

# SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Statement by the College of Bishops concerning future discussion of issues raised by the Windsor Report in the Province*

## **Discussion up to the Present**

Like all provinces in the Anglican Communion, we are at present sharing in two processes of discussion. In the Scottish Episcopal Church, we recently considered the Study Guide issued by the Working Party on Sexuality. Responses were collated and made available in the Province. The College of Bishops then made and circulated its own response to that material in February 2004. Similarly, the *Windsor Report* was considered in the Province. When responses to it were collated, the College made and circulated its own response both to it, and to the *Primates' Communiqué* in March 2005.

Between now and Lambeth 2008, we are committed, as a Province, to sharing in the wider debate taking place across the Anglican Communion. We must, therefore, seek in a spirit of generosity to engage with and appreciate the full range of views that have been expressed and continue to be expressed both within our Province and elsewhere in our worldwide Communion.

## **The Issues Now Before Us**

The Anglican Communion is at present attempting to deal with three major issues on this subject:

1. Its attitude to people of homosexual orientation, including those who are in long term same-sex relationships;
2. Whether acceptance extends to ministry in general and, in particular, to ordination to priesthood and episcopacy;
3. How the church can hold within a single communion those who differ in their response to this issue and believe that this is, for various and differing reasons, an issue of fundamental importance.

## **Material for Further Consideration**

The members of the College of Bishops recognise that they have a teaching and pastoral responsibility. They, therefore, wish to create an environment in which passionately held views can be expressed and heard in an atmosphere of charity, acceptance and honesty.

They are aware that there is a danger that even to encourage debate on this subject is to raise concern that 'traditional' positions may be modified, that an open attitude may become more closed or that what has been an informal acceptance of difference may be made more difficult just by the process of debate. However, such a debate must

take place in every province of the Anglican Communion, as we move to the Lambeth Conference in 2008.

Everyone who engages in this debate must consider a number of factors:

1. The interpretation and the authority of scripture – what it says and how it is to be read;
2. An examination of the tradition of faith and the documents which have been produced as part of the Anglican Communion's own examination of this issue. These most recently include the *Resolutions of the 1998 Lambeth Conference*, the *Windsor Report* and the *Primates' Communiqué*. Further material will arise between now and 2008, possibly as a result of the coming meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council;
3. Experience of the presence and the ministry of people of homosexual orientation within the life of the church;
4. Ways in which our understanding of gender and sexuality has developed and continues to develop in our society.

In all this, we must seek to be open to learning the truth of God from one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **The College's Commitment and Invitation**

The College of Bishops, therefore, *affirms its commitment* to the task set before the whole Communion – to engage openly and prayerfully with the full range of issues and material which are now part of this debate.

The College *invites the Province* to share in this process, listening to each other and to voices from other Provinces with that same spirit of generosity as has characterised our own debate so far.

7 June 2005