

Canadian Gay Anglicans Respond to Primates' Statement

Primates of the international Anglican Communion have called on the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church of the United States to withdraw voluntarily from the Anglican Consultative Council because the two national churches have expressed their support for committed same-sex relationships and, in the case of the U.S. church, the consecration of a gay bishop. The primates also called on the Anglican Consultative Council to initiate a "listening and study process" and expressed support for a moratorium on blessing rites for same-sex unions.

Listening and Study Process.

Integrity Canada receives the primates' communiqué with reserved regret. While we are cautiously optimistic that at long last an international listening process might now begin, we note that previous requests have gone unheeded since international bishops first promised it in 1978, largely explaining the profound frustration of many gay-supportive Anglicans in the worldwide church.

In fact many of the primates attending this week's meeting are themselves responsible for oppressing lesbian and gay people in their home countries, barring gay Christians from communion, even sacking and cutting off the pensions of clergy who disagree with the traditional view. The caring rhetoric of this communiqué notwithstanding, there is ample evidence that many provinces in the worldwide church are incapable of insuring a safe space for gay and lesbian people and their supporters to be heard.

The possibility of a safe and balanced listening process is further eroded by the primates' request that the Canadian and U.S. churches voluntarily withdraw from the Anglican Consultative Council. Even as they call on the ACC to initiate a dialogue about homosexuality, the primates ask those churches most welcoming of gay and lesbian people to leave the Council. This makes no sense to us.

Chris Ambidge, convener of Integrity Toronto, asks: "If North American churches choose to withdraw, to whom will the Council be listening in this discussion? It is vital that the Canadian and the U.S. churches remain engaged in international church structures. We have done nothing shameful, and we cannot abandon our care and concern for the worldwide church. Some people may find our presence uncomfortable, but without us the conclusion of any dialogue is preordained."

Moratorium on Same-Sex Unions.

While acknowledging that many Anglicans in the worldwide Communion disagree with us, Integrity Canada reaffirms, unequivocally, our belief that God is leading the Canadian church to embrace its gay and lesbian members and support committed same-sex relationships. The Anglican Church of Canada formally affirmed "the integrity and sanctity of committed, adult, same-sex relationships" just last year.

Steve Schuh, president of Integrity Vancouver, explains: "In asking gay Anglicans to accept a voluntary moratorium on same-sex blessings, the primates are asking us to violate our conscience. But now that we're out of the ecclesiastical closet, we won't deny the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives again. It would be impossible for us to stop thanking God for blessing our relationships."

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Integrity Canada supports a network of chapters across Canada, offering support and advocacy on behalf of gay and lesbian Anglicans and their friends. Website: www.integritycanada.org.

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