

Convocation of Anglicans in North America

Polycarp of Smyrna
February 23, 2007

Dear Friends:

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our one and only Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing after a truly historic meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where the Primates of the Anglican Communion met to chart a way forward. The stakes were enormous and it was an intense spiritual battle. The setting was idyllic - the meetings were held in the White Sands Hotel overlooking the Indian Ocean - but the struggle was so fierce, we never found time to walk on the beach. Angela and I were there as members of a staff support team for Archbishop Peter Akinola and the other Primates of the Global South.

What were the results? Many important topics such as the development of an Anglican Communion Covenant, Millennium Development Goals, and Theological Education were discussed. But the ongoing intransigence of The Episcopal Church (TEC) forced the Primates to devote the majority of the meeting to following through on The Windsor Report and especially determining the adequacy of the response from TEC.

One of the most positive outcomes from the meeting was a clear and unambiguous declaration of what we, as Christians and as Anglicans, believe. This was expressed both in terms of core creedal statements through the Covenant and also in a powerful recapitulation of our convictions regarding marriage and human sexuality: "in view of the teaching of Scripture, [the Conference] upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage." Someone commented that this was almost un-Anglican in its clarity!

The Primates also recognized that while mission initiatives such as the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANAm) and the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA) do create some "difficulties," they have a valid and important place in the Anglican Communion as TEC decides whether to abandon its innovations and seek to reclaim its place in mainstream Anglicanism. I was especially gratified by the recognition given to the important role that Archbishop Akinola and the Church of Nigeria have played in providing a safe harbor for those who simply want to get on with the work of the Gospel without compromise of our core beliefs.

While rejecting any attempt to draw a moral equivalence between our so-called "interventions" and the "innovations" now embraced by TEC, the Primates concluded that The Episcopal Church had NOT responded adequately to the requests of The Windsor Report and gave them one last chance with a date certain set for September 30, 2007. The Primates were clear that after that there will be serious, though not yet

specified, consequences. It is clear that The Episcopal Church must decide if it will uphold the biblical teachings of the Anglican Communion or choose to walk apart.

The Primates urged the suspension of all property litigation since they - and we - do not believe that this is the way that our disputes should be handled. We already have communicated with both diocesan and national church leadership, urging them to follow through on this important request and we pray that there will be a positive response.

The Primates also recognized that many dioceses and congregations within TEC do want to embrace the principles set out in The Windsor Report and proposed a complex and unprecedented restructuring of TEC to accommodate them. At the heart of that proposal is the establishment of "Primatial Vicar" who will provide oversight in conjunction with the Presiding Bishop and a Pastoral Council jointly appointed by member dioceses, the Presiding Bishop and the Archbishop of Canterbury. If it sounds terribly complicated . . . it is. "It is an experiment," said Archbishop Rowan Williams at the final news conference. "Please pray!"

What does it all mean for us?

First of all, it means that we are part of a Communion that is determined to stand on the truth of the Holy Scriptures and is not willing to abandon such a stand despite enormous pressure from The Episcopal Church and its leadership. We are also part of a Communion that is led by gracious leaders who are both patient and wise - who are determined to do all that they can for the unity of the Church but who will not give up biblical truth for the sake of a false unity.

With regard to CANA, we were recognized as having a valid place in the life and work of the Anglican Communion, under the Primate of Nigeria, and our mission and ministry understood as prompted by our desire to serve as faithful Anglicans. As to whether there will be an eventual reconciliation between the various Anglican bodies operating in the USA - that question awaits both the response of TEC and also the effectiveness of the various structural recommendations. In the meantime, we will continue to work to provide a life-boat for all those who wish to embrace biblical truth and the Anglican tradition in North America.

Our task is to continue to grow and reach out to the people around us with the Good News of God's inclusive and life-transforming love. We are to be reflections of the character of Christ into a world that is so desperately in need of hope. We have been distracted for too long by the endless struggles of TEC. We are no longer a part of TEC and our call is to show the world a new way of living and a new way of loving.

Thank you for all of your prayers and encouragement. To God be the Glory!

In Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns
Missionary Bishop of CANA