



Fort Worth Reflections on the Alexandria Communiqué



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So what are we to make of the latest Communiqué from the Primates of the Anglican Communion? By “we” I mean those of us who have separated from the General Convention of TEC, while remaining full members of the Communion by realignment with another Province. Is it good news, bad news, or no news at all, for those of us who are working towards the establishment of an orthodox province for Anglicans in North America?

My first reading of the Communiqué left me rather disappointed. I wanted to ask, “Is that all there is?” After hearing some of the comments made about the Alexandria meeting by GAFCON Primates, I have come to the conclusion that reading the Communiqué is not sufficient for understanding what actually transpired during the course of the meeting itself. Evidently the document released by the Primates does not tell the whole story. If Archbishops Greg Venables and Henry Orombi are encouraged and hopeful about what will come of all this, then so am I. Time will tell.

My second and third readings of the Communiqué reinforced my initial impression that we had heard all of this before and that there was not much new in what was being proposed. The idea of mediated conversations has been tried before, but I suppose there is no harm in trying again. Yes, we know there are “difficulties” and “concerns” about the possibility of parallel jurisdictions, but new challenges call for new solutions, and it can be done. There are precedents. So let the “professionally mediated conversation” begin at the earliest opportunity. But let there also be a halt to the litigation and law suits against all parties at the same time. How can we expect to resolve the impasse we are in when TEC still seeks to use the civil courts to eliminate all opposition?

The Archbishop of Canterbury should, by all means, move forward with the scheme for a Pastoral Council and the appointment of Pastoral Visitors, though such an approach sounds very similar to the proposal that came out of the Primates’ Meeting in Dar-es-Salaam in 2007, only to be soundly rejected by the Bishops of TEC. As this scheme proceeds, so must the work of the Common Cause Partnership in forming the Anglican Church in North America at its constitutional assembly in June 2009 in Bedford, Texas. The Pastoral Council and the ACNA must cooperate together in finding a way to establish “a provisional holding arrangement” for the new Province as the formal recognition process unfolds.

We are grateful to the Windsor Continuation Group for their report and the recommendation in paragraph 101 about “a professionally mediated conversation.” However, there are three other points in this paragraph that warrant clarification and comment.

1. “It is not for individual groups to claim the terms on which they will relate to the communion.” Yes, but this is as true for TEC as it is for the ACNA organizers.
2. “Any scheme developed would rely on an undertaking from the present partners to ACNA that they would not seek to recruit and expand their membership by means of proselytisation.” I assume this is intended to protect the Communion Partners Fellowship from the further loss of additional parishes and clergy, but no such guarantee can be given. It is not at the initiative of

ACNA, but of individuals and congregations in TEC that such losses are likely to continue. ACNA is a missionary movement, but it is not interested in sheep stealing from our Communion Partner friends. We will not recruit, but neither can we turn away those who come to us seeking refuge and membership.

3. "WCG believes that the advent of schemes such as the Communion Partners Fellowship and the Episcopal Visitors scheme instituted by the Presiding Bishop in the United States should be sufficient to provide for the care of those alienated within the Episcopal Church from recent developments." We must respectfully disagree and do so rather strongly. If such schemes were sufficient, then the Dioceses of San Joaquin, Pittsburgh, Quincy, and Fort Worth (as well as scores of parishes and clergy) would have had no need to separate from TEC. Again, it is an assertion that seems aimed at protecting the Communion Partners Fellowship from further losses. It must be noted that it is not ACNA that is causing the divisions, but TEC. The Communion is going to have to respond to the reality that there are going to be two jurisdictions in the USA and Canada, one that complies with the rest of the Communion and the other that does not.

One last thought. In paragraph 12, the Primates state that "it is imperative that further aggravation and acts which cause offence, misunderstanding or hostility cease." I sincerely hope this is possible; I am all for a cease-fire and reconciliation. But it appears to me that two things are certain: ACNA will be formed in June to chart a way forward for orthodox Anglicans in North America, and the General Convention of TEC will meet in July to do what it must do. I see no realistic chance of reconciliation between these two bodies on the horizon, but rather a continuation of the "deep differences and disrupted relationships" that have torn the fabric of the Communion at its deepest level. Nonetheless, we place our hope and trust in Jesus Christ alone for what the future might hold for our beloved church – which is His, not ours.

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