

WHAT HAPPENED?

“The Episcopal Church allowed New Hampshire to have the person they elected as bishop to serve in that capacity in that diocese, recognizing that he is well known to them and that he is also a divorced, gay man in a long term partnership with another man. At the same time, in what some see as direct contradiction, the Convention voted that we are not in agreement on the matter of blessing same sex unions, so we will not at this time push the church to develop rites for blessing same sex relationships.” —*Gordon P. Scruton, Bishop of Western Massachusetts (abstained on confirmation of Gene Robinson)*

“When Canon Robinson’s confirmation was announced, I stood with eighteen other bishops to disassociate ourselves from the decision. I believed then and believe now that this action represents a departure from the historic faith and order of the Church. But my speech on the floor of the House of Bishops included these words: ‘I am absolutely committed to Jesus Christ, absolutely committed to the Episcopal Church, absolutely committed to this House [of Bishops], absolutely committed to you, my brothers and sisters.’ My convictions are set in the context of community. Just as nothing ‘will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Romans 8:39), so nothing will separate me from this church which I love so deeply. I continue as a loyal member of the Episcopal Church and the happy bishop of this wonderful diocese.” —*Edward S. Little II, Bishop of Northern Indiana (voted “no” on confirmation)*

“I believe that this election is an opportunity for the Episcopal Church to affirm Jesus’ call to those on the margins of society, a call that says ALL are welcome at God’s banquet table.” —*Katherine Jefferts Schori, Bishop of Nevada (voted “yes” on confirmation)*

“Suppose the people who are opposed to the actions taken in General Convention are right. Suppose that their interpretation of the Scriptures and of the Christian Faith are correct and the General Convention erred. In time, God’s will shall manifest itself and correct the error. But how will God judge them if they behave in a manner that is unloving and divisive to His Church? Strong love is demanded and required. Suppose the General Convention was right and reflected the mind of Christ. Those who support the actions of General Convention have a great responsibility to live and act in a way that helps others to understand why our Church moved the way it did. New ground was plowed.” —*Robert Moody, Bishop of Oklahoma (voted “yes”)*

“The question before us is not questioning the core of our faith. Our belief in God the Holy Trinity is not in question. Our belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is not in question. Our belief in the life and teachings of Jesus, including the saving efficacy of his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection is not in question. The calling of discipleship to live our baptismal covenant is not in question. The sacraments and sacramental rites of the church are not in question. The question before us does not concern the core of our faith. The question before us concerns how we can faithfully live that faith out today specifically as regards our sexuality, which is only one dimension of our lives.” —*Michael B. Curry, Bishop of North Carolina (voted “yes”)*

“These decisions have not been taken unadvisedly or lightly. They have been made within the established procedures of our canons and with the legitimate authority we have as an autonomous church within the Anglican Communion, despite the claims of some detractors. I have consulted with our partners in the Anglican Communion, and I assure you that our relationships are still strong.” —*J. Jon Bruno, Bishop of Los Angeles (voted “yes”)*

NOW WHAT?

“I am not going to leave the Church because my side did or did not prevail, nor will I lead this diocese out of the Episcopal Church!” —*Philip Duncan II, Bishop of Central Gulf Coast (voted “no”)*

“As your bishop I am deeply committed to the unity of the church. Our oneness in Christ is a precious gift and a shared responsibility, especially when there is disagreement. One of the special charisms of the Episcopal Church is to be a church where God’s unconditional love is extended to all, and where we value diversity in unity. We may not always think alike about everything. But we are confident in the reconciling ministry of Jesus and believe that the love of God is big enough to embrace us all. So in response to these events let us be

the spiritually mature diocese that we are. Let us stay focused on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the cross we see the love of God reconciling the world to himself.” —*Henry Parsley, Bishop of Alabama* (voted “no”)

“This is an occasion for us to model and practice the unity for which Jesus prayed and to demonstrate the level of Christian maturity that is a value of and characteristic of the Diocese of Louisiana. We would further the work of our great Adversary if we were to promote schism and cut off.” —*Charles E. Jenkins III, Bishop of Louisiana* (voted “no”)

“For better or for worse I am committed to being a part of ECUSA though I will watch with interest the global developments on this matter. What pains me most is that I have heard from several dozen people from the congregations of our diocese who feel they can no longer be part of the Episcopal Church. To those who have reached this conclusion I would say that I understand your frustration, but I beg you to remain with us as God leads us through these testing times.” —*Gethin Hughes, Bishop of San Diego* (voted “no”)

“I pray earnestly that the people of the Diocese of Virginia might continue to affirm our loving unity, even as we express our disagreements. The Episcopal Church is a large tent, and as such, finds its unity in the love of Christ and not in our limited grasp of his truth that transcends any individual.” —*Peter James Lee, Bishop of Virginia* (voted “yes”)

“Thus we come to a familiar question of our day. Was the church—gathered as General Convention this summer—right in decisions made about human sexuality? The short answer to that question—and in many ways, the best answer—is that time will tell. For those of us who are imperfect people, we usually need the passage of time and the advantage of hindsight to determine the rightness or wrongness of difficult decisions.” —*Charles G. vonRosenberg, Bishop of East Tennessee* (voted “no”)

“When we remember how God’s love is bigger & greater than any of our precious held convictions, we have the chance to show the rest of the world how Unity in the Spirit really works. It does not mean unanimity. It does mean learning to live together even when we disagree.” —*James A. Kelsey, Bishop of Northern Michigan* (voted “yes”)

“There are those who are predicting that these decisions will cause irreparable division in the Episcopal Church. I do not believe that because what I know, that most of the media does not, is how much Episcopalians love their church. It is of the nature of our Anglican heritage to hold together Catholic and Protestant, high church and low church, conservative and liberal, young and old, rich and poor, male and female, gay and straight, saint and sinner, red and yellow, black, brown, and white.” —*J. Neil Alexander, Bishop of Atlanta* (voted “yes”)

“My sense is that this church continues to be a community of people bound together by the tradition, scripture, and reason that has been handed down to us through the ages. I also believe that being in community is a gift of God’s grace given to us as we continue to try to live together, facing all of the issues that come our way, as we try to live a life that God calls us to live, being faithful to each other and faithful in receiving the sacraments of this church, a church that educates us and sustains us, during difficult times and in good times.” —*Creighton L. Robertson, Bishop of South Dakota* (voted “yes”)

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

“To the faithful who are concerned by this development: (1) ‘Jesus Christ is Lord!’ This is the only dogma of the Episcopal Church, just as it was the first Creed of the Church. All else is doctrine, about which we may conscientiously disagree—until the Holy Spirit leads us to clarity. (2) It is Jesus who saves us—NOT doctrine, sound or unsound. Salvation does not depend on the soundness of our theology, as important as that is. (3) Our unity is rooted in Jesus Christ—NOT in total agreement on doctrine.” —*Dorsey Henderson, Bishop of Upper South Carolina* (voted “no”)

“It is Christ Jesus who gives us new life no matter who or what we are. I have come to believe that homosexuality is part of the human condition. It is not something that a person chooses any more than they can choose the color of their skin or their genetic makeup. As human beings and children of God by Baptism, gays and lesbians should have the right to relationships and full access to life in the church community as well as society at large.” —*Jerry A. Lamb, Bishop of Northern California* (voted “yes”)

“The Diocese of Northwest Texas is a child of the General Convention. We do not always agree with everything the Episcopal Church through General Convention has done, but it is our responsibility and duty to work within the Church to bring our perspective and position to bear upon the larger life of the Episcopal Church. During Bishop Quarterman’s tenure there were various national level programs that were not supported locally but we never failed to support the Church with our financial and human resources. Bishop Quarterman spoke to me of those times as being a test, but that he could not in faith withdraw support and expect to be heard as a man of faith. It is my expectation that we will all support the work of Christ through our local parishes, through the diocese and yes, even through the Episcopal Church.” —*C. Wallis Ohl, Jr., Bishop of Northwest Texas* (voted “no”)

“I often ask myself why it is so hard to engage one another in love. Am I afraid? Am I threatened? Will someone else’s life style be the ruin of my life? I believe we are called by our baptismal covenant not to live in fear, but rather to live in the spirit of love that protects, trusts, hopes and preserves.” —*James J. Shand, Bishop of Easton* (voted “yes”)

“It cannot fairly be said that we ‘legislate morality’ in our church. Most moral issues arise *because* there is more than one value at stake in them, and more than one Bible verse relevant to them. This creates many perspectives and tensions, yet we believe the Holy Spirit illumines our understanding and guides us in our decisions. Voting the resolution of opposing positions may not be ideal, but it is what our church does and has always done. We consider that better than schism, for there is a larger and transcending unity that holds us together, and that is our communion with one another in Christ.” —*Carolyn T. Irish, Bishop of Utah* (voted “yes”)

THE VIA MEDIA: WHO ARE WE?

“This present environment is uncomfortable and unfamiliar, yet there is within it an extraordinary opportunity for Christian witness to the world. I only wonder if we will grasp it. It is easy to stay in relationship with people just like ourselves—everyone can do that. But when humans are stretched by real differences and frustrated when things don’t go our way, and we hold a very clear belief about what is acceptable in the eyes of God, we are tested beyond what we can do by ourselves. If we allow this event to drive us apart from one another, people outside the Church will nod knowingly and say, ‘See. When push comes to shove, they are no different. They love with the same limits everyone else does.’ To stay together when there are many extremely important reasons not to do so will be unbelievably hard work, at times seemingly impossible. I don’t know how many of us believe Christ calls us to do such a difficult thing, but it will change the world if we choose to bear this burden together. —*David C. Bane, Jr. Bishop of Southern Virginia* (voted “no”)

“The spiritual reality is that we, you and I, ARE the Body of Christ and not clients of a religious institution who are privileged to stay or leave at will. Our unity is not dependent on our agreement, but is forever grounded in our oneness in Christ. ... We do need each other and we are all diminished by the loss of one person.” —*James E. Waggoner, Jr., Bishop of Spokane* (voted “yes”)

“We affirm The Episcopal Church’s prayerful discussions of the complete witness of Scriptures, together with holy tradition and our God-given reason. This traditional, Anglican approach does not always yield unanimity, but we hope our approach contributes constructively to the important ongoing task of interpreting the ways of God to human beings.” —*Don E. Johnson, Bishop of Western Tennessee* (voted “no”)

“Those who love the *via media*, the middle way, that so characterizes Anglicanism, find their anchor, not in confessional statements to which all are expected to ascribe, but in the ancient creeds and in the baptismal covenant. We know and experience God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. On that we agree. And because we experience God in that way, we are drawn into the great promises of baptism. There we promise to continue the apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. We promise to resist evil and strive for justice and peace. We promise to seek Christ in all persons. We promise to love our neighbor as ourselves. We promise to respect the dignity of every human being. And when we fail at any of that, we promise to repent and return to the Lord. About all of that we agree.” —*Larry Maze, Bishop of Arkansas* (voted “yes”)

“Christ came to reconcile each of us to God. He called us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to stay in relationship with God and one another.” —*Vincent W. Warner, Bishop of Olympia* (voted “yes”)

WHAT ABOUT SCRIPTURE?

“The Church throughout the ages has understood that the Bible is a living document which, according to our Lord Himself, leads to an ever deepening understanding of the truths embedded in Scripture through the passage of time and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-13). This is why this Church has made a pastoral exception to Jesus’ teaching on divorce based on a broader understanding both of human fallibility and failure and the depth of divine forgiveness. This is why slavery is no longer an acceptable Christian practice. This is why The Episcopal Church now benefits from the leadership of ordained women.” —*Clifton Daniel, III, Bishop of East Carolina* (voted “yes”)

“It is one thing to say that Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, and another to say that everything in the writings must be believed for salvation. The Bible was written over time, compiled over time, and has been variously translated and interpreted over time” —*Catherine M. Waynick, Bishop of Indianapolis* (voted “yes”)

“I believe ALL Holy Scripture is written for our learning. There are no throw away passages from the Bible. Rather, we are to ‘read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest’ Scripture to be informed persons of faith. Scripture demands our best intellectual efforts. Snippets should never be used as proof texts; all Scripture must be read in its full context. Scripture study demands that we first understand what the passage meant in Biblical times. Only then can we begin to see how it applies today. The eight passages which condemn homosexual practice come in vastly different contexts, but they all were written in a time when it was assumed that all persons are heterosexual from birth. Therefore if anyone commits homosexual acts, he/she is going against nature and is sinning. Some Christians still hold this point of view. However, increasingly, we talk about homosexuality as a[n] orientation (something unthinkable in the ancient world). We hear from people who maintain that they have been homosexual from birth. How does Scripture apply to these people? How about gay men and lesbians who are in committed, lifelong relationships? There are many such couples in our churches. To what degree do they conform to the morality Jesus teaches in the New Testament? The answers are not so clear as some presume.” —*Robert Wilkes Ihloff, Bishop of Maryland* (voted “yes”)

“As Episcopalians, we believe in scripture, tradition, and reason with prayer. We take our scripture seriously, but not literally. We disagree and we value differences of opinion. We might divide on the issues, but we do not divide the Church.” —*Neff Powell, Bishop of Southwestern Virginia* (voted “yes”)

CONFLICT AND DIALOG

“In my reading of Acts 15, I was struck by the story of disagreement within the early church There is a lot of fighting in Acts 15, but these arguments did not destroy the church; instead, the urgency of the message of the transforming love of Jesus Christ overwhelmed the differences, and the church grew.” —*Leo Frade, Bishop of Southeast Florida* (voted “yes”)

“I believe with all my soul that when a family has a disagreement that little is to be gained by removing oneself from the family. We need to stay and work it out together. The Church needs your voice, even a dissenting one, to remain in love and charity with one another as we continue to seek God’s will for us as the people of God. We are not finished.” —*Gladstone B. Adams III, Bishop of Central New York* (voted “yes”)

“Righteousness is a result of grace; self righteousness is a result of hubris. The ability to listen to another—even one who disagrees with us is a result of loving our neighbor as ourself. The unwillingness to listen is sometimes a result of self-centeredness.” —*Keith Ackerman, Diocese of Quincy*, (voted “no”)

All statements were compiled from materials on the official Web pages of the various dioceses. Most appear in pastoral letters written by the bishops to Episcopalians in their dioceses. Comments on voting refer to the way the bishop voted on confirmation of Canon Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire.