

TEC'S CRASH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
by the Rev. Murray Henderson

Maybe Bishop Tom Wright put it best: "... the slow-moving train crash of international Anglicanism..." has happened, at least it has, to one of its prominent cars.

You will have heard that The Episcopal Church (TEC), AT ITS General Convention, has repudiated the moratorium asked of it on same sex blessings, and allowed in principle the ordaining to all orders of ministry, people in same-sex relationships. Despite its stated desire to remain part of the Anglican Communion, TEC's actions betray its intent. In the words of the Windsor Report, they are effectively setting out to "walk apart". In flagrant contradiction of the four Instruments of Unity, the revisionist theology of the American church has led it to what must be regarded by the rest of the Communion as schism.

There are questions that will take a while to answer:

How will Canterbury and the other Instruments respond? It is surely time for polite firmness. That should mean TEC's demotion to observer status, at best, within the Communion. You cannot protest your desire to be part of the family, while at the same time deliberately setting yourself on a course which, if universalized, will break the family up!

What are the implications of TEC's walking apart, for the Anglican Church of Canada, especially as General Synod looms in Halifax less than a year from now?

No doubt there are some in the Canadian Church who will be encouraged by the American action, to push for the same outcome at General Synod. Revisionists in the Canadian church may feel that after the TEC decision they are on a roll (as distinct from a train-wreck). My hope, however, is that the outcry from the international Communion may cause many of our more moderate and Communion-centered laity, clergy, and bishops to pause. No longer can it be denied, as though it ever could, that our actions in the North American churches have the capacity to split us off from the Anglican Communion we love, and indeed to create great fissures within that Communion.

I am encouraged that a good many of my liberal friends within the Anglican Church of Canada, are pulling back from pursuing the Marriage Canon at General Synod 2010. There is a sense in their ranks of the catastrophic effects that would have here in Canada and in the wider Communion. But it will not be sufficient for the liberals to give the Marriage Canon revision a bit more time. Moderate liberals will need to weigh very carefully, whether they truly want, by the way they vote, to force the Canadian church to "walk apart", following their TEC counterparts. Passing the same-sex blessing option will be quite sufficient for the Anglican Church of Canada to express its unwillingness to function as part of a "communion" of churches.

It was encouraging, too, to hear Bishop Tom Wright appeal to the rest of the Communion on behalf of the many in TEC who are appalled at General Convention's recklessness. He asked that bishops, dioceses, and parishes which repudiate General Convention's actions, should be recognized for what they are: loyal and steadfast Anglicans committed to biblical teaching in matters of faith, morals, and worship.

May I assure you all that the Anglican Federation is preparing another vigorous presence at our General Synod 2010 next June. On the heels of TEC's decision to go it alone, there will be many willing to have another look at Windsor, and at the Covenant process. The Covenant process is the best tool at the disposal of those who want the Anglican Communion to work collegially on its pressing issues, and I'm quite sure the Federation will be pressing for its full acceptance within the Anglican Church of Canada. Equally important, the Covenant process is the best way we have of ensuring that we continue to be "a communion", that is a spiritually united reflection of the Body of Christ, rather than a mere loose federation of churches. The Covenant process also represents the expressed willingness on the part of the Western (and mainly white) churches to welcome their Global South sisters and brothers as equals in decision-making which we have often until now, made unilaterally.

Let us commit ourselves to God our Father and to our Lord Jesus Christ, with renewed zeal and fervor in the difficult and exciting days which lie ahead, "until this tyranny be overpast (Psalm 57:2),