



Communion Partners

Maintaining and strengthening ties with the Anglican Communion + Episcopal Church.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen:

An Easter Report from the Communion Partners of the Episcopal Church
March 30, 2016

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

We, Communion Partner leaders and friends, gathered at the Canterbury Retreat and Conference Center in the Diocese of Central Florida from March 29-30. We are grateful to the Archbishop of Canterbury for his leadership in gathering the Primates of the Anglican Communion to take counsel for the good of the Communion, just as we are grateful for our membership and roles of leadership in the Episcopal Church. We believe that communion in faith and life in the church is a gift, and that the fellowship shared by the churches of the Anglican Communion is God's gift to us as Anglican Christians for the sake of a greater unity.

We rejoice that the Primates decided unanimously to "walk together" as a Communion of churches, even if from a "distance." We agree with them and grieve that the Episcopal Church through its General Convention has departed from "the faith and teaching held by the majority of our Provinces on the doctrine of marriage."¹ This traditional doctrine, based on the teaching of Scripture, as articulated by the Primates, upholds marriage as between a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union. This is the teaching expressed in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, and the doctrine we are committed to upholding.

For the sake of the unity of the Anglican Communion, and the ability to walk together even at a distance, the Primates have asked that members of the Episcopal Church no longer represent the Communion on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, not be appointed to internal standing committees, and to refrain from voting upon matters of doctrine and polity. We call upon the Episcopal Church's three delegates to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) voluntarily to honor these requests.

We thank our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry for greeting us by letter at our meeting, and are grateful for his pledge of support for the House of Bishops' 2015 statement, "Communion Across Difference,"² and look forward to his appointment of a "Working Group" to discern ways to move this vision forward.

We continue to be concerned about Prayer Book revision in the Episcopal Church, including the possibility of change in the doctrine of marriage in our Prayer Book formularies.

We pray for reconciliation within the Anglican Communion. We note the intentional statement of the bishops of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan. Though severing communion with the Episcopal Church, they nonetheless remain in communion with the Episcopal dioceses represented by the signers of the Salt Lake City Statement of 2015.³ We call for the conclusion of litigation between the Episcopal Church and its former members, and for prayer and work for eventual reconciliation with those who have left the Episcopal Church.

Along with the Primates of the Anglican Communion, we condemn “homophobic prejudice and violence,” reject “criminal sanctions against same-sex attracted people,” and resolve “to offer pastoral care and loving service irrespective of sexual orientation.”⁴ We spent time in consultation with others about these important matters. We were addressed by the Rev. Dawn McDonald of the Zacchaeus Fellowship and Professor Wesley Hill of Trinity School for Ministry, about their perspectives on these matters.

We commit ourselves to “the difficult work of racial reconciliation through prayer, teaching, engagement, and action” (GC Resolution 2015-CO19).⁵ A number of Bishops from Province IX are among our members, and they blessed our time together by their participation and in sharing stories of growth and hardship. We also note the call by leaders of the Episcopal Church for “listening with Anglican partners in the Global South, with particular attention to colonial and neocolonial patterns of relationship.”⁶

We re-commit ourselves to the important work of evangelism which we understand as “the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in him as Savior and follow him as Lord in the fellowship of the church.”⁷ With the Primates, “we commit ourselves through evangelism to proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ, unceasingly and authentically, inviting all to embrace the beauty and joy of the Gospel.”⁸ We are eager to foster the “Jesus Movement.”

In furtherance of the Jesus Movement, we will endeavor to be bridge-builders. We seek to live more fully into our vocation of maintaining and strengthening ties with the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church. We commit ourselves to expanding mission partnerships within the Episcopal Church, and beyond it in the Anglican Communion. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our relationship with the “Gracious Restraint” bishops in the Anglican Church of Canada. We continue to encourage and support a new generation of leaders and scholars in the Episcopal Church.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

The Rt. Rev. Lloyd Allen, *Bishop of Honduras*

The Rev. Dr. Chuck Alley, *Rector of St. Matthew’s Church, Henrico VA*

The Rt. Rev. John Bauerschmidt, *Bishop of Tennessee*

The Rt. Rev. Greg Brewer, *Bishop of Central Florida*

The Rt. Rev. Francisco Duque-Gómez, *Bishop of Colombia*

The Rt. Rev. Bill Frey, *Bishop of Colorado (resigned)*

The Rt. Rev. Julio Holguin, *Bishop of Dominican Republic*

The Rt. Rev. Johnson Howard, *Bishop of Florida*
The Rt. Rev. Paul Lambert, *Bishop Suffragan of Dallas*
The Rev. Dr. Russ Levenson, *Rector of St. Martin's Church, Houston TX*
The Rt. Rev. Bill Love, *Bishop of Albany*
The Rt. Rev. Dan Martins, *Bishop of Springfield*
The Rt. Rev. Moises Quezada Mota, *Bishop Coadjutor of Dominican Republic*
The Rt. Rev. Bill Skilton, *Bishop Assistant of Dominican Republic (resigned)*
The Rt. Rev. Michael Smith, *Bishop of North Dakota*
The Rev. R. Leigh Spruill, *Rector of St. George's Church, Nashville TN*
The Rt. Rev. George Sumner, *Bishop of Dallas*
The Rt. Rev. Stephen Andrews, Bishop of Algoma (Canada)
The Rt. Rev. Fraser Lawton, Bishop of Athabasca (Canada)
The Rt. Rev. David Parsons, Bishop of the Arctic (Canada)

¹ <http://www.primates2016.org/articles/2016/01/15/communique-primates/>

² <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2015/07/02/mind-of-the-house-of-bishops-statement-communion-across-difference/>

³ <http://www.communionpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Communion-Partner-Salt-Lake-City-Statement6.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.primates2016.org/articles/2016/01/15/communique-primates/>

⁵ http://www.generalconvention.org/gc/2015-resolutions/C019/current_english_text

⁶ <http://houseofdeputies.org/a-letter-on-racial-reconciliation.html>

⁷ http://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=1991-A059

⁸ <http://www.primates2016.org/articles/2016/01/15/communique-primates/>