

Statement by Peterborough DEF September 2008

The Peterborough Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship exists, according to its Constitution, to foster fellowship within the evangelical constituency in the Diocese, to commend our evangelical convictions to others, and to apply these convictions, as expressed in the Basis of Faith, to contemporary opportunities and problems in church and nation.

Some clergy from the PDEF met in mid September 2008 specifically to pray and discuss together in the light of the recent developments within the Anglican Communion. After reflecting on overviews of the GAFCON and Lambeth conferences, we would like to express some concerns to the wider church, and also re-commit ourselves to mission and service within the Church of England in the context of a changing ecclesiastical landscape.

Firstly, we as the PDEF want to affirm our support for the GAFCON movement, whose theological emphases we share. We commend the Jerusalem Declaration to the Diocese for study and for affirmation as a valid summary of authentic Christianity in its Anglican expression. We believe that the GAFCON movement has arisen in response to heterodoxy in theology and practice which has sadly become the norm in some parts of the Anglican Communion, and as such GAFCON is needed at this time. However, we are aware of the need to balance a passion for God's revealed truth with attitudes of graciousness, patience and servanthood, avoiding party spirit, power struggles and personality cults, and we pray that the Holy Spirit would enable the church's leaders to conduct discussions in this way over the coming months and years.

Secondly, we have read the reports from the recent Lambeth Conference, and commend the Archbishop of Canterbury and the organisers for facilitating a praying, worshipping and reflecting community of Bishops, where views were shared in an atmosphere of respect, and the mission of the Church was reaffirmed in terms of proclaiming Christ as Lord and combating world poverty. However, we note with concern the increasing polarisation between opposing views among Anglicans on the uniqueness of Christ, the authority and interpretation of Scripture, human sexuality and other issues. As the official position now seems to be "non-confessional", there are signs that those who continue to hold to the core beliefs of classical Christianity might be increasingly marginalized and viewed as "extreme" in this new climate of uncertainty about doctrine. This might be seen in the area of local policies on theological education or mission to those of other faiths, for example. We will be seeking

assurances from our Diocesan leadership that as we hold to and proclaim our evangelical beliefs, this will be respected, welcomed and encouraged, rather than seen as divisive or somehow “un-Anglican”.

Thirdly, we note that many in the church, especially laity, are confused and feel in the dark about the big issues facing Anglicanism and the Christian church as a whole which are often not addressed from the pulpit, so we as the PDEF commit ourselves to find ways of helping our people to understand the issues more clearly. We will not shy away from controversial areas, but will always seek to avoid attitudes of judgementalism and party spirit. The PDEF programme for 2009 has already been drawn up and reflects this desire to engage prayerfully, biblically and respectfully with some of the issues over which Anglicans disagree.