

STATEMENT FROM CENTRAL AFRICA

Date : 19 March 2004

Source : Province of Central Africa

The Episcopal Synod Standing Committee of the Church of the Province of Central Africa which met in Botswana from 17th to 18th February 2004 made the following Statement:-

STATEMENT FROM THE EPISCOPAL SYNOD OF CENTRAL AFRICA

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

With profound sadness the Church of the Province of Central Africa declares that the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA) has inflicted a desperately grave wound to us and the Communion. By official and wilful action, sixty two bishops approved the election of an openly active homosexual as a bishop. Many participated in his consecration. By choosing to ignore the clear voice of God revealed in Holy scripture, the bishops and other leaders who have done this put in peril the souls of those who follow them into this grievous error.

These bishops have disregarded the anguished cries of the Primates of the Anglican Communion, the clear voice of the Anglican Consultative Council, the overwhelming voice of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, and countless pleas from other Christians. If their actions were benign, their arrogance has irreparably shattered trust and fellowship. But the action was not morally neutral. It is so desperately sinful, it has fractured sacramental communion. **Only their sincere repentance can rescue the crisis they have created. This is wrong and it is sin.**

By their action, they have rejected us, our counsel, and the faith we share with history and with countless millions. The Presiding Bishop of ECUSA and the other bishops who have acted with him could not have been more clear. Despite our pleas, they have declared independence from the agreed historical faith. By wilfully ignoring the unanimous voice of the Primates, ECUSA has declared independence from the Anglican Communion. They have created a separation that cannot be ignored. Though they continue to speak of unity, they have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. The unity they propose no longer exists. Sadly, it appears that defiant eyes see neither truth nor pain.

The province of Central Africa declares that relationship is fractured and communion is impaired. It is simply not possible to share what they have fractured. The jagged edges are too destructive to embrace. Separation is necessary to maintain Gospel integrity and spiritual safety for our people.

A commission has been created to deal with ECUSA's actions. Our primate is one of the members of that panel. We will earnestly pray for their work, that they might be empowered by the Holy Spirit to find a way forward. But the way forward simply cannot welcome sin into the church. It cannot ignore the authority of the Bible. It cannot overlook the injury ECUSA has caused. It is simply not acceptable to rob wounded people of our only true hope.

Our way is to pray, consult, and decide together. It is our hope that the commission will do just that. We believe the Anglican Communion can rise to the demands of faithfulness. In the mean time, separation from ECUSA is inevitable. If there is no repentance, it will become permanent.

We continue to celebrate our common life and unblemished communion with those in the USA who have rejected this decision of the General Convention of 2003.

We are very concerned about the increasing reports of persecution and threats against those who maintain "the faith once delivered," and are committed to providing support for those who share faith. We believe that God will order our steps. Relationships have been broken, but the Gospel still holds the power to transform lives. It is to that truth that we give ourselves.

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