

Editorial – May 2022

Brian Douglas

Editor

In a moment of fantasy I imagine ‘Anglicanism – the Musical’! I know it is a fantasy but there are some images here for me that resonate with what we find in the Anglican Communion. There is a cast of different characters involved in a great story line, some great hit songs and the chorus singing together. There are stars and big voices and yet many others faithfully playing their part in ways that assist the whole and using their voices and actions to allow the show to go on. There is variety and yet substance and enthusiasm, blessed with the integrity of individual talents and journeys and the regional and cultural gifts and differences of so many places.

The Anglican Communion may not be a musical but it is one of the world’s largest world-wide Christian bodies – the third largest after the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It has tens of millions of members in more than 165 countries around the world. It is diverse and composed of 42 Provinces with some having a national and others a regional focus. There are several traditions existing side by side in a way that attempts to be complementary. The number of Anglicans has roughly doubled since 1970 with a total membership of approximately 86 million in the present day. There has been both growth and decline and different parts of the Communion with phenomenal growth in Africa where most Anglicans live. All the Provinces recognise and are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and yet there is no central authority in the Anglican Communion since each of the Provinces is autonomous and guided by the Instruments of Communion: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council. Anglicans share much in common in the way they worship but there is diversity as well.

This diversity has become more apparent in recent times with the emergence of the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) which began in 2008. GAFCON exists across the world and one Province (the Anglican Church of North America) is not part of the Anglican Communion, but nonetheless has links with many of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion associated with GAFCON. GAFCON has issued the *Jerusalem Declaration* in 2008 which expresses GAFCON’s understanding of ‘orthodox Anglican faith’.

In this edition of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* the lead article is written by the Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph, the Bishop of North Queensland in Australia. In his article, called *The Challenge of GAFCON to the Unity of the Anglican Communion*, Bishop Keith argues that since 2008 GAFCON has emerged as a powerful force within the Anglican Communion. He believes it had the potential to reform some of the issues facing the Anglican Communion. However, he also

believes that its *Jerusalem Declaration* has become for GAFCON a standard of Anglican orthodoxy to the exclusion of many orthodox Anglicans who cannot assent to its extra-doctrinal material. This lends GAFCON, in Bishop Keith's view, to schismatic ends.

In order to promote dialogue on the Anglican Communion and the emergence of GAFCON I have invited the Bishop of Tasmania, the Right Reverend Dr Richard Condie, to write a reply to Bishop Keith's article. Bishop Richard is the Chair of GAFCON (Australia) and so is well placed to respond and present the views of GAFCON. He has also written a letter to the supporters of GAFCON Australia called *Commitment 2020* in which he presents a call to 'proactively promote orthodox Anglicanism', to 'respond to specific issues' and to 'assist those who disaffiliate' from the Anglican Church of Australia. Part of this assistance is the possible proposal for a parallel jurisdiction in Australia alongside the existing Anglican Church of Australia and the subsequent establishment of an extra-provincial diocese for Australia under the authority of the GAFCON Primates, with its own constitution, canons and bishop. Bishop Richard's response will be published in the November edition of the *Journal of Anglican Studies*.

As Editor of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* I am hoping that these articles can be a positive exchange of views which promotes respectful dialogue of important matters in the life of the Anglican Church of Australia and indeed the wider Anglican Communion and at the same time assist in mutual understanding.