



No Anglican Covenant Coalition
Anglicans for Comprehensive Unity
noanglican covenant.org

January 18, 2016

**STATEMENT BY NO ANGLICAN COVENANT COALITION MODERATOR
THE VENERABLE MALCOLM FRENCH
REGARDING THE PRIMATES MEETING 2016
AND THE PURPORTED SANCTIONS AGAINST THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

Last week, the Primates Meeting issued a communique "requiring" that members of The Episcopal Church:

- no longer represent the Anglican Communion on ecumenical and interfaith bodies;
- not be appointed or elected to internal standing committees of the Anglican Communion; and
- when participating in internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, refrain from taking part in any decision making on "issues pertaining to doctrine and polity."

There are a number of very problematical issues raised by the Primates Meeting statement.

1. Exceeding their authority

The Primates Meeting has no authority to require anything of any member church of the Anglican Communion or of any of the other Instruments of Communion. To pretend that these are "consequences" as opposed to "sanctions" is a distinction without a difference and a verbal evasion.

2. The authority of Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference ([pdf text](#))

The Primates Meeting argues that The Episcopal Church has not conformed to Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference and therefore deserves sanctions, specifically partial exclusion from decision-making bodies of the Anglican Communion. However,

- The conclusions of Lambeth Conferences are not laws of the Communion.
- If Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference is considered definitive then it must be applied in full.
 - Section (c) affirms that all people are loved by God irrespective of their sexuality and are full members of the Church and their voices are to be heard.
 - Section (d) calls on churches "to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals."

Surely all Provinces must also conform to these sections of Resolution I.10. In justice those which do not — for example, by promoting draconian anti-gay legislation — should recuse themselves from the Councils of the Communion to the same degree as they now require of The Episcopal Church.

3. The constitutional limits of Primatial authority

The Primates exceed their authority when seeking to exclude The Episcopal Church from standing committees, including the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Consultative Council elects the majority of the 15 members of the Standing Committee. It would be unconstitutional to restrict the choice of candidates available to the members of the Anglican Consultative Council based on an *ultra vires* demand by the Primates Meeting. It would also make a very worrying precedent for future elections.

4. Doctrine and polity

The Anglican Communion remains a family of autonomous churches. Doctrine and polity are matters for each separate Province following their own procedures, constitutions, and canons.

Therefore, The Episcopal Church cannot be excluded on “issues pertaining to doctrine and polity” unless the Primates Meeting seeks to centralize doctrinal authority in the Anglican Communion in its own hands, in clear violation of Anglican ecclesiology and of the constitution and canons of every Anglican Province.

5. Observations

As a Canadian, I have some freedom to observe how much of the events of the past 20 years have been motivated by a reactionary anti-Americanism. The Episcopal Church has been subjected to constant, unrelenting, and profoundly un-Christian vilification for far too long. Yet in the face of all the vitriol, The Episcopal Church has never threatened to walk away. Its leaders have never threatened to pull their (substantial) funding of the operations of the Anglican Communion. I appreciate the grace and forbearance of my Episcopal Church brothers and sisters. The Anglican Communion has presumed on that grace and forbearance long enough.

These continue to be difficult days for the Anglican Communion. Our difficulties will not be resolved by grasping power politics, but by honest engagement and prayerful dialogue. It is a poor witness to the world that these seem to have been in such short supply at the Primates Meeting.

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The No Anglican Covenant Coalition is an international group of Anglicans who oppose the adoption of the proposed Anglican Covenant.

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