

A Pastoral Letter from the Moderator of the Anglican Communion Network - 6th October

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6th October, A.D. 2006 Feast of William Tyndale

TO ALL THE BELOVED OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION NETWORK: Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, May the grace and peace of Christ Jesus be multiplied to you, and to all who call upon Him as Savior of the world and who serve Him as Lord of all the ages.

I wrote to you back in June expressing my conviction that a new day was dawning for all of us who understand ourselves to be faithful and orthodox Anglicans whether within the Episcopal Church or gone out from it. Three months have passed since I last wrote, and the evidence bearing out that conviction grows daily.

Seven Network Dioceses appealed for Alternative Primatial Relationship in July. The Archbishop of Canterbury responded in August, intervening (in classical Anglican fashion) by asking the principals to sit down together to see if some "American path forward" might be found. In September, that mediation took place in New York without achieving resolution. Shortly thereafter, the leaders of 20 Anglican Provinces (out of 38 total Provinces and representing some 70 percent of the world's active Anglicans) met, promising that Alternative Primatial Oversight would be provided, and that the Global South Steering Committee would work both with the leadership of the whole Communion and with Network leadership to work out the substance of such provision. Meetings to carry this pledge forward will begin within weeks. An eighth Network diocese, having joined the Appeal of the other seven, will be part of that deliberation.

One of the things the four Network bishops meeting in New York (representing the seven, now eight, appellant dioceses, and meeting with the Presiding Bishop and Presiding Bishop-elect at Canterbury's request) refused to do was to negotiate a settlement that did not provide for all of the Network congregations in non-Network dioceses. The Global South Primates meeting in September also signaled their concern for the most vulnerable in the U.S. situation. From Kigali, the Global South Primates wrote the following words: "We are convinced that the time now has come to take initial steps toward the formation of what will be recognized as a separate ecclesiastical structure of the Anglican Communion in the USA." For all those "gone out" or "put out," this gives shape to the longed-for day. For the Network deans and for the clergy and congregations of the Network's International Conference, this is an urgent concern and answer to prayer.

In September, Network Bishops met with a wider coalition of Windsor Bishops. This was a most encouraging meeting. Recognizing the local contexts in which we bishops serve, there was agreement that each of us would continue the hallmarks of our present differentiated leadership (whether Network or non-Network). At the same time, there was consensus about our common commitment to the Windsor Report and our assessment that the Episcopal Church had by no means made adequate response. Further, to state together our understanding that acceptance of the spirit and the substance of the Windsor Report was the only way for dioceses of the Episcopal Church to go forward in the Anglican Communion was a significant achievement, as was our readiness to express the regret that Report called for. The Network has been ten dioceses standing together, and we will continue to stand as we have done. Nevertheless, having twenty or, God-willing, thirty dioceses standing together as Windsor dioceses, committed to live within Anglican Communion boundaries and under an emerging Anglican Communion Covenant, should be a great sign of hopefulness for us all.

For all in the Network, the last three years have been monumentally challenging, but, as I said in June, the new day is dawning. The contours are not fully clear, but the fearful night is passing. The Global South Primates, writing from Kigali, acknowledged the role the Network has played. The Network remains the domestic key to what is ahead. Your prayers, your participation, and your support remain as crucial as ever they have been. We have hung together, and thus have not been hanged separately. By God's grace this will continue. Local needs dictate different courses through the troubles. It has been this way since the defining actions in August and November of 2003. Fear not! The Lord is sovereign and is Savior. Orthodox and faithful Anglicans can be divided from one another only if we allow it to be so. The present separations are temporary. When midday comes, the Lord will have put it all back together in the way He intends, if we will but not get in the way.

"Be watchful. Stand firm in your faith. Be courageous. Be strong. Let everything you do be done in love." (I Cor.16:13-14)

Faithfully in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Robert Wm. Duncan Moderator of the Anglican Communion Network