

A REFLECTION ON THE FOURTH ANGLICAN GLOBAL SOUTH TO SOUTH ENCOUNTER, APRIL 19-23, 2010, ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, SINGAPORE

As a member of the fellowship of Communion Partner Clergy, I received an invitation to investigate mission and ministry partnership opportunities with the mission staff of the Diocese of Singapore and preach at St. Andrew's Cathedral on Sunday, April 25. Since my visit coincided with the final days of the Encounter, I was invited to attend as an observer. It was a powerful experience to see a truly diverse population wrestle with matters of faith and order without ever losing sight of the need to proclaim the Gospel as once for all delivered by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

On the final day of the Encounter, the ecumenical observer and the associate delegations from the "West" were invited to address the assembly. Addresses were made by representatives of the Coptic Church, New Zealand, Australia and North America. In a demonstration of unity and fellowship, the delegates from the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and the Communion Partner Bishops and Clergy (CP) stood together before the delegations from the provinces of the Global South. Archbishop Bob Duncan (ACNA) and Bishop John W. Howe (CP) brought greetings from Anglicans in North America who are committed to the Anglican Communion and traditional Christian orthodoxy and practice. They declared a mutual respect and growing spirit of cooperation in the proclamation of the Gospel in the North American context. Bishop Howe (CP) responded to the question asked earlier in the conference about how Communion Partners would view the recognition of the ACNA by the provinces of the Global South, by saying that CP would see it as a positive step in support of the orthodox community within the Episcopal Church (TEC). Their only concern would be the possibility that this recognition would be to the exclusion of those orthodox Anglicans called to remain in TEC as an internal witness for the Gospel.

At the end of the Encounter, the assembly approved a communiqué of 22 paragraphs, the subjects of which ranged from expressing gratitude to the Diocese of Singapore and Province of South East Asia, to prayer for nations facing natural disasters, political instability and modern secularism, to economic empowerment, and to the Anglican Covenant and structure of the Anglican Communion. Four paragraphs were explicitly dedicated to: the expression of grief over the continued actions of TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada; the decision of several primates to refrain from participation in any councils with representative of TEC or the Anglican Church of Canada; encouragement to provinces to reconsider their communion relationships with TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada; and acknowledgement of the ACNA and CP and the expression of hope that "all provinces will be in full communion with the clergy and people of the ACNA and the Communion Partners." The communiqué contains words of encouragement for us to continue to fight the good fight for the Gospel in the context of TEC. Through it we are also assured that our brothers and sisters in the Global South of the Anglican Communion stand with us and behind us as we walk the path of obedience to our gracious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have partners in the Anglican Communion and these partners are not there only to support us, but to partner with us in the mutual ministry of the Gospel in the world.

As expressed by Archbishop Duncan (ACNA) in his remarks, it is truly humbling to know that in the face of the opposition and hardship experienced by many in the provinces of the Global South, the gathered primates, archbishops, bishops and lay persons would even consider the plight of Anglicans in North America after all the pain and discord we have caused the Communion. They have given us an incredible gift of grace and mercy. Let us remember the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48b). May we begin by sharing such grace and mercy among ourselves within the orthodox Anglican community in North America.

The communiqué ended with a quotation from the Letter to the Hebrews:

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1,2).

I believe there is no better encouragement than that for our immediate future and beyond.

Yours in Christ,

Chuck +

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