

INTERPRETING THE PROPOSED ANGLICAN COVENANT THROUGH THE COMMUNIQUE

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Thank you for the invitation to be with you today. My task is to speak about the process by which the Proposed Anglican Covenant came into being and to contribute one interpretation of where the text is going, that, along with other interpretations, will assist you in your deliberations on behalf of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion as a whole. As a member of the Covenant Design Group, along with my colleague Ephraim Radner, I attended its first meeting in Nassau in mid-January. Ephraim and I have divergent views about the covenant process as of this point in time. I will argue that the covenant process has become considerably clearer as a result of the recent Primates' Communiqué. I'm saying, in a nutshell, that the best source for understanding the logic of the proposed Anglican Covenant and the best evidence for how it is likely to be interpreted in the future is the recent Communiqué of the Primates.

Background: Theological Assumptions and Recent History

Like many people in the Anglican Communion, when I first read the Windsor Report with its recommendation of a covenant and its draft of a possible covenant in an appendix, initially I had strong reservations about the idea of a covenant for the Anglican Communion. These reservations derived both from my legal education and from my training as a New Testament theologian. The very word "testament" is a partial synonym for "covenant" and New Testament scholars take pains to express clearly what is "older" and "newer" about God's covenant-making. Lawyers are often preoccupied with covenants in the form of contracts, breaches of contract, and various sorts of remedies.

The term "covenant" itself is fluid: it can range anywhere from an informal agreement to a solemn oath to a formal contract that is legally binding and enforceable. Covenants can be used for a variety of purposes: to invite or to impose, to include or exclude, to summarize a hard-won consensus or to set a limit beyond which the parties to the covenant may not go. The idea of a covenant is neutral: an agreement can be for good purposes or bad. One biblical example concerns the plot to kill Paul in Acts 23:12ff where a group of men bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. On the other hand, Paul and the Philippians are bound together in "koinonia," a business partnership or covenant for the proclamation of the gospel. He writes to them from prison precisely because they are bound to one another in covenant relationship.

In Scripture, the great majority of uses of the term "covenant" refers not to these agreements between people, but to the covenants that God has made: with humanity, with Israel as a whole, and with particular representatives of Israel: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, etc. Biblical scholars have for a long time connected these to the treaties by which a powerful king or emperor bound a vassal-king's allegiance in return for certain benefits. These have a familiar form and there are many examples of the genre within the Old Testament to describe the relationship between God and Israel. Probably the first reference to a new covenant came out of the exilic period, e.g., Jeremiah 31:31-34, when God and Israel recommitted themselves to one another.

The references to covenant-making between people or covenants initiated by Israel are much less frequent and not always so positive. Israel was a small and powerless nation, often tempted to form covenant alliances with stronger neighbors instead of relying on God's protections. Isaiah 7 describes the king of Judah's fear that Israel and Syria would combine against him. Isaiah 28 portrays the rulers of Israel as saying "we have made a covenant agreement with Death and with Sheol we have an agreement" but God says: "your covenant with Death is annulled; your agreement with Sheol will not stand." Behold I am laying in Zion a foundation stone...." God has made alternative arrangements for Israel's salvation. So a covenant that is not of God, a covenant with powers opposed to God, or a covenant constructed for an ungodly purpose, will not finally stand. Again, to summarize: a covenant can be good or bad. The idea of a covenant by itself, is neutral. Everything depends on its purpose.

As a member of the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, I was asked to write a paper on "covenant" outlining these reservations and suggesting ways in which they might be overcome. That process was clarifying for me: I reviewed the biblical background, a bit of British common law tradition, Richard Hooker on "ecclesiastical polity," John Locke on "toleration," and some of the ways in United States history that covenants have not worked so well, for example, housing covenants where homeowners agreed not to sell their property to African

Americans or Jews or Roman Catholics. The Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission at its most recent meeting last September divided into two sub-groups and I chose to work on "covenant." Part of our task there was to articulate possible models of covenant for discussion by the group.

By that time, the Archbishop of Canterbury had formally endorsed the idea of covenant as "the best way forward" shortly after General Convention 2006. At the same time, he hinted at a possible result of the continuing Windsor Process: some parts of the Communion might not be able to ratify such a covenant for reasons of conscience, and might then become somewhat like Methodists, historically related to the Anglican Communion and bound by many common traditions, but no longer one denomination. At the IATDC meeting the following September, we did not dwell on the potentially divisive aspects of covenant but on its unitive possibilities. I think we all came away from that meeting convinced that a covenant might be very helpful for the Anglican Communion at the present time and that a great deal would depend on the form of the covenant. We also noted that a covenant is not self-interpreting: someone has to say what it means and how it is to be applied in a particular situation.

When I was asked to serve on the Covenant Design Group for the Anglican Communion, I prayed hard and consulted some wise people, then I said yes. I assumed that the group had been carefully balanced in a number of ways (north, south, theologians, ecumenists, biblical scholars, people with legal background, male, female, lay, ordained, etc.) and I was determined not to second guess that process or mess it up. The stakes for the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church seemed to me and still seem to me to be very high.

A little more background: Before the meeting I expressed to the Presiding Bishop my strong desire to work hard for us to remain in the Anglican Communion even if what we achieved was not ideal from an Episcopal Church point of view. I also expressed my concern that I might be part of crafting something that would be harmful to us and that I might be put in a place of having to decide whether to do that or resign.

The Covenant Design Group Meeting in Nassau in January

Turning from that background to the meeting itself, I need to say as clearly as possible that I thought we worked well together and that I thought we were able to craft something that actually would be a good conversation starter about the covenant process, a more helpful approach to covenant-making than any of the documents we had looked at that went into our discussion. I also thought there were some potential dangers – I'll say more about that in a minute – but I want to say again that I was an active participant in that meeting and that I was fully part of the draft covenant we designed for discussion.

When we first formed as a group and introduced ourselves to one another, it became obvious that we were missing three of our members, no small matter in a group of that size. The representatives from South Africa, Ireland and Ceylon were unable to attend the meeting. We had been formed as a group in November, so undoubtedly they had prior commitments, but for whatever reasons they did not send replacements and we were missing those perspectives that I assume were also carefully chosen to balance the group. This was a concern to me because South Africa has been through the experience of apartheid and the powerful work of the Truth and Reconciliation process; Ceylon has recently ordained women after careful discussion, and Ireland has experienced the bitter religious conflicts between Roman Catholics and Protestants and also the peacemaking efforts. The perspectives of these three members would have been invaluable to our committee.

At the beginning of our work, one of the Primates present suggested that there might need to be a minority report, looking at me, and we were informed, again at the very beginning of our work, that an Episcopal Church bishop had already described us as "a lynch mob." We set to work, reviewing the large set of documents that had either been solicited or volunteered to guide our work and to try to find a way forward that would work for everyone. We worked together well, listening to one another, respecting one another's differences. But the absence of the three members I described meant that there were only one or two voices at the table to speak for the use of the covenant as binding the whole Communion together with different points of view on issues that are not adiaphora represented in it.

As I said to the Episcopal News Service immediately after the meeting, the most well-represented view around the table was that the covenant was preventative. According to that view, the point of a covenant is to prevent any significant change from occurring in the Church's doctrine and practice. Proponents of that view were and are eager to have a covenant in place as quickly as possible, so that there will be procedures available to prevent any unwelcome innovations from their point of view. There had been discussion earlier that the covenant drafting and discussion process might take as long as ten years, but at our meeting it became clear that the covenant process would be moving at top speed. It was even suggested at one point that the completed covenant be ratified by all bishops at Lambeth 2008. The present timetable is not quite that fast: the Anglican Communion will have until the

end of 2007 (so about nine months) to respond to the Proposed Anglican Covenant. Then the Covenant Design Group or some other group will re-craft the Covenant for approval at Lambeth and the ratification process will happen as soon as possible after that. The point is, we're talking about an accelerated process.

That same majority point of view was also most insistent on the key role of the Primates as the interpreters and enforcers of the Covenant. A few of us suggested that the Anglican Consultative Council, being more representative of the Anglican Communion as a whole, including women and laity, might be the better body to interpret the Covenant. But it was felt that the group is too large, that it meets too infrequently, and that the "augmented role" of the Primates was a major part of the rationale for the Covenant in the first place. The language about the Primates prevailed, with the reminder that the Communion as a whole would be discussing this move at length, that this was a draft document to be tested by the larger Communion.

The same sort of discussion happened around the issue of the normativity of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer in section 2.5. The only footnote in the document recognizes that there are other duly authorized Books of Common Prayer in the Anglican Communion, "but acknowledges the foundational nature of the Book of Common Prayer 1662 in the life of the Communion." So that section now reads that "each member Church and the Communion as a whole, affirms"... "that, led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." Once again, objections that this would work to exclude provinces that are not ordered by the 1662 Prayerbook were met with the argument that this was the sort of thing that the provinces would need to discuss and report back about: how central is the role of the Thirty-nine Articles or the 1662 Book of Common Prayer in the Anglican Communion as a whole?

So the Proposed Anglican Covenant is most clearly based on the covenant document already widely circulated and ratified in principle by representatives of the Global South. That document served as the framework for our deliberations and we added to it language from a variety of sources: the Province of Australia's covenant proposal, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Windsor Report, and several other documents, all recognizably Anglican. Of course we wrote with an eye to the upcoming Primates' meeting and the point was to use language that all the Primates could "recognize" if not affirm in all the details, so that the conversation, critique, and reception process could go forward.

The key language about the interpretation and application of the Proposed Anglican Covenant, and where we were most innovative with respect to classic Anglican tradition, was in section 6. We spent a great deal of our short time on this section. The language about Scripture, the Instruments of Communion, the enhanced role of the Primates, and the possibility of the exclusion of a member church "in the most extreme circumstances" where the "substance of the covenant as understood by the Councils of the Instruments of Communion" was not fulfilled, were the topics most discussed by our working group. I thought then, and I continued to think that what we had drafted was clear and that it would be a useful tool for discussion by the larger Communion.

At the time, I called for widespread participation by members of the Episcopal Church in the Draft Anglican Covenant discernment process. I said,

"It is important for the entire Anglican Communion to go forward as a group and not to split into two different versions of Anglican Communion. It's worth working for; it's crucial theologically to be one body for our witness and our mission. If the covenant is the best way of holding the Communion together, then a lot of us are interested in the covenant for that purpose."

I also expressed a vision of a comprehensive and generously orthodox Anglicanism that I thought was compatible with and could be embodied in a covenant of the sort we had drafted:

"This coming time [of response to the draft proposed covenant] will require action around the Communion if we want to continue in the Anglican tradition of comprehensiveness, generous orthodoxy, listening to minorities and welcoming the stranger – the person with another point of view. Not everyone in the Anglican tradition views that sort of tradition as distinctively Anglican."

I said Anglicanism has a "long tradition, not of closing our eyes to conflict, but of creating spaces where different points of view can be argued intelligently, coherently, and with attention to biblical interpretation in ways that we can move forward without everyone agreeing but with an understanding that though we don't see it the same way, we care deeply about our union."

I rooted that tradition in the early Church and the subsequent life of the Church throughout the centuries. "We've always been working it out; we've always been trying to figure out how to live together around the same table with different points of view. We will continue to do that unless we abandon the project of Communion."

I spoke of two great traditions of biblical interpretation that live side-by-side in our congregations and throughout the Communion. "As we reflect on our present context, we can recommit ourselves to welcome those who share another interpretation of Scripture and therefore another interpretation of doctrine or ethics than we do." I said, "it is the time for the Anglican Communion at every level to renew its commitment to conversation about the Anglican Communion and about the history of biblical interpretation in Anglicanism." And I said: "We're up to that; we can do this." All that was before the Primates' Communiqué.

The Primates' Meeting and Communiqué

The character of that discussion and discernment process has been clarified considerably by the Primates' Communiqué and by the specific "assurances" requested from the Episcopal Church by September 30 of this year. The Primates are acting in an unprecedented way, setting up a "pastoral council" and one or more "primatial vicars," as if the Proposed Anglican Covenant process had been completed and the document already ratified by all the provinces. But the long careful process the Covenant Design Group had envisioned with respect to our section 6.6 – by which, eventually, in extreme circumstances, after all procedural due process had been followed, a member Church might be judged to have "relinquished for themselves the force and meaning of the Covenant's purpose" by "the councils of the Instruments of Communion" (all of the Instruments of Communion) – that suggested process has been ignored, bypassed, condensed, or otherwise made irrelevant by the Primates' Communiqué. The Primates have given the clearest possible signal that they themselves cannot wait for the Proposed Anglican Covenant. Their section 30 states that "an interim response is required in the period until the Covenant is secured." As we speculate about what could have motivated such a strong response when the work of the Covenant Design Group had clearly advanced beyond anyone's initial expectations, I think we should assume that the Episcopal Church is considered so unreliable and so untrustworthy that the Primates feel the Anglican Communion is presently endangered without these "assurances" and without the imposed structures (the pastoral council and the primatial vicars).

At the same time, we have been instructed to "read" the Proposed Anglican Covenant and the Communiqué as a package. And while I agree with Ephraim Radner that the proposed draft the Covenant Design Group suggested was not especially innovative in what it affirmed, though it clearly was innovative in its section 6, this Communiqué from the Primates by which we are to interpret the Proposed Anglican Covenant is a clear innovation. One likely result, whether intended and anticipated or not I don't know, is that the reception process (discussion, critique, amendment) of the draft of the Proposed Anglican Covenant is going to be very limited, especially for members of the Episcopal Church who have, in a sense, a double deadline (one in September, another in December), which is a very short time to engage such momentous matters.

Of course, the members of the House of Bishops have already been engaging this individually in discussion of the Communiqué and the House has collectively addressed it during this meeting. But there is a sense in which the discussion of the Communiqué cannot be completed without attention to the covenant process, since the Covenant and the Communiqué are mutually interpretive documents. So, to restate my conclusion, the best source for understanding the logic of the Proposed Anglican Covenant and the best evidence for how it is likely to be interpreted in the future is the Primates' Communiqué.

Some Observations about the Primates' Meeting and Communiqué

1. The first thing to look at is the Report of the Communion Sub-Group that considered the adequacy of the Episcopal Church's response to the Windsor Report's recommendations. The group commended the Episcopal Church for taking the Windsor Report and the Primates' recommendations "extremely seriously" and then focused its attention on the resolutions passed by General Convention 2006. It did not, for example, note that in response to Paragraph #135 of the Windsor Report, the Presiding Bishop had commissioned the task force that produced "To Set Our Hope on Christ" though it did mention that the structures for alternative episcopal oversight (DEPO), taken up by the Windsor Report, were still in place. It gave the resolutions of the General Convention 2006 a passing grade on expressions of regret, noted the absence of "moratorium" language in the resolution calling for "restraint" on the part of bishops by not consenting to the consecration of any episcopal candidate whose manner of life presents a challenge and could further strain communion, and it gave us a failing grade on the same-sex blessings resolution that never made it to the House of Bishops. You all know well the extraordinary measures the General Convention took to get that much passed. But the Communion Sub-Group did mention that provisions of the Windsor Report directed to other parts of the Anglican Communion "appear to have been ignored so far," and called on the Instruments of Communion to become pro-active in identifying potentially divisive issues in the future and discussing them before they become polarizing.

The Primates' Communiqué moves away from this document in several ways: it replaces the whole DEPO structure with the "pastoral council" and "primatial vicar" plan and it justifies the boundary-crossing behavior, moving it from being one of the three things the Windsor Report wanted a moratorium on, to an understandable reaction (a symptom rather than a problem) that would surely stop on its own once the difficulties in the Episcopal Church were straightened out.

2. The Primates' Communiqué makes it clear that the bicameral structure of our polity is not important to them: the House of Bishops is to give these assurances on its own, through its Primate. A polity that would require us to do this another way is our problem. This sentiment was underlined by the statement of the Archbishop of Canterbury immediately after the Communiqué. Asked about the response to the House of Bishops, he said it was impossible for him to speculate about the House of Bishops, that no one, including the Presiding Bishop, was in a position "to deliver the whole of the House of Bishops. We hope that they will." He added, "On the specifics of the wording – well, these are the terms that have been put to them. I think it would be rather difficult if there were a response in other terms."

The Communiqué itself, as you well know, requires the House of Bishops to:

- 1) "make an unequivocal common covenant that the Bishops will not authorize any rite of blessing for same-sex unions in their dioceses or through General Convention;" and
- 2) "confirm that the passing of Resolution B033 of the 75th General Convention means that a candidate for episcopal orders living in a same-sex union shall not receive the necessary consent unless some new consensus on these matters emerges across the Communion."

It says that failure to give these assurances means that the relationship between us "remains damaged at best" and this "has consequences for the full participation of the Church in the Anglican Communion." In other words, this is a highly condensed version of section 6.6 of our Proposed Anglican Covenant document. We see that the main purpose of the Proposed Anglican Covenant is directed at the Episcopal Church specifically and the issue of same-sex relationships particularly. We see that section 6.6, far from being a logical outcome of a long list of beliefs we hold in common, is the point of the covenant-making process. We also see how the Primates are very likely to interpret the Proposed Anglican Covenant when it is finally in place: as a means to bring the practices of a province holding a minority view on a contentious matter into line with the view a majority of the Primates themselves so that the Communion speaks with only one voice.

It was particularly disheartening to me to see that the Hermeneutics Project (the Primates' agreement to a worldwide study of the methods of interpreting Scripture) would begin sometime after the Lambeth Conference in 2008, that is, long after the Episcopal Church is being asked to give assurances that effectively renounce an entire way of reading Scripture that has shaped much of our recent conversation. But, that Hermeneutics Project, the work of Theological Education in the Anglican Communion, and the Listening Process focusing on the experience of gay and lesbian Anglicans from around the Communion are possibilities towards an openness to more than one way of reading Scripture not apparently present at the moment.

Some Suggestions for a Way Forward

Ephraim will remember that at our final session of the Covenant Design Group I commented that our working document did not reflect much of a theology of the Cross, and so we borrowed some language from the Oporto Statement at that time. It seems appropriate to revive that concern now, as the House of Bishops considers its response to the Communiqué that is standing in for the Covenant.

I think the Presiding Bishop's language about fasting points the way for us: It is now very clear that the tremendous concern of the Primates to obtain these interim assurances is the point of the covenant process as a whole. As painful as it is for us to think about this, the whole question of a covenant for the Anglican Communion arose first in the Windsor Report in response to the General Convention of 2003 and was pushed forward by the Archbishop of Canterbury immediately after our General Convention of 2006. It is distinctly possible, even highly probable, that these events and these responses have had a distorting effect on the Anglican Communion. We haven't actually been a covenant-based tradition and it may be that the Communion is rushing to embrace a Covenant as a short-term solution to some questions that require a much longer process. Would it help the Communion if we removed the pressure to come up with a Covenant by stepping out of the room for a while as they discuss it?

I suggest that we enter a five-year period of fasting from full participation in the Anglican Communion to give us all time to think and to listen more carefully to one another. I think we should engage in prayerful non-participation in

global meetings (in Lambeth, in the Anglican Consultative Council, in other Communion committee meetings) or, if invited to do so, send observers who could comment, if asked, on the matter under discussion. We should continue on the local level to send money and people wherever they are wanted. (This is not about taking our marbles and going home.) We need to remain wholly engaged in the mission of the church, as closely tied as we are allowed to the See of Canterbury and to the Anglican Communion as a whole. But we should absent ourselves from positions of leadership, stepping out of the room, so that the discussions of the Anglican Communion about itself can go on without spending any more time on our situation which has preoccupied it.

Someone suggested that I call this five-year period a "time out" where screaming brothers and sisters go to separate corners of the room for a while and think about things. We certainly could use some time without the hyped rhetoric and the media attention (they probably cause one another). On some level, we all need a rest from the intensity of this discussion and from the loss of perspective that results from such heated polemic. I wouldn't want to call this season of fasting from full communion a "trial separation" because I think we should, for our part at least, continue to seek "the fullest degree of communion possible" without giving the reassurances requested by the Primates. The extent of that "fullness" will, of course, be determined by the Primates and I do not think we should be optimistic about how much "communion" will be allowed to us. But I hope we could "walk in parallel" if not "walk together" and see, if by God's grace, those parallel lines can in fact meet in five years.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in particular, and also the Primates, have been gracious enough to allow that there are matters of conscience on both sides. These are weighty matters indeed, which should not be entered into lightly or quickly.

For this reason, I do not think the House of Bishops can make this decision alone – a least not in our polity. It is essential for us to listen to all the representatives of the Episcopal Church, and our constitution does provide for calling a special General Convention. Article 1, section 7 says special meetings may be held as provided for by the canons. Canon 1.1.3 (a) vests the right of calling a special meeting of the General Convention in the bishops. The Presiding Bishop summons the meeting, designates the time and place, with the consent of the requisition of a majority of the bishops expressed to the Presiding Bishop in writing. Canon 1.1.3 (b) says that deputies elected to the preceding General Convention shall be the deputies of the Special Convention. This could be a stripped down, more tightly focused General Convention and somebody who knows a lot more about this than I do can tell us if there are ways to streamline the resolutions process to deal with the Primates' request as directly as possible. Perhaps the Presiding Bishop could appoint a group of Bishops and Deputies to structure this important conversation so that we could hear one another past the sound bytes.

If the Special General Convention decides to instruct the House of Bishops and the Presiding Bishop to fast from making hasty assurances to the Primates and to fast from full participation in the Anglican Communion, then we should ask the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops or some other group appointed by the Presiding Bishop to lead us in an active process of prayer, listening, and discernment, so that the five years are well spent. During that time, the Anglican Communion should have begun its Hermeneutics Project and continued its Listening Process. We would continue to do the same thing in parallel.

But if the Special General Convention decides to instruct the House of Bishops and the Presiding Bishop to give precisely the assurances required by the Primates – if it is actually possible to do that without amending our Constitution, I'm not sure that it is – that would not guarantee us a place at the table. The wording of the first assurance seems to require 100 percent of the bishops with jurisdiction to agree not to authorize same-sex blessings. The word "authorize" by itself could do us in: although we use the word in the technical sense of passing resolutions, the Primates might well interpret it in a non-technical sense, so that if any priest in the Episcopal Church blessed same-sex unions and the diocesan bishop did not discipline or inhibit that priest, arguably the diocese would have "authorized" the action.

As to the second assurance, you all know better than I do whether a clear majority of you would be willing to promise to withhold consent to a candidate for episcopal orders living in a same-sex union. But it may be a long time indeed before "some new consensus on these matters emerges across the Communion" and who knows whether the bishops elected in subsequent years will consider themselves bound by your promises or whether some of you will become convicted to renounce your promises? All indications from the Primates' Communiqué are that the words will be interpreted very literally and without much concern for matters of our polity. Personally, I think it is only a matter of time before we would be placed on probation anyway. Archbishop Eames had suggested that the Episcopal Church had already responded adequately to the Windsor Report even before General Convention 2006, but apparently the head of the Windsor Report Commission himself cannot interpret the Windsor Report. The Primates do the interpreting for the Anglican Communion and the Primates are very angry at the Episcopal Church.

Theologically, biblically, I think we are at Antioch with Paul, in Jerusalem with Jeremiah, and walking the way of the Cross with that mysterious Son of Man. With Paul in Antioch, we have – perhaps without adequate consultation with Jerusalem – been having table fellowship (koinonia) with Gentiles, until the men from James came to tell us that we have to stop doing it. They want a moratorium on eating with Gentiles. This presents the community with a difficult decision. Peter and Barnabas pull away from the table physically and ritually separate themselves from the Gentiles. Paul says, "I can't do it." If he had not, most of us would not be here today, being Gentiles ourselves.

Jeremiah in Jerusalem before the exile told the frightened people to wake up and appreciate their situation. Their naïve belief that God would never allow the city of Jerusalem and its Temple to be taken by the Babylonians was not going to save them. They were going into exile, one way or another. They could do it the hard way or the easier way, but they were going into exile. I think the metaphor of "exile" captures something of the pain we can expect from being in less than full communion with the Primates, who will certainly distance themselves from us, if not in September, then later on down the line. But we might remember that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters have long lived in exile and it will be a great privilege to go into exile in their company.

Finally, I think we are in the place of all potential disciples of Jesus when some Pharisees come to warn him about Herod. He will go his way today, and the next day, and the day after that, healing and teaching and casting out demons, but eventually he will end up in Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who lose their lives for now on the way to Jerusalem, when things are hard and scary and it feels like death is all around, then we shouldn't be surprised later when the Son of Man says he doesn't want to be seen with us.

Where is that mysterious Son of Man hidden today? What is the cross that we are to take up? This message is especially directed to those of us who are called to "stand with" a rejected category of persons. Dietrich Bonhoeffer recognized the hidden Son of Man in the persecuted Jews. Abraham Heschel, who marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., had eyes to see the Son of Man hidden in the rejected separate and unequal ones. Perhaps Mahatma Gandhi caught a glimpse of him in the Dalit, the "untouchables" of India. Since we shall have to answer for these things we do on the day of judgment, it may not hurt to ask ourselves ahead of time the question Jesus asks us: What good will it do any of us, even if we gain the whole world, if we forfeit our soul, our life, our self?