



A Pastoral Letter on the General Convention

**The Third Sunday after Pentecost
June 25, 2006**

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thought it important to write briefly about the just concluded 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church and to say one main thing:

The great, diverse middle of our Church has found a voice.

A dozen or so important resolutions addressing the Windsor Report steadily worked their way through the legislative processes, with broad-based support all along. Resolutions on such matters as support for an Anglican covenant, a communion-wide listening process, and expression of regret passed without much fanfare. Importantly, there was also a resolution to state our unambiguous desire to remain part of the Anglican Communion. In the House of Bishops, all these and other Windsor-related resolutions passed with little or no dissent.

In the last hours of the final day, the General Convention found a way to address the most controversial of the Windsor matters, the issue of electing bishops “whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.”

The Presiding Bishop, Frank Griswold, put the matter before both Houses of the Convention in a special joint session, a rarely used procedure for meeting that is a prerogative of his office to initiate. He spoke pointedly to the Bishops and Deputies about the urgency and necessity of our acting. You need to know also that during the ensuing debate, Presiding Bishop-Elect Katherine Jefferts Schori rose first in the House of Bishops and later in the House of Deputies to speak in favor of the resolution.

Both Bishop Griswold and Bishop Jefferts Schori exercised much needed leadership during a difficult hour. And the resolution subsequently passed overwhelmingly in both Houses. The Missouri Deputation, clergy and lay, voted in favor, with one dissenting vote. I also voted for the action.

continued

Page two —

It is important for you to know the breadth of our detailed response to Windsor, for there are those outside the large and diverse middle of the Episcopal Church who would have you believe otherwise, that our action was somehow “inadequate.” Leaders of the Anglican Communion, bishops from other parts of the world who sat as guests in our House, signaled a different message. They spoke to the adequacy of our response.

To our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers, I say: Do not despair. I continue to support your full inclusion in the life of this Church. I know that we have asked much from you these last days, but I ask for your understanding. It would be meaningless one day to gain your full inclusion in the Church, only to discover that the Church would, in the meantime, have disappeared. It is not a splinter group that I want for your life; it is this diverse and vibrant Church, with its acknowledged place in the Anglican Communion, that I want for you, for me, and for all of us together.

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George Wayne Smith". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

George Wayne Smith
Tenth Bishop of Missouri