



CNI

NEWS FOCUS -

Reaction to Anglican Primate's statement

Statement from Primates 2016

Today (January 14) the Primates agreed how they would walk together in the grace and love of Christ.

This agreement acknowledges the significant distance that remains but confirms their unanimous commitment to walk together.

The Primates regret that it appears that the text of this agreement has been leaked in advance of their communiqué tomorrow. In order to avoid speculation the document is being released in full. This agreement demonstrates the commitment of all the Primates to continue the

life of the Communion with neither victor nor vanquished.

The full text of this particular agreement follows:

1. We gathered as Anglican Primates to pray and consider how we may preserve our unity in Christ given the ongoing deep differences that exist among us concerning our understanding of marriage.

2. Recent developments in The Episcopal Church with respect to a change in their Canon on marriage represent a fundamental departure from the faith and teaching held by the majority of our Provinces on the doctrine of marriage. Possible developments in other Provinces could further exacerbate this situation.

3. All of us acknowledge that these developments have caused further deep pain throughout our Communion.

4. The traditional doctrine of the church in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds marriage as between a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union. The majority of those gathered reaffirm this teaching.

5. In keeping with the consistent position of previous Primates' meetings such unilateral actions on a matter of doctrine without Catholic unity is considered by many of us as a departure from the mutual accountability and interdependence implied through being in relationship with each other in the Anglican Communion.

6. Such actions further impair our communion and create a deeper mistrust between us. This results in significant distance between us and places huge strains on the functioning of the Instruments of Communion and the ways in which we express our historic and ongoing relationships.

7. It is our unanimous desire to walk together. However given the seriousness of these matters we formally acknowledge this distance by requiring that for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity.

8. We have asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a Task Group to maintain conversation among ourselves with the intention of restoration of relationship, the rebuilding of mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognising the extent of our commonality and exploring our deep differences, ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ.

Presiding Bishop responds to Primates' statement

Before I say a word about our gathering here at the Primates Meeting, I just want to say a word of thank you to you for all of your prayers: your prayers for this meeting, your prayers for me personally, both here and in my earlier sickness. We are well, and God is God, and I thank you.

Let me say a word about the meeting.

This is not the outcome we expected, and while we are disappointed, it's important to remember that the Anglican Communion is really not a matter of structure and organization. The Anglican Communion is a network of relationships that have been built on mission partnerships; relationships that are grounded in a common faith; relationships in companion

diocese relationships; relationships with parish to parish across the world; relationships that are profoundly committed to serving and following the way of Jesus of Nazareth by helping the poorest of the poor, and helping this world to be a place where no child goes to bed hungry ever. That's what the Anglican Communion is, and that Communion continues and moves forward.

This has been a disappointing time for many, and there will be heartache and pain for many, but it's important to remember that we are still part of the Anglican Communion. We are the Episcopal Church, and we are part of the Jesus Movement, and that Movement goes on, and our work goes on. And the truth is, it may be part of our vocation to help the Communion and to help many others to grow in a direction where we can realize and live the love that God has for all of us, and we can one day be a Church and a Communion where all of God's children are fully welcomed, where this is truly a house of prayer for all people. And maybe it's a part of our vocation to help that to happen. And so we must claim that high calling; claim the high calling of love and faith; love even for those with whom we disagree, and then continue, and that we will do, and we will do it together.

We are part of the Jesus Movement, and the cause of God's love in this world can never stop and will never be defeated.

God love you. God bless you. And you keep the faith. And we move forward.

The Most Rev. Michael Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

Video at -

<http://www.episcopalcafe.com/presiding-bishop-responds-to-primates-statement/>

Bishop of Western Massachusetts blogs on primates' action

"Anglican Communion Suspends the Episcopal Church After Years of Gay Rights Debates"
headline in the Washington Post

"Anglican Communion Suspends the Episcopal Church in the United States" news crawl on CNN

"Episcopal Church Suspended from Anglican Communion" headline from Religious News Service

“...the disciplinary action is the most serious setback for the Episcopal Church...since the conflict erupted in earnest over how to interpret what the Scriptures say about gay people and same-sex marriage.” Quote within a news report from the New York Times

These are all reliable news sources that I respect. None of the statements are true. What happened at the Primates’ meeting in Canterbury needs to be unpacked in light of who Primates are (an awful name – we need to come up with something better), what Primates do and what the Anglican Communion is. I can’t explain that any better than Andrew McGowan, Dean of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, does in this blog.

If you don’t have time to read that blog, know that a gathering of Anglican Communion leaders throughout the world declared that The Episcopal Church could have “voice but not vote” in several internal bodies of the Anglican Communion for the next three years. They made this decision in reaction to our (The Episcopal Church) decision at General Convention last summer to allow same-sex marriage. We are not “suspended” from the Anglican Communion. We are still united “in bonds of affection” with this religious tradition of 90 million people. And we

are still a companion diocese with Kumasi, Ghana and Mampong, Ghana. We will support the Mampong Babies' Home as generously as ever. We will listen respectfully to Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and support his leadership of the Anglican Communion and his prophetic witness for the poor and for the earth.

I hope the above shows why the headline and "crawl line" from the Washington Post and Religious News Service and CNN are wrong. As to the NY Times statement, I offer the following rebuttal that this decision by this one gathering of church leaders is "the most serious set-back for the Episcopal Church...since the conflict erupted in earnest over how to interrupt what the Scriptures say about gay people and same-sex marriage."

Our "Primate" – also called our Presiding Bishop, also called my friend and inspiration – Michael Curry, responded to the Primates' decision against The Episcopal Church's decision to support same-sex marriage with this:

"Many of us have committed ourselves and our church to being a 'house of prayer for all people' as the Bible says, when all are truly welcome. Our commitment to be an inclusive church is not based on social theory or capitulation to the

ways of culture, but on our belief that the outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross are a sign of the very love of God reaching out to us all. While I understand that many disagree with us, our decision regarding marriage is based on the belief that the words of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians are true for the church today: All who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, for all are one in Christ.”

Or, as my brother bishop in Rhode Island, Nick Knisely, said in the midst of the debate over same-sex marriage in his state, said “I’m not for same-sex marriage despite my faith. I am for it because of my faith.”

The Episcopal Church is not backing down on our support for same-sex marriage and for the dignity and equality of LGBTQ persons. But I also, as a Bishop in the Episcopal Church which is part of the Anglican Communion, apologize to LGBTQ persons. This decision by the Primates is hurtful for you – you who are God’s creation and beloved by God as you are. I wish they had never said what they did and I support you.

I support you despite the Primates’ Meeting and I look forward to this as an opportunity to once again make this support public. We are not “set

back.” Just the opposite. This is an opportunity to again say to LGBTQ persons – “you can come home to the Episcopal Church.” We will not back away from that support – not in these three years of “sanctions” and never in the years after that. Not only are you welcomed, but you are a great gift from the Living God.

At the same time, I value this opportunity to walk with our Anglican Communion even though we disagree. We are not walking out on the Anglican Communion. We need to show the world how to live in disagreement. We are not the Body of Christ because we agree with each other. We are the Body of Christ because we care about each other.

As I write this on Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, remember his words “the moral arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice.” I wish the Primates did not say what they said. But we are still moving toward justice for LGBTQ persons. The Jesus Movement rolls on.
+Doug

P.S. Another source of reflection is this blog post written by the Rev. Jesse Zink – a WMA priest. You can find it here.

Initial statement by the Primate of Canada

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, of the Anglican Church of Canada was one of the 38 primates who gathered Jan. 11-15 in Canterbury, England. In an initial statement he comments -

Having met this week in Canterbury, England, the Primates of the Anglican Communion committed—even in the face of deep differences of theological conviction concerning same sex marriage—to walk together and not apart. Our conversations reflected the truth that, while the Anglican Communion is a family of autonomous churches in communion with the see of Canterbury, we live by the long-held principle of ‘mutual responsibility and inter dependence in the Body of Christ’. While our relationships are most often characterized by mutual support and encouragement, there are times when we experience stress and strain and we know our need for the grace of God to be patient with each other. Such was the experience of the primates this week.

We struggled with the fragility of our relations in response to the actions taken by the General

Convention of The Episcopal Church in changing its canon on marriage, making provision for the blessing of same sex marriages. We talked, prayed and wrestled with the consequences considered by the meeting. Some of us wept.

Through this whole conversation I was deeply mindful that our church will deal with the first reading of a proposed change of a similar kind in our canon on marriage at General Synod in July 2016. There is no doubt in my mind that the action of the Primates' meeting will weigh into our deliberations. On this matter I shall not comment further just now, as I intend to write some reflections for release on Monday January 18, 2016. They will speak not only to the issue of same sex marriage, but also the host of other critical global issues discussed in our meeting.

For now I ask for your prayers for all of the primates as they make their way home. I know some are returning to very challenging situations beset with extreme poverty, civil war, religiously motivated violence and the devastating effects of climate change.

This week reminded me once again of the servant style of leadership required of the primates of the Churches of The Anglican Communion. As Jean Vanier reminded us in his

reflections at our closing Eucharist, we are called to be the face of Jesus in this world. Pray with me that all of us be faithful in this calling.

Primates Meeting: What you need to know about why gay marriage could still split the Church

The Primates Meeting at Canterbury last week suspended the US Episcopal Church (TEC) from membership for three years because of its endorsement of same-sex marriage.

Mark Woods writes in Christian Today - The move was the result of battles within the Communion over the issue which had lasted years, with conservatives particularly from Africa leading the charge for tradition and liberals from North America keen to be more relaxed. However, there's more to it than meets the eye.

1. It's not about gay marriage

Much social media reaction has spun this as a rejection of gay people, if not an actual concession to homophobia. In fact it's about how the Church makes decisions and what holds it together as a Communion. TEC has led the liberal charge; Bishop Gene Robinson

became the first bishop to live openly with a same-sex partner in 2003 and last year its General Synod agreed to allow religious services for same-sex couples. When Rowan Williams was the Archbishop of Canterbury he **tried desperately** to hold the Americans back from unilateral action, without success. His view – and that of the majority of the Primates at Canterbury – was that this was a step that required consensus, which was a long way away.

2. It doesn't condemn TEC's view of human sexuality

The **document** released last week by the Primates was not a condemnation of same-sex marriage or of TEC's view on it. It says that TEC's actions "represent a fundamental departure from the faith and teaching held by the majority of our Provinces on the doctrine of marriage". That's just a statement of fact, as is paragraph 4: "The traditional doctrine of the church in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds marriage as between a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union. The majority of those gathered reaffirm this teaching." The Primates Meeting didn't pronounce on TEC's theology but on its "departure from mutual accountability and interdependence".

3. Problems like this go with the territory

The Anglican Communion is a strangely constituted and theologically unsatisfactory creation, reflecting its origins. The Church of England itself is a creation of the State, the product both of high principle (the new insights of the Reformers) and low politics (Henry VIII's desire to control the English Church and cut out the Pope). The Anglican Churches in other countries are all the product of the British Empire, which spread its own brand of Christianity as it expanded. So relations between its constituent parts are complicated by anti-colonialism and wider historical issues. A recurring theme of the same-sex marriage debate among African Christians is that they aren't having white English people telling them what to think.

4. No one's in charge

One consequence of the messy origins of the Communion is that there is no central authority, as there is in the case of Roman Catholicism (though not in Eastern Orthodoxy). There is a historic loyalty to and respect for the English Church and for the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but much depends on goodwill.

5. It's very complicated

Theologically, the situation is bedevilled by questions of interpretation and by questions of culture (these are not always easy to separate). On interpretation, conservatives argue that TEC – and, indeed, the whole Church – has no authority to ignore the clear teaching of scripture on the subject of human sexuality. By allowing what God has forbidden, they say, they have put themselves beyond the pale of orthodox Christianity. For these conservatives, being in communion with those who have taken this step would be to participate in their sin.

Liberals believe that advances in understanding human sexuality require a reinterpretation of traditional understandings of so-called "clobber texts", or even their outright rejection. In theory, it ought to be possible for both sides to accept the validity of different readings of scripture, even if they profoundly disagree with each other; in practice, human sexuality remains a Communion-breaking issue for Anglicans and others.

6. It's not just about theology

On culture, Western countries have moved towards acceptance of same-sex relationships as normal. Many Christians anxious to make up for their past ill-treatment of gay people and welcome them in Christ's name. An **open letter** signed by senior clergy and released just

before the Primates Meeting made this point forcefully, if not perhaps very helpfully. On the other hand in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, homosexuality is culturally unacceptable. In Uganda, attempts were made to pass a bill making homosexual acts punishable by death. The Church of Uganda said it was "sympathetic to concerns behind the bill" though against the death penalty. It **said in a statement**: "As a church, we support Uganda's national sovereignty and our right to self-determination in establishing this law, and will not bow to international pressure to change that part of our culture that aligns with our biblical convictions." Uganda's Archbishop, Stanley Ntagali, was the only Primate to walk out of the Canterbury meeting.

The extreme divergence between the different wings means that each regards the other's views with abhorrence.

8. Church politics matter

Conservatives in the Anglican Communion are represented in two main groupings, GAFCON (Global Anglican Future) and Global South Anglican. GAFCON began in 2008 when, it says, "moral compromise, doctrinal error and the collapse of biblical witness in parts of the Anglican communion had reached such a level

that the leaders of the majority of the world's Anglicans felt it was necessary to take a united stand for truth". The 25 members of Global South have similar concerns. These bodies campaign for hearts and minds, just as their opponents do.

9. It's a win for Justin Welby...

The decision to suspend TEC for three years is being seen by those in favour of accepting same-sex relationship as a defeat. Insofar as the Primates did not offer a ringing endorsement of gay marriage, this is true, though this was not what their meeting was about. However, it is insufficiently nuanced. At issue was the decision by TEC to disregard the appeals of the rest of the Communion and go its own way. The perception was inevitably that it believed it had a better theological understanding of the issues than everyone else and did not sufficiently value the bonds of the Communion. So the conclusion of the Primates' statement, referring to the establishment of a task group to "maintain conversation among ourselves with the intention of restoration of relationship, the rebuilding of mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognising the extent of our commonality and exploring our deep differences, ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ" is arguably a good result.

10. But maybe not for long

However, the end result might still be the fragmentation of the Communion. TEC has backed itself into a corner by its unilateral action and the GAFCON and Global South Churches are in no mood to compromise.

If the Communion does break up into smaller coalitions of theologically like-minded Churches it would be the end of a tradition which is not, in fact, all that long judged by the whole sweep of Christian history. It might free its constituent parts to be truer to themselves and release energies for mission and service which are at present taken up with what looks like an increasingly futile attempt to maintain a sort of unity.

News digest

Reports about a statement issued during the Primates' gathering in Canterbury which set out the consequences for The Episcopal Church of changing their doctrine on marriage. The Guardian reports that the text acknowledged the 'deep pain' of the divisions within the communion but says "it is our unanimous desire to walk together." (*See full text of statement above*)

Daily Mail

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3400431/Church-England-leaders-condemn-sex-marriage-despite-100-senior-Anglicans-criticising-discrimination-against-lesbian-gay-Christians.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3400203/Anglican-church-suspends-US-arm-gay-marriage.html>
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/church-of-england-leaders-defy-liberals-and-condemn-same-sex-marriage-a6813241.html>

BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35318392>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35319022> <http://>

Guardian

www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/14/anglican-church-sanctions-against-liberal-us-church-same-sex-marriage

Telegraph

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12100648/Anglicans-step-back-from-brink-of-schism-over-homosexuality.html>

Times

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article4666136.ece>

New York Times

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/15/world/europe/anglican-archbishops-sanction-us-episcopal-church-over-gay-marriages.html?_r=1

Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/01/14/anglican-communion-suspends-the-episcopal-church-for-3-years-from-committees/>

Guardian

In his *Loose Canon* column, Giles Fraser argues that "equal marriage is the next stage in the church's continual reformation"

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/jan/14/>

[equal-marriage-is-the-next-stage-in-the-churchs-continual-reformation](#)

Telegraph - Report on the Primates' meeting and gathering at Canterbury Cathedral which says some Primates had taken 'time out' from the meeting, but had returned. The article speculates on how the meeting has been structured.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12098501/Archbishops-treated-like-children-in-church-gay-crisis-talks.html> Report on the

Christian Today

Interview with Rev Gay Clark Jennings, President of The House of Deputies of the American Episcopal Church who says that the measures taken by Anglican Primates against The Episcopal Church because of its support for same sex marriage will not stop the church working to feed the hungry and care for the sick across the world.

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/leading.member.of.us.church.pledges.to.continue.anglican.comunion.work/76784.htm>

Ind/Metro

Report that Labour MP Chris Bryant and former Anglican priest has quit the Church of England over its “homophobic” stance, following the Primates decision to temporarily remove the American Episcopal church from

Anglican Communion decision-making bodies for supporting same sex marriage.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/bryant-quits-church-over-stance-on-gay-rights>

<http://metro.co.uk/2016/01/16/mp-and-former-vicar-quits-evil-church-of-england-over-gay-rights-5626558/>

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