

12 Jan 2013: Statement from the Primates of the Global South of the Anglican Communion

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We, Primates of the Global South of the Anglican Communion, are deeply concerned and worried by the recent decision of the Church of England's House of Bishops which approves that clergy living in civil partnerships can be candidates to the episcopate.

There is already an ambiguity regarding civil partnerships per se. We learnt that most civil partnerships, according to the Office for National Statistics in the UK, take place among the most sexually active age group. In addition dissolutions of civil partnerships are now increasing especially in the last few years. This puts into question the motives behind this civil partnership and adds to our confusion in the Global South.

When the Church of England allowed civil partnerships in 2005, they said that "The House of Bishops does not regard entering into a civil partnership as intrinsically incompatible with holy orders, provided the person concerned is willing to give assurances to his or her bishop that the relationship is consistent with the standards for the clergy set out in Issues in Human Sexuality." Now, with allowing candidates for episcopacy to do the same, to whom should they give assurances? Clarification on this point is needed.

Sadly, both the decision to permit clergy to enter civil partnerships and this latest decision which some call it a "local option," are wrong and were taken without prior consultation or consensus with the rest of the Anglican Communion at a time when the Communion is still facing major challenges of disunity. It is contrary to "the interdependence" which we try to affirm between churches within the Communion. Moreover, it does not only widen the gap between the Church of England and Anglicans in the Global South, it also widens the gap between the Anglican Communion and our ecumenical partners. Further, it jeopardizes the relationship between us Anglicans living in the Global South and followers of other faiths, and gives opportunities to exploit such departure of moral standards that this type of decision may provide.

The Church, more than any time before, needs to stand firm for the faith once received from Jesus Christ through the Apostles and not yield to the pressures of the society! In other words, the Church needs to be "salt" and "light" and to present a distinctive message from that of the secular world around us.

We strongly urge the Church of England to reconsider this divisive decision.

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