to Lambeth as a contribution to the continuing dialogue on the whole subject of authority. CARRIED
- Notes:** APPENDIX B
- AUTHORITY IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH
- A. The issue of authority in the Church impinges on us as bishops in several ways. We are called upon to exercise authority in the ordering of ministry, in ordaining and licensing clergy, in the sacraments of Christian Initiation, in shaping the liturgical life of our dioceses, and in preaching and teaching the Gospel. The Church's authority has its source in God who calls us into unity with each other under the lordship of Christ

the same as the unity that each enter under the leadership of Christ. Episcopal authority is grounded in, and expressed through, the Koinonia of the Church.

B. If the true purpose of authority is to unify, in practice the exercise of it becomes the occasion for diverse reaction. The recent activity of some bishops within the Communion acting outside their diocesan jurisdiction has raised questions about episcopal collegiality. Liturgical renewal has generated hostility and fear of change in some quarters, resulting in a challenge to episcopal authority itself. Theological development which has evolved new images of the nature of God has produced new models of authority which challenge our present structures. Political and economic changes in society have generated individualistic concepts of authority which seem to be in conflict with the Church's understanding of Koinonia.

C. Within this context, we are compelled to ask about our identity as members of the Anglican Communion. The issue of authority raises the question of identity. Our tradition has been that of a family of autonomous Churches united by our common desire to belong to one another. We affirm that tradition precisely because it is conciliar rather than legislative. We would like to see the instruments of unity strengthened in the Communion, but in such a way that their authority remains consultative and persuasive. We have no desire to see an Anglican "Curia". The following are ways in which the centre of authority in the Communion might be developed.

D. We affirm the special role of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a personal symbol of unity with the Communion. Some of us wish to affirm the role as it presently is. But the office is developing into a more international role, with the Archbishop visiting other provinces and asked for comments on their situations. Some therefore would prefer to see the role enhanced in order to allow the effective functioning of the office. There is value in the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury as diocesan bishop, in rooting this office in the particulars of a place. A primacy of honour might be exercised by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, but another person might serve as moderator of a conference or president of the Anglican Consultative Council.

E. The Lambeth Conference brings to the whole Communion a sense of unity and common purpose. We recognize that the Lambeth Conference is becoming unwieldy in size and cost, and we suggest that other structures, processes, and alternative venues be explored. We cannot describe at this time what these structures might be. Regional meetings, to include both affluent and less affluent provinces, would build better communication and mutual understanding.

F. We believe the meetings of Primates should be held in conjunction with those of another group -- either the Lambeth conference or the Anglican Consultative Council -- again in order to foster communication and interdependence.

G. The Anglican Consultative Council is an important vehicle of unity since it expresses the synodical model of the Church by its inclusion of priests and lay people as well as bishops. We are agreed that it is important to develop the representation of the laity on the Council, particularly in the area of women and youth. Regional meetings and the more frequent convening of an Anglican Congress could promote this greater involvement. It is important to provide adequate staff and financial support to the work of the Council. We are undecided, however, as to what authority the statements of the Council should have. There is an optimum size for Council and staff and it ought not to grow too large.

There is a danger in building up structures. The demands on time and money are great, and the purpose of the structures needs to be remembered.

H. We recognize that our history and geography in Canada have helped us to understand the concept of unity in diversity. We affirm the necessity for interdependence in this large country. All dioceses have gifts to share, and needs which can be met by the gifts of others. In our Canadian experience a number of models have developed which illustrate this unity in diversity. The Council of the North is a good example of the concept of partnership expressed through transparency and mutual accountability. The ecumenical coalitions provide a model of effective planning for social concerns. Decision making by consensus in the House of Bishops requires a high level of trust. We have learned a great deal about regional consultation through our experience in ACNAC [Anglican Council of North America and the Caribbean].

I. We recognize the importance of giving assent to structures of authority. We choose to remain in communion with each other. As issues arise in the Communion on which we have differing views, it will be important for provinces to commit themselves to work together to seek ways of expressing our unity in diversity. We need to listen to each other prayerfully and with sensitivity, recognizing that there must be in the Anglican Communion a tolerance for diversity and a reluctance to define every issue too closely. Our involvement in international structures needs to be communicated clearly to the local congregations, so that they can be aware of the importance of maintaining these links within the Communion.

**Subjects:**

Authority (Religion) - Anglican Church of Canada

Authority (Religion) - Anglican Communion

Authority in the Anglican Communion

Anglican Communion - Government

Church of England. Archbishop of Canterbury

Anglican Consultative Council

Decision-making - Religious aspects - Anglican Church of Canada

Decision-making - Religious aspects - Anglican Communion

Bishops - Anglican Communion

Anglican Communion - Bishops

Lambeth Conference

Anglican Communion. Primates Meeting