

A Statement from Global South Primates meeting in Nairobi - January 27 - 28, 2005

27 January 2005 - Print Version

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1. We are gathered in Nairobi, Kenya to strengthen our shared ministries and in anticipation of the third South-South Encounter that will take place in Egypt October 25th/31st 2005. We are encouraged by the reports that we have heard of the transforming power of the Gospel around the Anglican Communion and yet we are conscious that there are fundamental issues of faith and order confronting us that threaten the very existence of our common life.
2. At the meeting of the Primates in October 2003, in response to these concerns, we called for the establishment of the Lambeth Commission on Communion and are very grateful for their hard work over these past months. We also commend the dedicated servant leadership offered by the Most Reverend Robin Eames and the extraordinary contributions made by the individual members of the Commission. We believe that the Windsor Report offers a way forward that has the potential of being marked with God's grace.
3. We welcome the clear statement of the Windsor Report in its emphasis on the Church as a "Communion of radical holiness to which all Christ's people are called, [and] are thus rooted in the Trinitarian life and purposes of the One God" [TWR 3] As the Windsor Report rightly declares our individual autonomy is always limited by our commitment to living in this community. In light of this we commit ourselves to manifesting our oneness in Christ through our willing submission one to another.
4. We agree that the Windsor Report correctly points out that the Episcopal Church USA and the Diocese of New Westminster have pushed the Anglican Communion to breaking point. The report rightly states that they did not listen to the clear voices of the Communion, rejected the Counsel of the four Instruments of Unity and ignored the plea of the Primates in their statements issued on October 16th, 2003 (all Primates) and November 2nd, 2003 (Global South Primates). It is our considered opinion that their actions represent a "departure from genuine, apostolic Christian faith" [TWR 28]
5. We call on the Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada to take seriously the need for "repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation enjoined on us by Christ" (Windsor Report [134]) and move beyond informal expressions of regret for the effect of their actions to a genuine change of heart and mind. We are grieved that actions within both provinces have torn "the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level" and that to date there have been no concrete steps taken towards repentance and reconciliation. This indicates that they have chosen to walk apart from the rest of the Communion. Failing any substantial change of direction within the next three months (i.e. by May 31st, 2005,) the Global South Primates and the others who share our convictions would confirm that they have chosen to "walk alone" and follow another religion.
6. We are encouraged by the recent actions of those bishops in ECUSA who at the meeting of their House of Bishops in Salt Lake City on January 13th, 2005 signed "A Statement of Acceptance and Submission" renouncing the actions that have been so injurious to our common life and affirmed that in future they will only act in ways that are "fully compatible with the interests, standards, unity and good order of the Anglican Communion." We invite other Primates to join us in declaring that full communion with these bishops is maintained.
7. We note with approval the recognition that extraordinary Episcopal care is needed for congregations alienated from their diocesan bishops because of their refusal to distance themselves from the historic faith of the church and embrace the proposed innovations. While we remain committed to the importance of coherent diocesan and provincial structures we believe, however, that there are times when these very structures can and have been inappropriately used to intimidate the faithful. We recognize the necessity for the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates and the aforementioned bishops to establish a more collaborative mechanism to provide for adequate Episcopal care where needed.
8. We note that the Windsor Report calls for a moratorium on the election and consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in same gender union and the use of rites for the blessing of same-sex unions. We urge the Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada to fully comply mindful that this is only the first step towards acknowledgement of Lambeth Resolution 1.10 "We cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions."
9. We would also point out that faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures and to the expressed mind of the Communion requires that non-celibate homosexual clergy be asked to reform or resign and instead of a moratorium on same-sex blessings there should be an immediate, total and permanent cessation of such practices.

10. The Windsor Report acknowledges the great pain that has been inflicted upon those faithful communities that have resisted doctrinal innovations within Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada. However, we reject the moral equivalence drawn between those who have initiated the crisis and those of us in the Global South who have responded to cries for help from beleaguered brothers and sisters in Christ. Because of our commitment to our common life we do regret any discomfort and disorder that has resulted from our actions taken in fulfillment of our "conscientious duty." [TWR 155]

11. We are encouraged by the suggestions offered for restructuring the various instruments of unity to strengthen our common life in Christ. We are, however, aggrieved and disappointed that the contributions and resources of the majority of the Anglican Communion are not adequately recognized and represented in these instruments. We are convinced that there must be a more regionally and provincially representative procedure in appointments to commissions and task forces established to serve the whole Communion. We support the recommendation that the Archbishop of Canterbury, together with the Primates, should establish a 'Council of Advice'. A more deliberately global approach to leadership is vital if we are to be able to respond to the challenges and complexities of worldwide mission.

12. We are committed to the future life of the Anglican Communion, one that is rooted in truth and charity and faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We applaud the proposal for an Anglican Covenant and endorse and commend the following statement as an initial step in this direction:

"Each church shall act in a manner compatible both with its belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and with its membership of the Anglican Communion. In all essential matters of common concern in the Anglican Communion, no member church shall act without consideration of the common good of the Communion." [TWR, Appendix Two, Article 9]