

Press Statement From

The Councils of Reform, Church Society and Fellowship of Word and Spirit

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We have studied the Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion who met in Lambeth Palace on 15th and 16th October, 2003 and wish to make the following Statement ourselves.

Our Gratitude

We are grateful that

- the Primates have faced the divisive consequences of the recent decisions of the Diocese of New Westminster and of the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) regarding homosexuality. It is clear that these bodies have acted contrary to the Bible's teaching.
- the Primates have re-affirmed the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference 1998 on human sexuality which emphasize that "in view of the teaching of the Scripture ... abstinence is right for those who are not called for marriage" and which, therefore, reject "homosexual practice as incompatible with the Scripture".
- the Primates have underlined the Lambeth Conference 1998 resolution where it spoke of "full members of the body of Christ" as being "all baptized persons ... regardless of sexual orientation" but who are also "believing and faithful" In the context of the resolution, this means 'faithful to Scripture'. Thus "the experiences of homosexual persons" that we should especially listen to are of those of a homosexual orientation who are seeking to remain faithful believers.
- the Primates emphasize "the teaching of the Anglican Communion on this issue" which the unilateral actions of some "could be perceived to alter". We are grateful for the Primates' emphatic: "They do not." We are clear that it is not only action but also teaching contrary to the Lambeth Conference 1998 resolution 1.10 that needs to be disciplined. We are mindful of the words of the risen Christ to the Church at Thyatira in Rev 2.20 not to tolerate teachers who mislead Christians into immorality.

This is a Fundamental Issue: The Leaders of ECUSA and New Westminster Have Now Left The Anglican Communion

We note that the Primates have a "firm desire to remain part of a Communion, where what we hold in common is much greater than that which divides us". We, too, have a similar firm desire. However, the Anglican Communion is committed to a principled comprehensiveness where there is "agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion" (Lambeth Conference 1968).

The Anglican Communion and its member churches are grounded in the Holy Scriptures.[1] Where there is a clear defiance of Scripture a failure to discipline is to concede that our Communion need not be grounded in the Holy Scriptures. We want to continue to show compassion for those who struggle to remain faithful. We are only too aware that all of us sin in thought and deed. However, following discussions and debate in the Anglican Communion over the last 25 years, and with a clear ruling at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 in Resolution 1.10, we are satisfied that this issue of homosexual practice is a fundamental issue and not a secondary matter. We do not, therefore, think it helpful to pretend that further discussion and debate will do other than generate more confusion and more disunity. The Anglican tradition claims that those who clearly defy basic Christian teaching "separate themselves by heresy"[2]. The Anglican Communion must now formalise a separation that has already occurred. We note that the Primates judge that this process may take twelve months.

Realignment Is Necessary Throughout The Anglican Communion

□ We note that the Primates speak of "realignments". Already such realignments have been, and will be, taking place. The most significant of these is the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA). This is overseen by missionary bishops from the Provinces of Rwanda and South East Asia. Furthermore there

are those in the Church of England who are, or will be, in various states of impaired communion with bishops who do not, either by their explicit teaching or discipline, uphold the decision of the General Synod of 1987 and the resolution of the Lambeth Conference 1998. This has been particularly exacerbated by the proposed appointment of Canon Jeffrey John as Bishop of Reading. This much publicized case indicates that the problem for the Primates is not just for North America but throughout the Communion, especially in Anglo-Anglican churches.

We commit ourselves to pray for a restoration of communion when there is repentance and changes of heart. Until such a time, we encourage Archbishops and Bishops in the Anglican Communion, as they see fit, to make provision for Provinces, Dioceses and Parishes where there is pastoral need due to teaching or action contrary to the Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution 1.10 regarding sexuality and homosexual practice.

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We Declare Ourselves To Be In A State Of ‘Impaired Communion’

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We pray for the true unity of the Church. We see doctrinal discipline involving some separation as imperative for godly and lasting unity. We are aware that any separation will be classed by the revisionists as schismatic. We are mindful, however, of the words of Richard Hooker: “that which they call schism, we know to be our reasonable service to God” (op cit).

In the light of all the above, and following the lead of provinces including the Southern Cone, South East Asia, Central Africa, Uganda and Nigeria, we declare ourselves to be in a state of impaired communion with archbishops, bishops and priests, and not just in North America but throughout the Anglican world, who teach or act contrary to the decision of the General Synod of 1987 and the Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution 1.10 regarding sexual practice.

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[1] The Thirty-nine Articles; the BCP 1662; the Lambeth Quadrilateral and Canon A5 of the Church of England.

[2] Richard Hooker, 1554-1600 First Sermon on part of Jude’s epistle