COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE COLLEGE OF BISHOPS OF
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

January 5th to 9th, 2015

“For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” ~ 1 Corinthians 1:18

Led by our new Archbishop, The Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach, we met as a College to worship and pray, to study Scripture and the historic faith, and to pursue our common life as servant leaders. Meeting in Orlando from January 5th to 9th under the Cross of Christ, we sought to deepen our relationships with God and with each other, and learn ways to be more effective and fruitful.

Conscious of the weight of our responsibilities as bishops, we spent important time together in prayer, teaching, business, and fellowship; all in light of our recognition of the power of the Cross. Without question, the College emerged from this week stronger and more unified than ever before, sharing a common vision for reaching North America with the transforming love of Jesus Christ, and strengthening the bonds of trust.

Prayer

We followed the Anglican patterns of prayer, with both Daily Offices and daily Holy Eucharist. Homilies by several bishops richly added to our worship, inspiring us and challenging us to grow in authentic fellowship and discipleship.

Throughout the week, we were blessed by having David Clifton, Minister of Worship Arts at the Church of the Apostles, Knoxville, Tennessee, leading our music. He wove historic and contemporary music in a gentle and powerful way that enriched our time together.

On Thursday evening, we held a prayer vigil for our countries and for those issues facing our cultures and the nations of the world.

Teaching

We were enriched and strengthened in our apostolic ministries through the inspiring sessions presented by the Rt. Rev. John A.M Guernsey, Bishop of the Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic and Dean of...
Bishop Guernsey spoke about the importance of a bishop’s prayer life and accented his presentations with powerful testimonies of the ways Almighty God had answered prayers of faith and vision. We were reminded that Jesus himself instructed the disciples to pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Luke 10:2). Each afternoon the College of Bishops was enriched by Bishop Sutton’s outstanding and anointed teaching on the office of the Bishop. He presented an historical survey of the ministry of the bishop, highlighting many godly examples for us as we seek to live, pray, love, and minister.

In surveying seven eras in the history of the Church, from the Apostolic Age of the New Testament to the present day, Bishop Sutton challenged the College to recover the best of the apostolic office as it has been revealed in Scripture and experienced in the life of the Church. His presentation concluded with a tremendously stirring call to us to fulfill our vocations.

In small groups, we responded to these presentations by sharing how we had received God’s vision for our ministries and discussing the importance of prayerful leadership in the Church.

**Fellowship**

**Guest of the College**
We gave thanks for the presence of Bishop Mark Lawrence throughout the meeting. Our prayers continue to be with him and the faithful people whom he leads in the Diocese of South Carolina.

**Wives’ Retreat**
Over the years, the bishops’ wives have developed warm and loving relationships which were further deepened during the week through sharing and prayer. They also heard Bible teaching each morning from Krista Williams of Monroe, GA.

**Business**

The business portion of our meeting began with an address from Archbishop Beach, and then proceeded in four parts, each led by one of the Deans. Prayers were offered prior to the presentation of each report, and at the close of each report prayers were offered again for the respective leader and their ministry.

**Archbishop Beach’s Report**

Archbishop Beach gave thanks for the presence and grace of God that has been evident in the first six months of this new ministry. Reaffirming the principle of subsidiarity – that the ministry of the
Province is only to initiate or minister in ways that a diocese should not or could not – Archbishop Beach shared some of the unique ministry opportunities of his archiepiscopate that are strengthening both the Province and the larger Body of Christ.

These opportunities included his recent trip to Southeast Asia and Australia where our relationships with the Anglican provinces and dioceses in those regions were deepened; sitting down to dinner with Metropolitan Hilarion of the Russian Orthodox Church; and being invited by members of the Canadian Parliament to pray for the nation in the wake of the terrorist attack that affected the capital in October.

In discussion, we commented on how encouraging it is that our new Archbishop is being so well received by our international and ecumenical partners.

Archbishop Beach expressed his commitment to shared leadership in the College and Province, and demonstrated this commitment by having his four appointed Deans lead the business sessions throughout the week.

**College Affairs**

The Rt. Rev. Terrell Glenn, Dean of College Affairs, led the sessions on matters that touch upon the College’s common life.

First, we turned to reflections on the Conclave, and the process by which we selected our new Archbishop. We overwhelmingly affirmed the Conclave’s prayerful process.

We then turned our attention to the development of a process for the care of a bishop’s soul should discipline be required for an act committed against our Lord and His Church. More information about the process can be found at this link. No member of the College is presently under disciplinary measures, thus making it a helpful time to develop a pastoral process.

We spent significant time in small groups, praying together, addressing personal issues, and strengthening relationships. Many commented on the growing depth and genuineness of our life together.

**Provincial Affairs**

Bishop John Guernsey, Dean of Provincial Affairs, led the sessions affecting the internal life of our Province.

**Review of the Preface to Confirmation**

The Liturgy and Common Worship Task Force submitted to the College a “Preface Concerning the Confirmation Liturgy”. The intention is to ensure that each Anglican makes a public profession of faith
and receives the laying on of hands by a bishop. After minor revisions, the Preface was adopted. The text is available at this link.

**Task Force on Marriage**
Over the past fifty years there have been massive changes in the understanding and practice of marriage in Western society, including such matters as the sexual revolution, no-fault divorce, same-sex marriage, and abortion. These changes spring from a larger rejection of the Christian worldview in Western society.

There is an urgent need for the Anglican Church in North America to review our Anglican teaching and enrich our practice in areas relating to marriage. To this end, the College approved the formation of a task force, to be chaired by the Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll, that will work to strengthen marriage by developing a comprehensive provincial marriage initiative. This initiative will consider marriage from a variety of interlocking perspectives: theological, liturgical, pastoral, legal, canonical, ecumenical, and public policy.

**Holy Orders Task Force**
The Holy Orders Task Force currently is working on Phase Three of its stated procedure. In this phase, the task force is focusing on the manner in which ecclesiology relates to ordination and holy orders. In 2014, the Task Force met on March 20-21 (Ft. Worth, TX), May 14-15 (Bedford, TX), September 25-26 (Pittsburgh, PA), and November 20-21 (Bedford, TX). With the help of several outside scholars, the task force has developed working documents to assist with its task.

As was the case with the previous phase, the task force found it helpful to identify and summarize what the formularies say about the particular issues related to this phase of work. This represents the commonly accepted foundation, which forms the basis for discussion. The task force also has been working to identify those perspectives on ordination which lead to divergent understandings within our tradition about the nature of ordination and holy orders. This includes, but is not limited to, women’s ordination. By examining the premises upon which varying perspectives are based, the bishops will be in a better position to discuss a way forward in resolving the concerns about how holy orders are understood and function in the life of the Province.

**Anglican Unity Task Force**
The Anglican Unity Task Force reported on its work to facilitate simplifying the overlapping structures of our Church, particularly for the sake of the coming generations of leadership. While the task force does not have authority to mandate realignments, it hopes to foster conversations and create clear processes for local review of parish and diocesan alignments, with a particular focus on times of succession for rectors or bishops.

**Multi-ethnic Ministry**
We discussed our commitment to multi-ethnicity as an essential element of our life as a Church and our witness to the wider North American culture. We celebrated the advances being made by our
growing Latino works as evidenced by Caminemos Juntos, gave thanks for developments among our Asian brothers and sisters as led by Bishop Stephen Leung, and gave thanks for the contributions of African-American bishops, clergy and members of our Church. We identified the significant need for growth in our engagement with the greater African-American community, and are planning a symposium to help us chart a faithful way to honor this Gospel imperative and minister to this critical need in our current culture.

Other Provincial Initiatives

We received a number of other ministry reports. The Young Anglicans Project shared a short but poignant video about young people who are spiritually lost and unconnected. We were, however, encouraged by a program that is being piloted in the Diocese of Pittsburgh which pairs young people in a one-on-one discipling relationship with an older Christian. The reports of its effectiveness are very encouraging.

Our emphasis on church planting continues with some exciting developments, particularly in new work among minorities. The Rev. Dan Alger, Canon for Church Planting, is facilitating the next chapter of church planting in the province, and has begun bringing together key church planting leaders from dioceses and regional networks in order to share wisdom and resources.

The Provincial Retirement Fund task force reported on important work being done to strengthen and improve the retirement plan of the Anglican Church in North America by merging the ACNA retirement plan with that of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA) and other diocesan and parish plans. This will result in greater buying power in the retirement plan marketplace, reduce management fees, provide superior fiduciary oversight, allow for greater ease of movement within our Province and is intended to improve the rate of return for all plan participants.

International Affairs

A report on international affairs was presented by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Bill Atwood, Dean of International Affairs. His report celebrated the scope of global relationships that bless the Anglican Church in North America. We have relationships of full communion and recognition from the vast majority of the world’s Anglicans, and have robust mission partnerships with many Provinces.

We heard reports from Sharon Steinmiller on behalf of the Anglican Global Mission Partners (AGMP) and Bill Deiss, Executive Director of the Anglican Relief and Development Fund (ARDF), about the breadth of outreach in which our Province is engaged. There is a large and growing number of missionaries deployed around the world and a host of projects being undertaken. Canon Deiss reported that ARDF has funded over $6.5 million in 133 projects in more than 40 countries. All of these projects have been prioritized and approved by the ARDF board which is made up of Anglican Primates from both the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA) and the Global South. In addition, it was noted that our relationships with leaders from Youth With a Mission (YWAM) have led to hosting a Discipleship Training School program for the Province.
We also discussed the grave tear in the fabric of the Anglican Communion caused by decisions of some provinces and dioceses to depart from historic faith and practice. Inspired by the witness of provinces abroad, we are committed to upholding and proclaiming Biblical truth as members of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

We have also identified “point bishops” to help facilitate communication and relationships with each of the sixteen provinces where we have many friends and joint activities.

Ecumenical Affairs

A report on ecumenical relationships was presented by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Ray Sutton, Dean of Ecumenical Affairs.

The Anglican Church in North America is engaged in eight different ecumenical dialogues: Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church in America, Polish National Catholic Church, North American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Messianic Jewish churches, Good News Methodists, and Presbyterian Church in America.

Each dialogue committee is led by a member of the College, and we heard brief updates on the status of each dialogue. One of the highlights was Archbishop Duncan’s reflections on the experience of the seven members of the GFCA who were invited to the Vatican’s Humanum Colloquium on the complementarity of man and woman. A second high point in these conversations has been the warming of relationships with the Orthodox Church in America, punctuated in October by a visit with Metropolitan Hilarion (Russian Orthodox) and Metropolitan Tikhon (OCA).

Archbishop Beach noted that in an increasingly secular time, it is all the more essential to be working across denominational lines as we seek to reach our culture with the Gospel.

Conclusion

We leave this meeting of the College with hearts that are thankful for God’s love for us and for His providential care. As we take the next steps to reach North America with the transforming love of Jesus Christ, we continue to invite your prayers for our Church and for the nations we serve. To God be the glory.

Pictures and videos from the meeting can be found at this link.