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NEWS FOCUS

Curry looks to the ACC to respond to the Primates' ruling

The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, the Rt Revd Michael Curry, has emphasised the autonomy of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), in the wake of the Primates' decision to censure his Church, Madeline Davies writes in the Church Times.

At their meeting in Canterbury earlier this month, the Primates' required the US Episcopal Church to no longer represent them on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, not serve on the Primates or ACC standing committees, and not vote on matters of polity and doctrine at the ACC for a period of three years, as a consequence of its support for same-sex marriage.

The Primates' gathering, however, has no official executive status. The authority to enforce such steps rests with the ACC itself.

Bishop Curry was asked directly whether he would contest these “consequences” at the next meeting of the ACC in April. On Wednesday, he would say only: “The ACC is the only formal constitutional body of the Anglican Communion and it will decide what it will do. Our representatives from the Episcopal Church look forward to being there.”

Earlier this week, a prominent canon lawyer, Professor Norman Doe, state that the Primates' ruling was not binding ([News, 19 January](#)). He described it as “completely unacceptable interference with the autonomy of each of these bodies as they transact their own business”.

The ACC is due to meet in Zambia in April. Two US members, the Bishop of Connecticut, the Rt Revd Ian Douglas, and the Revd Gay Clark Jennings, have confirmed that they will attend. Bishop Douglas is also a member of the ACC's standing committee, and would therefore have to stand down if the ACC chooses to comply with the Primates' wishes.

In the past, members of the ACC have criticised the Primates for overstepping their remit. In

2006, after the Primates asked the US Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada to voluntarily withdraw their representatives from the ACC, the organisation's then chairman, the Rt Revd John Paterson, criticised the move as "at least slightly premature, if not coercive and somewhat punitive" ([News, 24 June, 2005](#)).

The members, he said, "want us to stay together, to live with difference, and not have difference forced upon them". At its meeting the following year, the ACC voted in favour of a modified plan to limit the involvement of the two Churches ([News, 2 November, 2006](#)).

In reflections published on Wednesday, the Archbishop of Brazil, the Most Revd Francisco de Assis da Silva, stressed that the decision of the Primates "needs to be scrutinised by the Anglican Consultative Council, as this is the only legislative body entitled to decide on membership issues within the Communion."

He confirmed that he would convene a meeting of his Church's House of Bishops, "in which we will compose a message of solidarity with TEC, and we will send this word out to the Communion."

Bishop Curry, whose initial response to the communiqué dwelt on the hurt that it would cause ([News, 15 January](#)), particularly to the LGBTI community, said on Wednesday that there were some positive aspects of the meeting.

“We met together. We talked together. We prayed together. We broke bread together. It was my first Primates meeting, and I was afforded the opportunity to meet with other Primates.”

He spoke of the “solid commitment” by Primates to continue to walk together.

“While we have significant disagreements and differences, we all seek to follow Jesus of Nazareth and walk in his love. My prayer is that we will come to find that way of Jesus’s love embracing us in our differences, not just in terms of our different cultures and perspectives but in terms of our basic human differences, whether of race, class, age, sex, national original, or sexual orientation.

“The world needs to see that, not just for the sake of the Church, but for the sake of the world.”

His Church’s mission would continue, he said, “as we feed the hungry, clothe the poor, help the prisoners, and walk together toward Galilee”. So,

too, would its work in the Communion, “joining together with fellow Anglicans, fellow Christians, and with all people of good will to help the world look less like a nightmare, and more like God’s dream for us all”.

He did not support the calls that have been heard to withdraw US funding from the wider Communion.

”As painful as this has been for many throughout the Anglican Communion, we are all seeking to follow Jesus in his way,” he said. “My hope and desire is for the Episcopal Church to continue to support the Anglican Communion in all the ways we have done. By the love we and the Anglican Communion all share in Jesus Christ, we can help the Anglican Communion to truly become a house of prayer for all people.”

The Bishop of Nevada, the Rt Revd Dan Thomas Edwards, said last week that he had been “disturbed” by calls to stop financial contributions.

“I am disappointed that we have so utterly failed to teach stewardship,” he wrote last Friday. “Our commitment to the Five Marks of Mission is far more important than any pique we feel about not being appointed to committees on a temporary basis. I am confident the Episcopal Church will

turn the other cheek and continue to support the Anglican Communion.”

He went on: “We will better lead in the Communion by modelling the way of Jesus extending forgiveness rather than retaliation — particularly in the context of wealthy Americans’ using wealth against provinces that are so poor.

“I believe the dynamics in the Communion are not really about sexuality. . . It is actually a protest arising out of a sense of powerlessness, a legacy of Western imperialism. Assertions of wealth/power by us would only deepen that divide and further entrench them.”

The Province is the second largest contributor to the Inter-Anglican Budget, providing £204,772 in 2014 (out of the £538,280 requested of it).

One of the expenses incurred by the Inter-Anglican Budget is the Lambeth Conference. The last one, in 2008, cost £5.2 million, of which the Anglican Communion Office provided £1.6 million. It fell into financial difficulties, and its plans to undertake large-scale fund-raising in the US were abandoned in 2007 owing to “the situation in the Anglican Communion”.

Watch Bishop Curry's video statement on the Primates Meeting here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNEPvGYhnes#action=share>

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