



The Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches

PRESS STATEMENT

February 20, 2023

ASH WEDNESDAY STATEMENT OF GSFA PRIMATES ON THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S DECISION REGARDING THE BLESSING OF SAME SEX UNIONS

With great sorrow at the recent decision of the Church of England's General Synod to legitimise and incorporate into the Church's liturgy the blessing of same sex unions, ten Primates of the **Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches** (GSFA)ⁱ met virtually on 13 Feb 2023 under the chairmanship of Archbishop Justin Badi (Chairman of GSFA & Primate of South Sudan) to discuss our response.

The panel of Primates agreed on the following resolutions which it now commends to the orthodoxⁱⁱ provinces and dioceses who are part of her Fellowship for the respective Primate & Province to consider and deliberate on.

1. As the Church of England has departed from the historic faith passed down from the Apostles by this innovationⁱⁱⁱ in the liturgies of the Church and her pastoral practice (contravening her own Canon A5^{iv}), she has disqualified herself from leading the Communion as the historic "Mother" Church. Indeed, **the Church of England** has chosen to break communion with those provinces who remain faithful to the historic biblical faith expressed in the Anglican formularies (the 39 Articles, the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal and the Book of Homilies) and applied to the matter of marriage and sexuality in Lambeth Resolution 1.10^v of the 1998 Lambeth Conference.
2. As much as the GSFA Primates also want to keep the unity of the visible Church and the fabric of the Anglican Communion, **our calling to be 'a holy remnant'**^{vi} does not allow us be "in communion" with those provinces that have departed from the historic faith and taken the path of false teaching. This breaks our hearts and we pray for the revisionist provinces to return to 'the faith once delivered' (Jude 3) and to us.
3. The GSFA is no longer able to recognise the **present Archbishop of Canterbury**, the Rt Hon & Most Revd Justin Welby, as the "first among equals" Leader of the global Communion. He has sadly led his House of Bishops to make the recommendations that undergirded the General Synod Motion on 'Living in Love & Faith,' knowing that they run contrary to the faith & order of the orthodox provinces in the Communion whose people constitute the majority in the global flock. We pray that our withdrawal of support for him to lead the whole Communion is received by him as an admonishment in love.

4. With the Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury forfeiting their leadership role of the global Communion, GSFA Primates will **expeditiously meet, consult and work with other orthodox Primates in the Anglican Church across the nations to re-set the Communion on its biblical foundation**. We look forward to collaborating with Primates and bishops in the GAFCON movement and other orthodox Anglican groupings to work out the shape and nature of our common life together and how we are to keep the priority of proclaiming and witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world foremost in our life as God's people. Together with other orthodox Primates, we will seek to address the leadership crisis that has arisen because for us, and perhaps by his own reported self-exclusion, the present Archbishop of Canterbury is no longer the 'leader' of the Communion and no longer the Chair of the Primates' Meeting by virtue of his position.
5. GSFA Primates will carefully work with other orthodox Primates to **provide Primatial and episcopal oversight** to orthodox dioceses and networks of Anglican churches who indicate their need and who consult with us. This is to ensure that the faithful all across the worldwide Anglican Church but who find themselves in revisionist^{vii} Provinces receive the pastoral oversight, guidance and care of a global, connectional Church which the Anglican Communion is meant to be.
6. Given this action by the Church of England's General Synod, we believe it is no longer possible to continue in the way the Communion is. **We do not accept the view that we can still "walk together" with the revisionist provinces** as prescribed by the Anglican Communion Office and in the exploratory way proposed by IASCUFO (Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order) at the recent Anglican Consultative Council (ACC)-18 meeting.
7. GSFA Primates are **joint-stewards together with other orthodox Primates of the Anglican Communion**, defined by its Formularies and that has been birthed and sustained by God through the centuries. We are accountable to the whole and to each other for the historic Christian faith and its practice in our autonomous Churches. The Church of England is the "historic first" province, but now that it has departed from the historic faith the responsibility falls to the remaining orthodox Primates. We will not walk away from the Communion that has so richly blessed us and for whose faithfulness to God and His word our forebears have paid a costly price. What has happened in the Church of England has only served to strengthen our resolve **to work together to re-set the Communion, and to ensure that the re-set Communion is marked by reform and renewal**. Only then will the Anglican Church as a whole be able to be God's channel of light and transformation in a dark and broken world. Only then will we be able to live out our witness as part of God's one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

To this end, GSFA will work humbly, boldly and charitably with other orthodox parts of the global Anglican Church. In our own Provinces, we will repent of the ways in which we ourselves fail to keep the covenant God has given us in Christ Jesus. We will ask God to purify and build up our churches so that we can authentically and passionately take the Gospel out to our respective nations and assigned fields.

And with a renewed and reset Communion, we will be able to join hands in mission and ministry across the nations to be a bright, collective light in the midst of the major challenges of our time. This is what we in GSFA are looking forward to as we prepare for our first GSFA Assembly under our Covenantal Structure (Cairo, 2019) , which will be from 28th-31st May 2024 in Cairo.

To God be the glory as a new light mercifully dawns on His Church in the midst of the growing darkness. Isaiah 60:1-3.

This Statement is endorsed by the following GSFA Primate

1. Archbishop Justin Badi (Primate of South Sudan & Chair of GSFA)
2. Archbishop Hector (Tito) Zavala (Primate of Chile & Vice-Chair of GSFA)
3. Archbishop James Wong (Primate of Indian Ocean , GSFA Steering Committee member)
4. Archbishop Titre Ande (Primate of Congo , GSFA Steering Committee member)
5. Archbishop Stephen Than (Primate of Myanmar , GSFA Steering Committee member)
6. Archbishop Foley Beach (Primate of North America, GSFA Steering Committee member)
7. Archbishop Samuel Mankhin (Primate of Bangladesh , GSFA Steering Committee member)
8. Archbishop Stephen Kaziimba (Primate of Uganda)
9. Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo (Primate of Sudan)
10. Archbishop Samy Shehata (Primate of Alexandria)
11. Archbishop Miguel Uchoa Cavalcanti (Primate of Anglican Church in Brazil)
12. Archbishop Leonard Dawea (Primate of Melanesia)

ⁱ The GSFA is currently composed of 14 Provinces from a larger grouping of 25 Global South provinces. These 14 provinces plus one diocese have either signed on to be members of GSFA via assent to its Covenantal Structure (Cairo, 2019) or given written indication that a process to pursue GSFA membership has begun in their province. (See www.thegsfa.org)

ⁱⁱ 'Orthodox' provinces are those which hold to the plain and authoritative teaching of holy Scripture as historically understood, and correspondingly their 'Faith & Order' is consistent with what the Scriptures as a whole teach.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'The Church of England's General Synod has welcomed proposals which would enable same-sex couples to come to church after a civil marriage or civil partnership to give thanks, dedicate their relationship to God and receive God's blessing.' (<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/prayers-gods-blessing-same-sex-couples-take-step-forward-after-synod>)

^{iv} Canon A5 : 'The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.'

^v Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution 1.10 on Human Sexuality states that "while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation ..." The Resolution also states that the Lambeth Conference "cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions."

^{vi} The 'holy remnant' in Scripture refers to that segment among God's people who remain faithful to God's covenant against wind and tide by trusting and obeying God's word and keeping to God's standard of right and wrong. They do so in spite of sections of the wider community they belong to conforming to the world around them and disobeying the revealed word of God.

^{vii} 'Revisionist' provinces are those who take a liberal view on the interpretation of holy Scripture and introduce new and innovative doctrines that do not agree with the plain teaching of Scripture as historically understood by the Church. In their 'faith & order,' revisionist provinces and dioceses move increasingly away from the bounds of Scripture .

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