

THE COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
Meeting at St. Andrew's Diocesan Center, Nnewi, Anambra State
26th – 29th March 2008

1. The Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), comprising the House of Bishops, and delegates from the House of Clergy and the House of Laity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the leadership of the Most Rev. Peter J. Akinola, Primate of All Nigeria, met at St. Andrew's Diocesan Center, Nnewi, Anambra State between 26th and 29th March 2008. We are profoundly grateful to the Rt. Rev'd Godwin Okpala, the Bishop, Diocese of Nnewi, the Governor, His Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi, the Government of Anambra State, HRH, Igwe Kenneth Orizu, Igwe III of Nnewi, and the good people of the Diocese of Nnewi, for the warm hospitality and generosity shown to us.
2. We were privileged to take part in the dedication of All Saints' Anglican Church Parish, Irefi – Oraifite (The City of Joy) Ekwusigo Local Government Area. This magnificent edifice was made possible through the generosity of a single donor, Sir Emeka Ofor, who was present to be honoured for his generosity. In his dedication sermon the Primate reminded us that we can only enter into the House of the Lord when our hearts and hands are made clean by the redemptive work of Christ. He also encouraged other benefactors to take similar initiatives so that God's work can prosper throughout our nation.
3. The theme for the meeting and of the daily Bible Study was "Being in the world but not of the world" taken from the Gospel of John Chapter 17:14-19. We were reminded that Jesus did not ask the Father to take his followers out of the world but rather that they remain in the world as a testimony to His love. Our lives, however, are to reflect His values and His character and not embrace the values of the world. This challenge is a continuing one because in every age we see the traditions of the world seeking to corrupt the church. Our protection is the Word of God because it speaks truth to the deceptions of the world. In this light we were encouraged to examine our own lives, and the churches that we serve, to be sure that all that we do conform to the truth of God.
4. The Primate challenged us by his powerful Opening Address in which he continued the theme "In the world but not of the world" by declaring that were Christ Jesus to be physically present on planet earth today he would be shocked and disappointed by the extent to which the church, for which he gave his life, has compromised its values and become more and more like the world. He reminded us that as his disciples we have been sent into the world to be salt and light and that by doing so we will often incur the world's hatred. He stressed that those who are leaders in the church must exercise their ministry in such a way as to honor God at all times and never out of selfish interest or a desire for power or influence.
5. The Standing Committee embraced enthusiastically the themes identified by the Primate. Study groups were assigned to focus on some of them and the conclusions presented in this statement. Immediately following the Primate's address we received a welcome message and a powerful challenge from the Governor of Anambra State, His Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi. He called us to stand against the corruption of the world and to be the Church that God has called us to be. He pointed out that when the Church embraces corrupt government leaders without calling them to repentance we become complicit in their sin and we offer a destructive testimony to our impressionable young people. He acknowledged his own need for God's strength to fulfill the responsibilities of his office. He invited us to pray regularly for him. He also asked us to remind him when he falls short of his duty to care for the common good of all of the people of Anambra State.

GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL CONCERNS

6. We commend the faithfulness of the vast majority of Nigerians as we continue to wrestle with the various challenges to the 2007 elections. We affirm our government's public posture with respect to the rule of law in Nigeria. This is exemplified in its support for all the rulings arising from the various election tribunals. We encourage them to introduce

legislation necessary to prevent the recurrence of such problems in the future.

7. Equally commendable is the free hand that the National Assembly has been given as they probe transactions related to the power sector contracts undertaken during the previous administration. We call on the National Assembly to continue its various investigations and to do so with thoroughness and transparency. In particular we urge them to tackle decisively the current power problem and thereby give all Nigerian citizens and the Nigerian economy a much more secure future.
8. We are also deeply grieved by the continuing violence and destruction in the Niger Delta. We believe that this tragedy is avoidable and call on the federal government, and all relevant agencies, to implement its plans for the Niger Delta with utmost urgency. The time to act is now.
9. We discussed the tragic reality that Malaria continues to be the deadliest killer on the African Continent. It is estimated that there are more than 100 million cases in Nigeria alone and that malaria related problems cost Nigeria more than 35 billion Naira each year. We encourage all of our church leaders and every church member to take seriously their role in the Roll Back Malaria program. We believe that it can be an important example of cooperation between the government and our church.

GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE CONFERENCE

10. The Primate addressed the proposal for the Church of Nigeria to take part in the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) and Pilgrimage in Jerusalem from June 22nd through June 29th, 2008. The goals of this conference are to:
 - a. Provide an opportunity for fellowship to continue to experience and proclaim the transforming love of Christ.
 - b. Develop a renewed understanding of our identity as Anglican Christians within our current context
 - c. Prepare for an Anglican future in which the Gospel is uncompromised and Christ-centered mission a top priority.
11. This decision to participate in GAFCON received unanimous support from the Standing Committee and also from the Mother's Union Executive. It is a decision that has a long history and we were reminded that it has arisen out of a decade-long struggle within the Anglican Communion. Ten years ago at the 1998 Lambeth Conference a decision was made concerning the teaching of the Church as it applies to issues of human sexuality. The essential elements of the teaching have been enshrined within Resolution 1.10¹. An overwhelming majority of the bishops adopted this resolution. It led, however, to a very negative and defiant response from the leadership of the Episcopal Church in the USA – now known as The Episcopal Church (TEC). This led to their decision to approve the consecration of Gene Robinson, a homosexual priest living in a same-sex partnership, as bishop of New Hampshire. This, in turn, led to the unprecedented meeting of all the Primates of the Anglican Communion in October 2003 at which they called for what became known as “The Windsor Report”. Sadly the ominous words of their final communiqué, that ECUSA’s intransigence would “tear the fabric of the communion at its deepest level,” have proved to be true.
12. We were reminded again of the enormous efforts undertaken by the Primate and many of his colleagues to find a way to bring the necessary healing and reconciliation to our beloved Communion. These efforts have included innumerable meetings that have been held around the world and countless communiqués that have been issued at an enormous cost in both time and money. Time and time again TEC was given the opportunity to repent and embrace the scriptural teaching of the Communion but to no avail. One report, “The Road to Lambeth” commissioned by CAPA and endorsed by the Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria concluded that: *“We Anglicans stand at a crossroads. One road, the road of compromise of biblical truth, leads to destruction and disunity. The other road has its own obstacles because it requires changes in the way the Communion has been*

governed and it challenges our churches to live up to and into their full maturity in Christ. But surely the second road is God's way forward. It is our sincere hope that this road may pass through Lambeth, our historical mother. But above all it must be the road of the Cross that leads to life through our Saviour Jesus Christ."

13. It is this second road that is leading us to Jerusalem and the call by Primates and senior leaders of the Communion, representing more than thirty million active Anglicans, for the bishops and their wives together with clergy and lay leaders to meet for prayer, study and pilgrimage in the Holy Land. It is the shared conviction of the GAFCON leadership team that this will provide a unique opportunity for those who hold to the historic teachings of the Church to meet and discern God's call for our common future as Anglican Christians. The Primate reported that in the last few days God has shown his favor on these plans by sovereignly providing the funds necessary for all of the Bishops, their wives, the clergy and lay delegates of the Church of Nigeria to attend.

CREATION OF NEW DIOCESES

14. We were encouraged by the report that plans and funds are now in place for the creation of one full-fledged and eighteen new missionary dioceses for the Church of Nigeria. Archbishop Joseph Akinfenwa chaired the committee charged with the task of identifying strategic locations for new dioceses and presented his report that was enthusiastically endorsed by the Standing Committee. Subsequently the Episcopal Synod met and elected twenty new bishops, eighteen to serve as missionary bishops and two to fill vacancies in existing dioceses. The creation of new dioceses as a deliberate evangelistic strategy is bearing remarkable fruit. Those missionary dioceses created twelve months ago have reported that they have already planted over three hundred new congregations.

BIBLICAL MORALITY

15. For the past five years the Church of Nigeria has become known around the world as a champion for Biblical Sexual Morality. We recognize that we cannot simply ask others to conform to biblical norms if we ourselves are unwilling to look inward especially on the issue of the sanctity of marriage. At this meeting we took time to reflect upon the issue of polygamy, a practice that is still present in Nigerian culture. We agreed that while there are complex pastoral issues that must be addressed we as a Church stand against it and declare that the biblical norm for holy matrimony is the lifelong monogamous union of one man and one woman.

CONCLUSION

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 Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!

¹ **Lambeth Conference 1998: Resolution I.10 Human Sexuality**

This Conference:

1. Commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;

2. In view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;

3. Recognizes that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;

4. While rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialization and commercialization of sex;

5. Cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;

6. Requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;

7. Notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.