



Center Aisle

Center Aisle is an opinion journal offered by the Diocese of Virginia as a gift to General Convention. We offer analysis and opinions from a variety of sources that reflect the transformational center of our Church.
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"The middle is not the midpoint on a line between two extremes. In the life of faith, the great bulk of people are at the center, and that center is faith in the Risen Christ."
—The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop of Virginia

House of Deputies Poised to Debate Key Resolution

D025: 'This is Not a Great Leap Forward'

By the Rev. Lauren R. Stanley and Matthew Lukens

Two of the deputies who crafted the original Resolution D025, which deals with consecration of bishops, spoke to *Center Aisle* last night about their work and their hopes.

The Rev. Dr. Ruth Meyers of Chicago and D. Rebecca Snow of Alaska began working in 2007 on this resolution, which may come before the House of Deputies today through Special Order X009.

This resolution, Ms. Meyers said, "is really about affirming those relationships" we have with others in the Anglican Communion. "Then it says, 'This is who we are in conversation with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people. We have been in dialogue for many years. We have moved to a different place than many other provinces.'"

D025, Ms. Snow and Ms. Meyers stressed, emphasizes the importance of self-differentiation, "saying who we are so we can then be in authentic relationships with others in the Communion where they are."

Ms. Snow called D025 "the way forward. ... an attempt to make a contribution to the Listening Process by making another stab about who we are and where we are."



D. Rebecca Snow (left), lay deputy from Alaska, discusses D025 with the Rev. Dr. Ruth Myers, deputy from Chicago.
Photo: Matthew Lukens

"Tell the people that we know that not everyone in the Episcopal Church agrees with what's in here, and not everyone in the Anglican Communion agrees with it, but we are all acting in light of" Scripture, tradition and reason.

The two deputies described how they came to work together to craft the original resolution.

Ms. Meyers, formerly of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, is the new Hodges-Haynes Professor of Liturgics at Church Divinity School of the Pacific and a founder of the Chicago Consultation, a group of 50 bishops, clergy and lay people

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Editorial: Room for Optimism

You've heard them before – words like recognize, affirm, encourage. They are the parlance of unity amid diversity. They are the language World Mission is using in its earnest quest for consensus on issues relating to human sexuality.

Prepare to see the results of that effort in a discussion that could occur today or tomorrow on the floor of the House of Deputies. The fate of Resolution D025 could go a long way toward determining whether our Church will continue its pilgrimage with the rest of the Communion.

The work on this resolution is not done. Bishops on World Mission voted 3-2 against the proposal, while deputies on the panel approved it 24-2. Though D025 doesn't explicitly repeal B033, the compromise resolution from 2006, it does raise legitimate concerns by affirming that "God has called and may call" gay and lesbian persons "to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church." That language could be interpreted as a unilateral lifting of the moratorium on gay bishops.

Still, it's encouraging to see how effectively World Mission has drawn on language

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Today's Special Edition offers coverage of a key debate scheduled for 3:30 this afternoon in the House of Deputies related to Resolution D025—a proposal dealing with issues relating to human sexuality. We'll be back tomorrow with our next regular issue.

The Resolution in Question: D025, Commitment and Witness to Anglican Communion

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm the continued participation of The Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion; give thanks for the work of the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 2008; reaffirm the abiding commitment of The Episcopal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations, and members of The Episcopal Church to participate to the fullest extent possible in the many instruments, networks and relationships of the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm its financial commitment to the Anglican Communion and

pledge to participate fully in the Inter-Anglican Budget; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm the value of "listening to the experience of homosexual persons," as called for by the Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988, and 1998, and acknowledge that through our own listening the General Convention has come to recognize that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships "characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God" (2000-D039); and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention recognize that gay and lesbian persons who are part of such

relationships have responded to God's call and have exercised various ministries in and on behalf of God's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are currently doing so in our midst; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm that God has called and may call such individuals, to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church, which call is tested through our discernment processes acting in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge that members of The Episcopal Church as of the Anglican Communion, based on careful study of the Holy Scriptures, and in light of tradition and reason, are not of one mind, and Christians of good conscience disagree about some of these matters.

Letter to the Editor

I appreciate deeply the reflections of my colleague, John Ohmer, on the theology of blessings. As always, he finds a way to state the case succinctly and reasonably. I part company, however, with the quote from Kate Moorehead, who suggests that "we move so quickly that we're not allowed time to theologially reflect."

Perhaps Kate has not been reflecting theologically on the notion of gay marriage and the role of blessings in the Church, but such conversations and theological exchanges have been on the table at least since the 1960s when I entered seminary. It was professor of Church history Jules Moreau who first articulated to my ears a theology of blessing. We pray for God's blessings, but we do not impart them.

The real issue on the table is not "blessing" but rather the imprimatur of the Church. Some seem to believe that asking for God's presence in a relationship between two persons of the same gender is somehow disrespectful, perhaps even sacrilegious. It is as if the asking lends a certain kind of prestige to the couple with which some are not comfortable.

I could not disagree more. In fact, I believe that inviting God into the midst of relationships (all relationships) holds the promise of a higher calling to those so committed one to another.

—Jim Hammond, Diocese of Virginia

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supporting full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion. Ms. Snow is a senior deputy in the House and has served on two special legislative committees that addressed issues of sexuality in previous Conventions.

In 2006, Ms. Meyers said, she was in line to testify with a piece of blank paper and a pen in her hand, not knowing what to say. She recalled her own experiences as a woman priest who could not serve in one diocese as well as the words of Archbishop of York John Sentamu, who urged members of that Convention to look for signs of crucifixion in themselves. When it came her time to speak, she said, "I cannot and will not be a party to hammering those nails into the hands and feet of my sisters and brothers."

Following that Convention, she said, she and others knew they "really had to make this different at the next Convention. We need to bring people together and do this in a way that celebrates the relationships we have in the Anglican Communion, which are gifts of the Spirit. So are the steps the Episcopal Church has taken welcoming lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people, which are also gifts of the Spirit."

"God," Ms. Meyers said, "is calling us to

hold those together."

Ms. Snow decided to participate because she was "in favor of trying to find ways to be as gracious and giving as we could. ... I was interested in getting to something that looked forward. Rather than try to get rid of something in the past or tie ourselves to the canons, we have to keep marching forward."

Ms. Snow said the two "agreed that we've gotten to the place we've gotten in the Episcopal Church because we have spent all this time listening, including those who are opposed to homosexuality."

"I think we have to be very careful not to act in ways that exclude people who don't want to be on this train," Ms. Snow said, "who are not in agreement with moving anywhere, the people who want to hang on to B033 and are fearful of the consequences of not doing so."

"We are not better off for the loss of those voices – however uncomfortable they made others feel, we're still not better off without them."

"Even if there is an overwhelming majority (supporting D025), remember, when we go home to our dioceses, there will be parishes at home that will be unhappy."

Said Ms. Snow, "This is not a great leap forward."

Read the extended interview online at www.centeraisle.net.

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of reconciliation from past Conventions and how deftly it has integrated our Church's "abiding commitment" to the Anglican Communion with a reaffirmation of our inclusiveness as a community of faith.

It's a reminder of how precise wording can be far more than lawyerly nitpicking; it can be a catalyst to building bonds of trust. Recall past statements by Anglican bodies for "gracious restraint" and "bonds of affection."

So prepare for the latest quest for consensus—today or tomorrow in Deputies and, later this week, in Bishops. There is room for optimism that a compromise may emerge. Resolution D025 does achieve key goals: It reaffirms our relationship with and strong commitment to the Anglican Communion; it recommits our Church to being an inclusive community of faith; and it acknowledges the divisions in our Church on issues relating to human sexuality, specifically the consecration of gay bishops. The task now is to ensure that, while achieving these goals, Convention does not resort to unilateral actions that could fracture the Communion.

OffCenter

maybe i should have rested
when i made commissions...



Cartoon: Mike Kerr