



THE LIVING CHURCH FOUNDATION

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Bishop Duncan: We're the Anglicans here

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At the conclusion of the second annual council meeting of the Anglican Communion Network held April 18-20 in Bedford, Texas, Suzanne Gill, communications director for the Diocese of Fort Worth and a correspondent of *The Living Church*, conducted a one-on-one interview with the Rt. Rev. Robert W. Duncan, Bishop of Pittsburgh and moderator of the network.

TLC: *Do you have any announcements to make?*

Bishop Duncan: My word would be, we've had a very important meeting. This is a time of huge anxiety, and without the Panel of Reference having been appointed, which really was designed to guarantee the position of those who are remaining faithful in the Episcopal Church, this is a hard season for many of our people. Most noteworthy were the six congregations and clergy in Connecticut. We are absolutely committed to standing with those six congregations in Connecticut and with those clergy. We have a clear plan of action; it's not something that we can talk about at this point, but that may well prove to be the most newsworthy thing that unfolds, that comes out of this meeting.

TLC: *Were you hoping that, by meeting toward the end of April, the Panel of Reference would have been appointed?*

Bishop Duncan: I think we all believed the Panel of Reference would be appointed immediately after [the Primates' Meeting]. Of course, none of us knew that there would be a Panel of Reference until the primates met. As it's turned out, the decision of the Bishop of Connecticut to move against the six congregations and six clergy, specifically after they notified him that they intended to appeal to the Panel of Reference, has made this moment of huge significance. The fact that we were all together in the very week when it begins to be clear how Connecticut is going to deal with it gave us an immense tactical and strategic advantage. So, this was not the time that we originally chose, but it was the time we think God chose.

One of the things we've seen in this meeting has been the sense in which God is realigning his whole Church. This is much bigger – and it's been said many times in this conference – than the Episcopal Church, much bigger than the Anglican Communion. Most of our time has been focused, not on the crisis, but on the mission. We've had some really exciting presentations on a vision for church planting, and at the heart of that vision is making a whole movement of self-replicating churches that reach and make disciples and create more churches. And that vision includes doing it across boundaries and lines. So [we'll do it] not just in the old way, where we're trying to create Episcopal churches, but we're trying to build the Kingdom. And we'll do it with whoever, wherever it seems right to do it. The exciting part is there's a realignment going on. There's a reformation going on.

TLC: *You've had Bishop John Chew Hiang Chea of the Diocese of Singapore here as your guest?*

Bishop Duncan: Yes. One action we took was to accept an invitation for the whole network to become partners with the Diocese of Singapore for the evangelization of Southeast Asia. The Diocese of Singapore has responsibility for all of [the former] French Indochina – that is, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia – as well as Thailand, Nepal, and Indonesia. That's almost 500 million souls who do not know the Lord. Singapore's a diocese of 20,000; it's exactly the same size as the Diocese of Pittsburgh. So Bishop Chew asked if he could come and

challenge the network to a special missionary partnership. Their strategy is to put a deanery in each nation that will become a diocese. And they reported on some of the progress there.

We have, in Pittsburgh, had a number of missionaries out in that part of the world. We're about to send another one out who will go to Thailand. What we've embraced in this is a first and special commitment to work with them at the ends of the earth, as we're also committed to working locally. It certainly was referenced that for many of us the war in Vietnam was a life event, and for many of us who are in the boomer generation, we either fought there or lost friends there, and there's a great yearning to go and give something back to that part of the world.

TLC: *There's been a concern about attrition in the [Episcopal] Church. The defection of [Christ Church] in Overland Park, Kans., makes a huge difference, for instance?*

Bishop Duncan: I'd say it makes a huge difference to the Episcopal Church. At one level, it doesn't make a difference to the network. I'm still regularly in touch with the rector and clergy and people of Overland Park. [Senior rector Ron] McCrary is one of our six convocational deans. The congregation, as it leaves the Episcopal Church, moves from being an affiliate of the network to being a partner of the network. We wish it hadn't been necessary, but it doesn't change our relationship to them. It does change their relationship to the Episcopal Church.

I would say that we have great sorrow about everyone who finds it necessary to leave the Episcopal Church, and yet we stand with them locally. However it is how they feel they have to respond. So we're able to bless Christ Church, Overland Park, and we're able to bless Ascension, Montgomery [Ala.]. And indeed we're committed to stand with the six parishes in Connecticut. But if they find themselves pushed out – and it will be clear, because they don't want to leave the Episcopal Church – if they're pushed out, we'll be standing with them, and they'll still be part of the network. Again, it's just the Episcopal Church is disintegrating, and that's the tragedy.

TLC: *So, as a body within the Episcopal Church, what's your "lifespan"?*

Bishop Duncan: Well, of course we claim to be, constitutionally, the Episcopal Church. And there's every evidence, both from what the Windsor Report says and what the primates said in accepting it, in their communiqué in Northern Ireland, that we are the Anglicans. If the Episcopal Church's constitution says that we'll be constituent members of the Anglican Communion, and the Anglican Communion now says, Episcopal Church, you're in time out. In fact, you're not only in time out, but it appears you're making a decision to walk apart. If in General Convention 2006 the Episcopal Church determines to walk apart, then the question we ask is, who is the Episcopal Church? And our legal basis will be to say, we are, of course, because they have broken the constitution.

TLC: *Do you think General Convention will be the turning point?*

Bishop Duncan: Oh, yeah. The Presiding Bishop has made it clear, and he made it clear in Northern Ireland, that this church has thought about this, prayed about this, and is committed to this course, and there'll be no turning back. And I think he reads the situation right. We also believe there'll be no turning back. We intend, one of the issues for us going into General Convention, and we will be in General Convention, is to attempt to force this Church to make a very clear decision, unmistakably clear as to whether they're going to walk with the Communion and repent from these actions, return to standard Anglican practice, or really going to move forward. They call it moving forward; we call it walking apart.

If they determine to move out, well, then they've determined to move out. We're the Anglicans here. We'll also stand in a way that says, we're the Episcopal Church where we are. You know, there'll be infinite court battles, but it'll be very interesting, since the Communion will have said the Episcopal Church walked apart, and the Episcopal Church's Constitution says that you've got to be constituent members, and we're the only ones they recognize as constituent members, so who's the Episcopal Church, legally? It'll be very interesting time. I mean, we don't want to go to court, but it's quite clear the Episcopal Church is always ready to go to court, and this time I think they might not be so willing to go to court, because we think there's every reason they'll lose.

TLC: *But hasn't the Archbishop of Canterbury been counseled by his lawyers that he really can't intervene in this province?*

Bishop Duncan: The great news is that the primates have given mechanisms by which they've said the Episcopal Church is walking apart. The Windsor Report has signaled that the Episcopal Church is going in another direction. It's moving away from the Anglican Communion. And the Panel of Reference, which of course hasn't been set up yet, but the very notion of it is that the Communion has said there needs to be intervention in this system because those who are recognizably Anglican – that is, the network parishes and the fellow travelers with the Episcopal Church – are the ones who are being persecuted for holding the faith that the Anglican Communion holds. So it is quite clear that all of the provincial primates have actually said the Episcopal Church is walking apart and said there has to be this panel appointed to deal with the folks who are being persecuted here. I think all that is in our favor.

TLC: *At General Convention, do you intend to introduce resolutions or otherwise induce a vote?*

Bishop Duncan: General Convention is still 14 months away. But what we will do as we lead up to General Convention is develop a strategy that will help it to be clear that the Episcopal Church has to choose, and the General Convention is choosing either to return to what the Windsor Report says is our teaching, which is Lambeth I.10. That is the official, present teaching of the Church; or to say no. If the Episcopal Church wants to say no, that's not where we are.

Now, I also expect, because this innovation is so aggressive, I would just have to expect that among those bishops who will be elected between now and General Convention 2006, we'll have somebody, whether a man or a woman, to join the ranks of [Bishop]Gene Robinson [as an openly gay bishop]. And what will be wonderful about that is that we don't actually have to have a resolution. All we'll have to do is have a vote of confirmation, which will confirm that this church is technically, I'd say, hell-bent on this innovation, for all the world to see. At the last convention, it wasn't any resolution we passed, it was the confirmation of a bishop. This church just can't hold back on this.

TLC: *Shifting gears a little bit, is it a challenge for you to be both a diocesan bishop and to be the moderator of the Anglican Communion Network?*

Bishop Duncan: They're two full-time jobs. Of course. But again, I have a wonderful diocese. The people and clergy of Pittsburgh could not be more supportive. And they have willingly sacrificed the part of me that has to care for the Network to the wider cause. And what I'd say is that this is like leadership in any province all over the Communion. In every case, the bishop who presides over a group of dioceses, whether it's the Archbishop of Canterbury, or [whoever it is]. The Primate of Nigeria is, after all, the Bishop of Abuja. Or the Archbishop of Southeast Asia is the Bishop of Saba. In our system and in our history...in the history of the Western World, even the one we call pope is Bishop of Rome. The only people who have innovated in a way that has gotten them into such trouble are, in fact, the Episcopal Church, which disengaged its presiding bishop in the 20th century from being bishop of a diocese. And Canada did the same thing. And so you get two bishops who are leading who are like corporate executives, but they're not bishops of a diocese. And so, what we're doing in Pittsburgh is what the whole Church has done through its whole history, where sometimes a particular local bishop gets asked to take responsibilities outside his diocese while he remains the bishop of his diocese. I just have the best people in the world, and clergy who are willing to sacrifice to make a difference for everybody.

TLC: *You have one parish that has asked for a Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO) relationship.*

Bishop Duncan: Definitely. We've done that, and we're negotiating that. I've said from the beginning of my episcopate that I'd always grant that. I've wanted to model what I encouraged the Episcopal Church six years ago to do, which is, let's let one another go free, and let's let the Lord fight the battle on Mt. Carmel, and we'll see whose God is asleep. But of course the Episcopal Church, in its majority, wouldn't countenance that idea. But we in Pittsburgh have always said, we'll give people freedom to go, and we'll see what God does. Again, I wish ... Imagine how different history would be if the Bishop of Connecticut were doing what the Bishop of Pittsburgh is doing.

TLC: *Do you feel particularly on the spot to behave impeccably with regard to the DEPO rule so that you can't be criticized?*

Bishop Duncan: I'm certainly behaving in line with the DEPO rules. I think the DEPO rules, as I've often said,

don't go far enough. When I was talking with the congregation in our diocese, St. Brendan's in Franklin Park, and they wanted to know – there were statements people had made about DEPO being dead, or DEPO not going far enough – and I said, well now let's look at this. Suppose your rector were to leave. Would you prefer to have your DEPO bishop or me be a part of your search process? Does DEPO go far enough? Under DEPO, of course, I would be the one who deals with their search process. I've said all along I was prepared to go much further. But for purposes of the present moment, I'm doing what the Episcopal Church said it would do.

TLC: *You are a signer on a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking for a meeting in late May, and on another letter similar to that, to Bishop Griswold. Have you heard back?*

Bishop Duncan: I have no comment. The bishops together have agreed we'll have no comment, so I really don't have anything to say.

I can say that our coalition is expanding, and that's because once the choice is clear, do you choose the Anglican Communion, a global church and a faith that's held universally across the denominations, or do you choose an American sect with a rapidly declining market share? And when the question is put that way, many bishops and many dioceses begin to see, well, gee whiz, we're going to choose Anglicanism, because that's how to be part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. I mean, the choice for me is, are you going to be part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, or are you going to be part of something else? And that's what the Episcopal Church is now offering folks. And our job is to help everybody to make the choice. That's where our coalition is going.

TLC: *And to help people in the pews see where it is going?*

Bishop Duncan: Absolutely. We've got to help them, too. All of us in ordained leadership for years have been trying to keep the people focused on mission and not drag them down into these conflicts. Whether that was wise or foolish, at this moment we've got to keep working the mission, but we've also got to bring the lay people into an understanding that the hour of decision, as they used to say, has arrived.

TLC: *Has the time when acts of canonical disobedience were necessary passed?*

Bishop Duncan: Oh, well, again, different folks are acting in different ways. A principle that we have tended to use and I think have found very successful, is for those who make the canons their Bible, we're glad to play on that playing field. That is to say, if folks want to use the canons to say that people who haven't left the Episcopal Church have abandoned the communion of this church, then we'll help them to see just what the canons say in ways that, I think, they will find themselves very unhappy.

The best reference I can give you is, in 2002 or 2003, the [Rev.] David Moyer thing. The one great land battle we had, and victory we had, was we played the canons exactly according to what the canons said. When you really want to use the canons in ways they were not intended to be used, which is what I'd submit the Bishop of Connecticut is doing right now, we can also use the canons in ways they weren't intended to be used for ends which will actually break the system down. So we don't actually have to actually do canonical disobedience to help people see the absolute chaos that comes when a church is more concerned for power than it is for the truth.

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