

January 19, 2016

Many of you have asked me about the actions of the Anglican Primates in response to the General Convention. The following was written by Bishop Gunter and I think will help in understanding what happened, and what is happening.

Fr David

Response to the 2016 Primates Meeting

The [Primates](#) (chief bishops) of the [Anglican Communion](#) met at Canterbury, England this past week. They discussed religiously motivated violence, the refugee crisis, the real-life impact of climate change, and evangelism. But the topic that has gotten the most public attention is the disagreement regarding the Episcopal Church's decision last summer to formally change its teaching regarding marriage and the creation of rites for same-sex blessings and marriage.

The Primates issued a [communiqué](#) reiterating the fact that this is contrary to the understanding of the majority of the churches in the Anglican Communion. It acknowledges that this has caused pain in other parts of the Communion. As the consequence of that the communiqué states,

“It is our unanimous desire to walk together. However given the seriousness of these matters we formally acknowledge this distance by requiring that for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal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.”

It is important to note that this is not about whether or not the Episcopal Church is a member of the Anglican Communion. We are. That has not changed. Rather, this is a recognition of the deep disagreement with the decisions we have made. I have argued more or less in support of the position taken by the Episcopal Church. I still believe we are on a faithful path. But, I take seriously the strains this has put on our Communion. It is possible to believe that one is right while accepting that acting on that conviction might come with consequences. And then to accept the consequences.

I love the Episcopal Church. I love the Anglican Communion. They are inseparable. Whether the majority of the Episcopal Church and those throughout the Communion who agree with it are right or if the majority of the Anglican Communion and those within the Episcopal Church who agree with them are right, we need each other. We need to be encouraged and challenged by one another in order to grow into the truth and love of Jesus Christ.

We belong to one another. But, we have been reminded again this week that such belonging can be difficult. Perhaps the most significant and encouraging line in the communiqué is this one,

“Over the past week the unanimous decision of the Primates was to walk together, however painful this is, and despite our differences, as a deep expression of our unity in the body of Christ.”

To be a member of the Church is to be bound to all other members by the enduring bond of baptism. Because we are bound to one another, we walk together. Because we sometime disagree with one another or act in ways that hurt one another, that can be a painful thing. It is the pain of love. To be in real communion is difficult. It requires dying and rising. It requires patience, perseverance, and endurance. It requires the power of the Holy Spirit. And, as Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of the Province of Southern Africa said at the press conference at the close of the meeting, “The Holy Spirit is not done with us.”