

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This past week the Primates of the Anglican Communion gathered for a meeting. There was hope and fear, and certainly an undercurrent of anxiety throughout much of the Communion.

What would happen?

Rumors that some of the Primates would not show up were running around. Rumors that some of the Primates would walk out of the meeting were also being shared. Some thought that if the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church was present, some would boycott, or attend a different meeting.

in the end, all of the Primates come together. 100% of the Primates were present.

Our Presiding Bishop was the 'new kid on the block,' and got to introduce himself around. If you don't know Presiding Bishop Curry, I can tell you a few things: First, he is an extrovert. He is energized by being with other people, and he loves to talk. Second, he loves to talk about Jesus. He knows Jesus, and he talks about Jesus. He is excited about Jesus, and is unafraid to share His love, and to call Him by Name.

After several days of meeting, the news came out yesterday, that the Primates voted unanimously, to remain together. The Communion would hold together, despite deep differences concerning the doctrine of marriage.

However, with this commitment to remain together, came the request (or requirement?) that The Episcopal Church absent itself from various aspects of the Communion. In particular, we were 'told' not to participate in ecumenical conversations, and that within the Communion, we were not to be involved in decision making of doctrine and polity of the Church.

What does this mean?

First, it means that God's grace is still sufficient.

Some of the fears and rumors could have happened. Some of the Primates could have absented themselves, but they didn't. Only one Archbishop (from Uganda) left the meeting early.

One of the fears/concerns/rumors was that the Episcopal Church would be 'removed' from the Communion, and replaced by a group commonly known as ACNA (Anglican Church in North America). This did not happen. Some felt that another group would leave, and try to set up their own 'Anglican Communion' in Africa.

Again, none of these things happened.

Presiding Bishop Curry spoke eloquently about why the Episcopal Church took the actions it took, and spoke about the love and all inclusiveness of Jesus Christ. He confirmed that we did not take any actions at General Convention due to societal pressures or changes, but rather

because of an understanding of Christ's unqualified love for all of God's people. He stated also, that the Episcopal Church has been on this track, and understanding, for a long time, and this was a natural and expected result.

Some of the Primates expressed surprise, concern and perhaps confusion about the Episcopal Church's actions.

In the end, we were asked to step aside for 3 years, and not participate in certain aspects of the life of the Communion.

Is this right? That depends on which side of the argument/theology you stand.

Is it fair? Again, that depends.

What happens during the 3 years?

First, I suppose that this gives the Communion and the Primates some time to breathe, and to have more conversation. There is to be a task force set up to foster conversation.

SEcond, it's not the first time this has happened, and quite honestly, it shouldn't really come as a complete surprise. Several years ago, we were asked to step aside from other Communion activities. That time came and went, and we were back in the middle of the Communion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has already announced the upcoming Lambeth Conference in 2020. This would take place after the 3 year period is up, so it would be expected that the bishops of the Episcopal Church would again be invited to the Conference.

I know that within our Diocese, there will be some who are happy with this decision, some who feel there could have been more done to The Episcopal Church, and some who will be saddened by what has taken place.

I am also asking Bishop Mark, our Assistant Bishop, who served as Bishop of Niassa, Mozambique, to add his thoughts.

In this Diocese, as I have said in the past, all persons of God will be honored and welcomed into our Church and into our congregations.

As the report is unpacked over the coming days, I'm sure there will be more to discuss.

God bless you, and we ask your prayers for the Primates, the Communion, myself and this Diocese.

In Christ,

The Rt Rev W Michie Klusmeyer
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