
The Election of Katharine Jefferts Schori is an Incarnational Response to the Windsor Report

From The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip
And Deputy to General Convention
Atlanta, Georgia

A special committee of convention has been working mightily and faithfully to agree on a Windsor Report response they might recommend to us. They have prayed and struggled fervently. They join many, many others, around the world praying and struggling, too. The Episcopal Church is committed to two different realities: commitment to the Anglican Communion, and commitment to the full membership of gays and lesbians in the church.

However, as the world and the press awaits the careful crafting of the Episcopal Church's response to the Windsor Report, the Episcopal Church delivers not words, but a person. The election of Katharine Jefferts Schori as presiding bishop represents a different sort of response to Windsor, and it will probably be far more powerful than any document we adopt. When she is consecrated, the Episcopal Church will be represented by a woman, when just over 30 years ago women were not even allowed to be ordained priests. Only two other members of Anglican Communion churches (Canada and New Zealand) have women bishops.

Thus, the Episcopal Church is choosing to respond incarnationally, with flesh, as is proper for any church that is part of the Anglican Communion. And the Episcopal Church is responding in a way that is faithful to our local expressions of Christian faith. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory famously advised the first Archbishop of Canterbury not to impose upon the new church in England customs which were unfamiliar to them: "Choose, therefore, from every Church those things that are pious, religious, and upright," That remark set the tone for local respect.

The Anglican tradition of Christianity takes flesh seriously, and it takes local expression seriously. We are an incarnational church that respects local custom and order. Of course, we take words and doctrine and creed seriously, too. But we find our greatest authority in the Word made flesh, Jesus our Lord. We believe that God became flesh in Jesus Christ, and we believe that God continues to become flesh, in a correlative way, in men and women today.

The Episcopal Church formally realized 30 years ago our church could ordain women as priests and bishops. The Lambeth Conference of 1988 stated that "each province respect the decision and attitudes of other provinces in the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate." The Windsor Report's rather incomplete summary of the women's ordination process yet relies on that Lambeth statement. Today, the Episcopal Church benefits from the ordination and consecration of women, and we will benefit from the person of Katharine Jefferts Schori as our next presiding bishop.

Sam Candler

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