



The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

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Anglican Communion

Primate's Vote Draws Media Interest

The vote by a majority of leaders of the churches within the worldwide Anglican Communion to place temporary sanctions on the Episcopal Church has drawn a good deal of media interest, including newspapers in south Georgia. The vote was taken by the group known as Primates after lengthy discussion during their January 11-15 in Canterbury, England.

In advance of the meeting, many of the primates pledged to walk out of the meeting because of the action of the Episcopal Church's General Convention last July to change canonical language that defines marriage as being between a man and a woman and authorize two new marriage rites with language allowing them to be used by same-sex or opposite-sex couples.

The group asked that the Episcopal Church, for a period of three years, "no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity."

Most media attention missed the real surprise move by the leaders of the provinces of the Anglican Communion who wrote, "This agreement acknowledges the significant distance that remains but confirms their unanimous commitment to walk together."

The primates' statement also asks Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby to appoint a task group "to maintain conversation among ourselves with the intention of restoration of relationship, the rebuilding of mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognizing the extent of our commonality, and exploring our deep differences, ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ."

In response to these actions, Bishop Scott Benhase issued the following statement: "The Anglican Communion Primates have spoken through their vote. We respect their position, yet we are a communion of independent churches. Their voice, while important, has no effect on the mission of the Diocese of Georgia. We will continue to proclaim and seek to live out the gracious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do our utmost to welcome all God's Children, regardless of who they are, into a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus. Our call and mission have not changed. I pray that everyone in the Diocese will redouble their efforts to include the lonely, the lost, and the left out in this part of Christ's Body."

The Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop and Primate Michael Curry said, "Our commitment to be an inclusive church is not based on a social theory or capitulation to the ways of the culture, but on our belief that the outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross are a sign of the very love of God reaching out to us all."

For more complete background and the full statement by the Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, read the Episcopal News Service article: Majority of Primates Call for Temporary Episcopal Church Sanctions.