

Oxford Statement of the Primates' Council November 2010 AD

Introduction

The leaders of the GAFCON movement are keenly aware of the crises of conscience that are pressing some people to shift their membership and ministry from the Anglican Church.

While we are greatly sympathetic that there are many areas of crisis that assault conscience, once again, we would offer that the theological clarity of the Jerusalem Declaration offers a solid foundation on which to engage with other Anglicans in the pursuit of Gospel mission.

Being able to link with those who not only form the majority of Anglicans in the world, but also those who affirm Biblical theological foundations of what Anglicans have always believed and practiced can provide concrete relationships and meaningful partnerships that are of more substance than the structures that have shown themselves to be flawed or compromised.

GAFCON provides a way to share Biblical Anglicanism that is in concert with what Anglicans have always believed, taught, and practiced.

We believe that Anglicanism has a great deal to offer in the pursuit of reaching the world for Christ. While we wish those who are departing the Anglican Church well, we do not believe that it is necessary to depart from what Anglicans have always believed to remain faithful. At the same time, we understand that some structures have become so compromised that some have been pressed by conscience to separate from their national structures - such as in North America.

We are glad that GAFCON exists and provides links to remain Anglican when people have been unable, for conscience, to remain in their Province.

In England (as well as other areas), we invite people to re-affirm what we have always believed in Anglicanism by adopting the Jerusalem Declaration as a statement of their own faith and join with us in partnership in working to win the world to Christ. It is with that perspective that the leaders of GAFCON met recently in Oxford and they share their thoughts from that gathering in the attached document.

The Most Rev. Gregory J. Venables, GAFCON Chair

The Statement

1. The GAFCON/FCA Primates' Council met in Oxford from October 4th through October 7th, 2010. We gathered as Bishops in Council and as the elected leaders of provinces and national churches of the Anglican Communion representing more than forty million Anglicans. We know that many of our people confront a fallen world where sin abounds; the economy is troubled and resources are scarce; disasters loom and governments often seem impotent and helpless and yet even in the midst of all these things "our hope is in the Name of the Lord" and we are filled with hope and vision.
2. We are thankful for God's hand in establishing GAFCON and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. We rejoice in God's guidance from the Scriptures, the gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and the provision of a godly fellowship to sustain us. In this context we have met in Oxford, a city that has seen many critical events in Anglican history, and are grateful for the men and women who have given their lives to protect the faith that has given us eternal life.
3. We believe that we are now entering a new era for the Anglican Communion. New ways of living out our common life are emerging as old structures are proven to be ineffective in confronting the challenges of living in a pluralistic global community. We rejoice in the call of the Jerusalem Declaration for a renewed commitment to the authority of scripture and the centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sadly the rejection of these historic anchors to our faith has brought us to a crisis in the life of the Communion.
4. As we have made clear in numerous communiqués and meetings those who have abandoned the historic teaching of the Church have torn the fabric of our life together at its deepest level. We have made repeated attempts to bring repentance and restoration and yet these efforts have been rejected. We grieve for those who have walked apart and earnestly pray for them and the people under their care.
5. For the sake of Christ and of His Gospel we can no longer maintain the illusion of normalcy and so we join with other Primates from the Global South in declaring that we will not be present at the next Primates' meeting to be held in Ireland. And while we acknowledge that the efforts to heal our brokenness through the introduction of an Anglican Covenant were well intentioned we have come to the conclusion the current text is fatally flawed and so support for this initiative is no longer appropriate.
6. We also acknowledge with appreciation the address to the Nicean Society meeting in Lambeth Palace on September 9th of His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations. We welcome his call to all churches of the Anglican Communion to

step back from the abyss of heresy and reclaim the revealed truth that is at the heart of our historic understanding of Christian faith and moral order. We share with him the conviction that failure to do so will endanger our common witness and many important ecumenical dialogues but we would also point out that there are many within the Anglican Communion who have not 'bowed the knee' to secular liberalism and who are determined to stay true to the 'faith once delivered to the saints' whatever the cost.

7. The Primates Council, as bishops of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, wish to affirm the reality of human sin and divine judgment, the only way of salvation from sin through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, the sufficiency and clarity of Holy Scripture as the revelation of God's will, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit as he brings new birth and holiness of life.
8. As many people in the nations where we serve experience new economic challenges, we affirm that the Church has been entrusted with the task of holding before all people the truth of the gospel of the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the key to human well-being and the hope of creation. While we know well the scourge of poverty and the despair it produces, we call on our churches to remember this unique calling and not be seduced by those who would argue that economic development is our only goal. The destiny of humanity is not limited to this present world but to live the resurrection life in the new heavens and new earth.
9. We are, however, determined to lead our churches away from unhealthy economic dependency and to teach our people the importance of becoming effective stewards of their own resources. We must reclaim a vision of financial self-sufficiency. We are grateful for reports of several initiatives that are building capacity for economic growth in our various provinces and commit ourselves to making this an essential dimension of our continuing work. We also believe that a vital part of our witness is the integrity of our marriages and families and our care for the most vulnerable among us, our children. We welcome recent initiatives to encourage the ministry of women in leadership by CAPA – the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa.
10. We are also grateful for the recent conference sponsored by CAPA in Entebbe, Uganda, where we witnessed the growing strength of the Anglican Churches in Africa and their commitment to wholistic mission. We believe that GAFCON/FCA must expand its ministry through the inclusion of other Anglican provinces that share our faith conviction and love for the Communion. We also applaud the efforts of the Global South Provinces to find common ground and opportunities for common mission. We are committed to doing all that we can to strengthen our common witness.
11. We remain convinced that the unique character of GAFCON/FCA with its diversity of cultures and its embrace of the Jerusalem Declaration as a common theological confession is a vital contribution to the future of the global Anglican Communion. We are persuaded that we must offer new initiatives to more effectively respond to

the crises that confront us all. We must strengthen our communication capabilities and we are also looking to build partnerships with other denominational churches that share our faith convictions.

12. Specifically, we are planning a leadership conference in the latter part of 2011 that will focus on the need to “Contend for the Faith in the Public Square.” We are also beginning preparations for an international gathering of Primates, Bishops, Clergy and Lay leaders in 2012, provisionally designated “GAFCON 2”. To support all of this we have approved the expansion of the Secretariat.
13. Finally, we acknowledge that it is only by God’s grace that we can accomplish any of this and so we call on all those that acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord to join us in prayer for our world and for the raising up of many initiatives that will bring the redeeming and transforming love of God to all those in need.
14. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

The Primates Council:

The Most Rev’d Gregory Venables, GAFCON/FCA Chair
The Most Rev’d Justice Akrofi, Archbishop, Anglican Province of West Africa
The Most Rev’d Robert Duncan, Archbishop, Anglican Church in North America
The Most Rev’d Emmanuel Kolini, Archbishop, Anglican Church of Rwanda
The Most Rev’d Valentino Mokiwa, Archbishop, Anglican Church of Tanzania
The Most Rev’d Nicholas Okoh, Archbishop, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
The Most Rev’d Henry Orombi Archbishop, Church of Uganda
The Most Rev’d Eliud Wabukala, Archbishop, Anglican Church of Kenya

The Most Rev’d Peter Jensen, Archbishop, Diocese of Sydney, Secretary

(Enclosure: The Jerusalem Declaration)

The Jerusalem Declaration

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit: We, the participants in the Global Anglican Future Conference, have met in the land of Jesus' birth. We express our loyalty as disciples to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus. We joyfully embrace his command to proclaim the reality of his kingdom which he first announced in this land. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of salvation, liberation and transformation for all. In light of the above, we agree to chart a way forward together that promotes and protects the biblical gospel and mission to the world, solemnly declaring the following tenets of orthodoxy which underpin our Anglican identity.

1. We rejoice in the gospel of God through which we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because God first loved us, we love him and as believers bring forth fruits of love, ongoing repentance, lively hope and thanksgiving to God in all things.
2. We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God written and to contain all things necessary for salvation. The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the church's historic and consensual reading.
3. We uphold the four Ecumenical Councils and the three historic Creeds as expressing the rule of faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
4. We uphold the Thirty-nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church agreeing with God's Word and as authoritative for Anglicans today.
5. We gladly proclaim and submit to the unique and universal Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humanity's only Saviour from sin, judgement and hell, who lived the life we could not live and died the death that we deserve. By his atoning death and glorious resurrection, he secured the redemption of all who come to him in repentance and faith.
6. We rejoice in our Anglican sacramental and liturgical heritage as an expression of the gospel, and we uphold the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as a true and authoritative standard of worship and prayer, to be translated and locally adapted for each culture.
7. We recognise that God has called and gifted bishops, priests and deacons in historic succession to equip all the people of God for their ministry in the world. We uphold the classic Anglican Ordinal as an authoritative standard of clerical orders.
8. We acknowledge God's creation of humankind as male and female and the unchangeable standard of Christian marriage between one man and one woman as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis of the family. We repent of our failures to maintain this standard and call for a renewed commitment to lifelong fidelity in marriage and abstinence for those who are not married.
9. We gladly accept the Great Commission of the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations, to seek those who do not know Christ and to baptise, teach and bring new believers to maturity.
10. We are mindful of our responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation, to uphold and advocate justice in society, and to seek relief and empowerment of the poor and needy.
11. We are committed to the unity of all those who know and love Christ and to building authentic ecumenical relationships. We recognise the orders and jurisdiction of those Anglicans who uphold orthodox faith and practice, and we encourage them to join us in this declaration.
12. We celebrate the God-given diversity among us which enriches our global fellowship, and we acknowledge freedom in secondary matters. We pledge to work together to seek the mind of Christ on issues that divide us.
13. We reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed. We pray for them and call on them to repent and return to the Lord.
14. We rejoice at the prospect of Jesus' coming again in glory, and while we await this final event of history, we praise him for the way he builds up his church through his Spirit by miraculously changing lives.