

**Committee for Dialogue on Canon III.8.1  
Minority Report**

The Rt. Rev. William C. Wantland, the Rev. Rebecca Spanos, Mr. David Rawson and Mrs. David (Rita) Moyer, make this minority report.

This committee was established pursuant to Resolution 1994: C004sa, adopted by the 71st General Convention of The Episcopal Church, meeting in Indianapolis:

1. "recognizes that women are not ordained to the priesthood in all dioceses";
2. "acknowledges that those who support and those who oppose the ordination of women each hold a recognized theological position in this Church";
3. requests the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies, in consultation with two bishops from dioceses where women are not ordained to priesthood to "appoint a committee to promote dialogue and understanding";
4. directs the committee "to discuss how the canon can be implemented";
5. provides that "the following shall be among the matters discussed:
  - a. opportunities for full access for women to the ordination process;
  - b. opportunities for ordained women to carry out their ministries in every diocese;
  - c. opportunities for congregations that desire the ministries of ordained women to have access to them; and
  - d. opportunities for those persons who oppose the ordination of women to have access to the ordination process and to carry out their ministries in every diocese".
6. directs that "this committee shall report to the interim meeting of the House of Bishops in 1995 and subsequently to the Executive Council."

The Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies then named six members of the committee, all of whom favored the ordination of women. The two bishops from dioceses not ordaining women to priesthood were then asked to name four members of the committee. These bishops (Donald Parsons, Retired, of Quincy and William C. Wantland of Eau Claire) pointed out that a more balanced committee membership might be provided for, by either appointing equal numbers of committee members from each side, or at least by allowing the six appointments to stand, but providing for five members from the minority position. These proposals were not entertained. It should also be noted that the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies are additional ex officio members of the committee, although the Presiding Bishop did not attend either meeting, and the President of the House of Deputies attended only the July meeting.

The committee met for three days in April of 1995, and three days in July. The April meeting prepared four suggestions to be considered. They were:

1. in dioceses where women are not currently ordained to priesthood, to provide a means by which women could test vocation to priesthood in an adjacent diocese;
2. a canonical provision to allow the licensing of either women in priesthood or those opposed to women priests by the bishop president of the province if the diocesan could not conscientiously do so;
3. a canonical provision to allow the acceptance of letters dimissory of women in priesthood or of those opposed to women in priesthood if the diocesan could not conscientiously do so; and

4. a canonical provision to allow a congregation in a diocese with a woman bishop to have the sacramental ministrations of a male bishop.

It quickly became obvious that the April suggestions were totally unacceptable to the Episcopal Women's Caucus. On the first day of the July meeting, the committee declared the April proposal "dead." It should be noted that the April suggestions were first made by the minority of the committee which is making this Report. In fact, these suggestions were made after the majority demanded to know how the minority proposed to carry out the provisions of Resolution 1994: C004sa. No suggestions were made by the majority. Eight of the ten committee members had initially supported these suggestions.

The first day of the July meeting was supposed to have been a dialogue with bishops who opposed the ordination of women to priesthood and episcopate, women bishops, and male bishops who favor the ordination of women. However, none of the women bishops appeared that day, and only one pro-ordination male bishop appeared, the Bishop of Fond du Lac. The Bishops of Fort Worth and San Joaquin appeared, along with the Bishop of Eau Claire, who is a member of the committee. The Bishop of Quincy could not appear, but presented a written report. Instead of any dialogue, the majority members of the committee simply quizzed the conservative bishops to see how far they were willing to compromise their beliefs. Those who did not accept women's ordinations were told to join the Roman Catholic Church, if they could not accept the majority view. When the Bishop of Fort Worth described a way of accomplishing the intent of the April proposals without canonical amendment, he was told that he was not willing to go far enough. In fact, the committee chairman, Robert Rowley, Bishop of Northwestern Pennsylvania, indicated that failure to accept women priests in their dioceses as fully in communion with bishops was an indication of unwillingness to live up to the Chairman's perceived view of Resolution 1994: C004sa. Perhaps the statement of Jane Dixon, suffragan of Washington, on the following day, sums up the attitude expressed, "We will not engage in dialogue with those who do not accept women's ordination."

The second day was a series of presentations by members and supporters of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, aided by leaders of Integrity. The thrust of this "testimony" was to show why ordination of women should be made mandatory in the Episcopal Church. One woman priest from Canada even recommended to the committee the so-called Canadian plan of requiring acceptance of women priests as a condition to ordination or placement in the church. While an invitation to testify was sent to the Episcopal Women's Caucus, none was sent to the Episcopal Synod of America. The Synod therefore determined it would obviously serve no purpose to send people to the meeting.

The final day of the meeting was given over to the majority rejecting each and every suggestion of the minority for a way to allow two different recognized theological positions to live together in the church. The Chairman announced that he would vote only in case of a tie, and the President of the House of Deputies announced that she would refrain from voting. This left a majority of five voting committee members. The minority first proposed the suggestion of Bishop Iker to adjust the April proposal. This was voted down five to four. An adaptation of the English plan (adopted by the Church of England following authorization of ordination of women to priesthood), and features of the Pennsylvania plan (informally providing for a visiting bishop to "traditionalist"

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parishes) were likewise voted down by a five to four vote. The majority then proceeded to vote, still by a five to four division, in favor of a canonical amendment along the lines of the 1994 Diocese of Chicago proposal, which would make mandatory the acceptance of women for priesthood in every diocese in the ordination process, the licensing of women priests and the placing of women priests in congregations. While a resolution was then adopted which would allow persons opposed to women's ordination access to ordination process and placement, the resolution also required total obedience to the proposed mandatory canons on ordination, licensing, and placement, with the understanding read into the committee's record that this meant no member of the laity could serve on the vestry of a congregation, no member of laity or clergy could serve on Standing Committees or Commissions on Ministry, and no bishop could serve in a diocese, unless they would refrain from opposing the ordination or placement of women priests.

Disregarding the clear statement of Resolution 1994: C004sa that there are two recognized theological positions in the church, the committee has consistently acted on the premise that there is (or certainly should be) only one recognized theological position. Further, although the committee was to "promote dialogue and understanding" on this matter, absolutely no time was allowed for any meaningful dialogue or even an attempt at understanding. Rather than any discussion as to how the canon might be implemented (or indeed whether it might already be implemented in some form) in every diocese, the majority constantly demanded that the minority come up with an acceptable "solution." Every proposal of the minority was rejected by the majority, and absolutely no proposals were ever made by the majority, other than to demand full acceptance of women priests. Virtually no time was spent at the July meeting in addressing the mandate of General Convention to provide "opportunities for those persons who oppose the ordination of women to have access to the ordination process and to carry out their ministries in every diocese." Written documentation of current persecution of people opposed to women's ordination was given to the committee, but never considered in session. In fact, the majority steadfastly refused to even consider putting some protection against persecution in the canons while they were preparing mandatory canons aimed at forcing this persecuted minority to give in to the majority.

In fine, there was no real dialogue ever allowed or provided for, there was no effort at understanding, there was no willingness to treat the minority as legitimately holding a recognized theological position, while there was an implied, but also voiced, view by the majority that the minority were law breakers, simply refusing to accept the decision of the church; there was only the oft repeated declaration of the majority that "the only task of this Committee is to see women priests in every diocese of the church, and as soon as possible."

The recommendation of the committee is moving toward the "final solution" of compelling conformity to the majority theological position on women's ordination by all, in spite of the fact that the resolution specifically declared the mind of General Convention to be that "those who support and those who oppose the ordination of women . . . each hold a recognized theological position in this Church." As the minority were told on more than one occasion, "You may hold your belief, but you may not exercise it." The majority is adopting the position that there is only one recognized theological position; at the very least, the committee proposal is aimed at extinguishing one of the two recognized theological positions in the church. This is neither dialogue, understanding, nor justice. It is the clear impression of the minority that in the process,

from the appointment of the committee members, to the format of procedure unilaterally imposed by the Chairman on committee operations, to the obviously slanted “hearings” and final proceedings, there was a foregone determination to coerce a minority of the church to either leave the church, deny their theological convictions, or submit to trial and punishment as law breakers.

In short, the minority has experienced the true meaning of the phrase, “tyranny of the majority” in its service on this Committee.

If there is any interest in truly carrying out the intent of General Convention’s resolve, then General Convention should reject the majority proposals as outlined in the Blue Book.

Respectfully submitted by The Rt. Rev. William C. Wantland, The Rev. Rebecca Spanos, Mr. David Rawson, and Mrs. David (Rita) Moyer, minority members of the Committee for Dialogue on Canon III.8.1.