

I. Background

In 1993, the Joint Meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Consultative Council passed a resolution outlining a set of principles, criteria and process “for the recognition of men and women who have lived godly lives by including them in the calendars of the Churches for remembrance.” (Resolution 21, preface)

The resolution described the process of calendar revision as a helpful ongoing process “which is one of the ways in which the Church holds the Christian hope before the people of God, to enable their growth as a holy temple in the Lord (Eph.2.21).” (Resolution 21)

II. Principles and Criteria adopted by the Joint Meeting of Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, 1993

- a. The commemoration of holy people is always an act of anamnesis. We remember not only the person’s historical events but the power of grace in their lives and consequently of ‘Christ in us the hope of glory.’ A calendar is an instrument for worship, just as much as a eucharistic prayer. We may learn from both, but we use them primarily for worship.
- b. In worship, the practice of devotion (cult) precedes law. Law exists to protect cult from deformity, not to shape it. The first step in a process of commemoration is the spontaneous devotion of people who knew the person involved and testify to his/her holiness. Authority enters the process to encourage or discourage its continuation. (One of the ways in which the cult emerges is in the naming of churches and chapels after people who were known for the holiness of life, e.g. the John Keble Church in Mill Hill, London. The role of authority in such cases is to make sure that the criteria for this practice is holiness and witness and not power or wealth.)
- c. Calendars should be developed to honour and expand the thankful remembering of Christian people. They should not be developed to meet pedagogical, regional or sectionalist goals. The names of Christian heroes and heroines, however holy, should not be imposed onto the worship of people to whom they mean nothing.
- d. A lean calendar may have more meaning and greater impact than a full calendar.
- e. A process for trimming calendars may be as important as a process for developing them.
- f. Originally the word ‘martyr’ meant simply ‘witness’, but it was attached at an early date to those who persevered as witnesses to the point of death and whose death was itself the ultimate act of witness. The concept of martyrdom has become more complex in the intervening centuries. Is it to be restricted to those who might have avoided death but chose to remain firm in their resolve? Does it include those who were killed for their faith without the option of escape? Are only those who were killed by persecutors who were hostile to Christianity as such to be accounted martyrs (some Provinces in the Communion have so ruled), or does martyrdom include those who have suffered at the hands of other

- Christians, perhaps for their doctrinal position or for their engagement with social evil? In societies which are nominally Christian it may be necessary to define martyrdom to include the killing of Christians by Christians. It is more than possible that those who were responsible, directly or indirectly, for the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Oscar Romero, to name but two, were not only technically Christian (i.e. baptized) but acted on the basis of values which they misguidedly perceived to be Christian. The question is not who killed these witnesses, but whether they died for the authentic Gospel.
- g. Some calendars restrict the word 'saint' to pre-Reformation figures; others do not. Anglicans should be neither intimidated nor beguiled by the technical terminology used traditionally and by Christians of other Communion in regard to the commemoration of holy people and heroes and heroines of the faith. The word 'saint' means only 'holy person' and should not be used as though it separated a loved and respected Christian from the ordinary levels of humanity. The use of the term is optional. Similarly, the word 'canonized' should not be used as though it implied human knowledge of divine judgement. There is, in fact, no compelling reason for Anglicans to appropriate the term, although it has been proposed in at least one province. A process of recognition after the cult has begun and historical statements have been attested will be valuable and may be called 'canonization', but the term should not be used as though people become saints as a result of such a process; they become saints, if at all, through holiness of life and witness to the Gospel.
 - h. While commemorations begin at the local level, among those who knew and remember a holy person, it is not inappropriate for them to spread more widely, especially if the style of holiness expressed in the life of a person addresses in a striking way the aspirations of a particular generation of Christians. The love and courage of some people makes an almost universal appeal as their story becomes known. In such cases the boundaries of geography and of divided Christianity make little sense. It is not surprising that some Anglican calendars contain the names of people who lived in other parts of the world or belonged to other Christian Communion.
 - i. Reports of extraordinary phenomena (miracles, appearances) in association with a cult are not to be equated with evidence of holiness of life and witness to the gospel. They should be treated with caution and not encouraged among those who may wish to promote a commemoration
 - j. The following traits will be found in those who are commemorated,
 - i. *Heroic faith*, i.e. bearing witness with great generosity to Christ and the gospel. Historically, the primary model of heroic faith has been witness to the death, but the term may also include persistent risk-taking as well as a life in which other values are set aside for the sake of devotion and service. True heroic faith is healthy and life-affirming; it is not masochistic or suicidal.
 - ii. *The fruit of the Spirit*. We may expect those commemorated to have exhibited in an exemplary way the fruit of the Spirit to which Paul refers in Gal 5.22, 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.' Their lives may not have

been perfect, but those who knew them should have been aware of this complex, but unified goal within them.

- iii. *Christian engagement.* We may expect those who are commemorated to have participated actively in the life of the Christian community and to have contributed to its sense of mission and to its life and growth.
- iv. *Recognition by the Christian Community.* The commemoration of holy people should have spontaneous roots and should grow from the testimony of those who knew them. The task of authority is to prevent the spread of inappropriate or misleading devotion, not to impose a commemoration which promotes a line of thought or boosts regional self-esteem. The larger church is not obliged to approve such recognition as local Christian communities may give to particular people; however, it should take them seriously.

III. Process adopted by the Joint Meeting of Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, 1993

Each Province should develop its own process for the liturgical commemoration of holy people. The process should include the following.

- a. A climate in the church which is hospitable to local commemorations
- b. Recognition by bishops and other church leaders that they have a responsibility to review local commemorations and to encourage or discourage them as they appear (or do not appear) to foster devotion and holiness.
- c. Provision for dioceses to suggest the names of people commemorated locally to an appropriate body of the Province for review (e.g., a Liturgical Commission or a sub-committee of a Liturgical Commission).
- d. Provision for a body of the Province to test the acceptance of commemorations with a larger representation of the church.
- e. Provision for the governing body of the Province to adopt names to be included in the provincial calendar, to assign them to a particular proper prayer and readings.
- f. Support for the preparation and publication of accurate biographical material on those who are commemorated.
- g. A process for the regular review of Provincial calendars and for the 'retiring' of names which no longer command significant attention. (This should be done by the same provincial body which received and reviews suggested names and tests their acceptance with the church, and in the same consultative way.)
- h. A process for sharing calendar revision among the Provinces of the Communion.
- i. Commitment to protecting Sundays as the weekly commemoration of the Lord, as well as the integrity of the great feasts and seasons (If a holy person died on Christmas Day, for instance, it may be appropriate to commemorate him/her on his/her birthday or on the date of some other significant event in his/her life.)
- j. Commitment to the commemoration of persons whose witness provides models for Christian life in the present context.