

Bp. Duncan's Pastoral Letter in Response to Primates' Meeting

23rd February, A.D. 2007 First Friday in Lent Eve of St. Matthias

TO ALL THE FAITHFUL IN CHRIST JESUS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION NETWORK, AND TO ALL WHO ARE PARTNERS WITH US: Beloved in the Lord,

We continue in an extraordinary moment in church history. It is my conviction, with St. Paul, that "He who has begun a good work in [us] will complete it to the end." [Phil. 1:6]

Resolution III.6 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference authorized the Primates' Meeting to include among its responsibilities both "intervention in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces, and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and in loyalty to our Anglican tradition and formularies." At Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the Primates Meeting of 15–19 February exercised these mandates in most significant fashion.

Following up on the historic appeal for intervention 20 other bishops and I made on August 5, 2003 – and responding directly to the Appeals for Alternative Primatial Oversight (or Relationship) lodged by eight Network dioceses between July and November of 2006, as well as to requests from the Windsor coalition of Bishops conveyed in a letter of January 2007 – the Primates Meeting acted to address the crisis in our Province, The Episcopal Church. The result can surely be described as an answer to prayer.

I was joined in Dar es Salaam by Bishop Bruce MacPherson of Western Louisiana from the wider Windsor Coalition (a coalition of some two dozen dioceses that includes all the Network dioceses among its members). We were given the opportunity to provide testimony and entreaty as to how the situation in the United States could be addressed. Among the matters covered were:

- Our assessment that the Episcopal Church's official response to the Windsor Report and Dromantine Communiqué was inadequate, grudging and calculated.
- Belief that the election of Katharine Jefferts Schori as Presiding Bishop had to be seen as a significant aspect of that official response, especially in light of her consent to New Hampshire's election, to her authorization of same-sex blessings as diocesan bishop, and to her theological heterodoxy.
- Observations on the majority's emerging theological construct where 1) claims of justice replaces morality, 2) many ways replaces the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ, and 3) experience replaces "Holy Scripture as the ultimate rule and standard of the Christian Faith."
- Testimony as to the extent, expense and acrimony of the civil lawsuits underway across the country, most significantly noting the scandalous involvement of the Presiding Bishop's Chancellor in suits brought not only against parishes but also against individual clergy and lay leaders.

- Statistics bearing out the assertion that the Network and Windsor Dioceses, together with AMiA, CANA, and Network Convocation and Conference parishes across the country, represented a number equal to one-quarter of The Episcopal Church's membership, minimally some 500,000 souls, a number larger than 18 Provinces of the Anglican Communion.
- Clear discussion of the particular hostility of "majority Episcopal Church" to the Forward in Faith Dioceses, as well as its failure to work with them and all those who hold to the Communion's older "integrity" concerning Holy Orders.
- Evidence of the increasingly unlikely confirmation of the Bishop-elect of South Carolina by diocesan standing committees, on grounds including the revealing misuse of the "manner of life" language of TEC's supposed acceptance of Windsor (Resolution B033, General Convention 2006).
- Request for recognition of all those who accept the Camp Allen Principles concerning full acceptance of the Windsor Report as the Communion's unquestioned partners in the United States.
- Appeal for some means of suitable and sufficient separation of the majority and minority parties of the Episcopal Church, including a practical "cease-fire," until the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant process will have run its course and determination of which of the parties in the U.S. dispute are to be viewed as the "constituent" members of the Communion.
- Our willingness as Network and Windsor Bishops to participate in a Primates-proposed domestic structure that could take the first steps toward addressing the escalating crisis.

Clearly we were heard. The Communiqué from Dar es Salaam, together with the "Key Recommendations of the Primates" and the transcript of the "Archbishop of Canterbury's Comments at the Final Press Conference," all speak to address the American crisis. The Episcopal Church has been given another chance to make an "unequivocal" response to Windsor and to Communion Faith and Order. Those of us who have already made clear our willingness to submit to the Windsor Report and to the Anglican Communion have been given the proposed Pastoral Council and a Primatial Vicar, to be nominated by the participating bishops and responsible to that Council. We have a call for the cessation of all civil legal actions. We can work with this. We will work with this. It is not perfect and there are a number of potential obstacles. We will enter in good faith. The Primates spent so much of their meeting on our concerns that we can do no less in response to their best assessment of a path forward. What we have is an interim proposal for an interim period with interim structures, while the Episcopal Church majority has one last opportunity to turn back from its "walking apart."

For the Network parishes of the International Convocation (congregations under Uganda, Kenya, Central Africa and Southern Cone) and for the churches of the Anglican Mission in America and of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America, there are particular concerns about relating to those still within the Episcopal Church, even if under the Pastoral Council and Primatial Vicar.

For the Alternative Primatial Oversight appellant dioceses, not least the Forward in Faith dioceses, there are still concerns about the role of the Presiding Bishop, about how the working relationship with the wider Windsor Coalition develops, and about whether "good faith" will characterize the other side.

All we can do is be ourselves at our best. That is certainly, by God's grace and your intercession, what two of us, on behalf of all of you, were within the Primates' Meeting. Even though it is Lent, let Te Deum be said and sung. And let's keep on, faithful to the Scriptures, focused on the mission, and submitted in unity, till the work is done, whatever the cost, always in prayer.

St. Paul speaks of the trust that is mine and yours and ours: "He who has called you is faithful, and He will do it." [I Thess. 5:24]

Faithfully in Christ,

+ *Bob Pittsburgh*

The Rt. Rev. Robert Wm. Duncan

Moderator of the Anglican Communion Network

Bishop of Pittsburgh