

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I have been reflecting on the recent communiqué from the Primates' Meeting in Dar es Salaam. I would like to share a few of my thoughts with you.

First of all, I urge everyone to read the communiqué, which is available at the website of the Anglican Communion News Service (www.anglicancommunion.org).

I am heartened that the communiqué recognizes that the Episcopal Church has taken the Windsor Report seriously. It is also important to note that the Primates raise serious questions about the intervention by bishops of other national churches in the internal affairs of the Episcopal Church. I believe that we have been treated respectfully in both these regards.

It cannot be denied, however, that the Primates reassert in no uncertain terms that the Episcopal Church acted wrongfully in consenting to the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson, who has been in a committed same-sex union for many years, as Bishop of New Hampshire. The Primates request that the House of Bishops agree not to authorize rites for the blessings of same-sex unions, and not to consent to the consecration of any bishop-elect who is "living in a same-sex union," until or unless "some new consensus on these matters emerges across the Communion."

The Primates also recommend the creation of a "Pastoral Council" within the Episcopal Church, which will oversee the provision of primate oversight to those dioceses and congregations that cannot at present accept the oversight of the Presiding Bishop. Our Presiding Bishop supports this initiative.

Finally, the Primates received and commend to all the member churches the recently-completed draft of an "Anglican Covenant," which it is hoped will provide more explicit ground rules for the common life of our churches in the future. (The text of this draft is also available at the website of the Anglican Communion News Service.)

Needless to say, this communiqué does not heal the uncertainty and the pain that continues in our church, on all sides. The House of Bishops will no doubt be struggling at its next meeting (March 15-21) to decide how best to respond to the Primates' requests. Assuming that I have received a majority of consents to my consecration by the standing committees and bishops of the Episcopal Church, I will be attending that meeting as a guest. Since I will not be a bishop yet, my role will be to listen carefully.

Some will welcome the substance of the Primates' communiqué; some will be dismayed by it. Wherever you stand on this spectrum, I ask you to keep praying that God's will be done, and to hold the whole church, including those with whom you most disagree, in

prayer. My greatest concern as your bishop-elect is that the mutual respect and care that you have forged and maintained continue to mark our life together.

Katharine Jefferts Schori has asked us to remember that we are entering into a time of fasting, in which all of us will be called on to do without quick outcomes that suit us. I am hopeful that this period of fasting will call the Anglican communion back to itself, and that we will remember that our strength lies in stretching, not limiting, our boundaries.

I am acutely aware of the pain and frustration that this time of fasting holds for our fellow disciples who are lesbian and gay. May our Lenten walk bring us to resurrection joy.

In Christ,

Tom Breidenthal
Bishop-Elect