

Dear Church family,

As previously advertised, this letter outlines the deliberations and decisions of the Governing Elders of our church concerning how to respond to the recent proposals of the C. of E. House of Bishops (HOB) to authorize prayers of thanksgiving and blessing in church for those in same-sex relationships.

As a church we are committed to living in joyful obedience to God's Word, the Bible. We therefore want to love people in our church and wider community, especially those who experience same-sex attraction, better than to lie about the lifestyle required by Jesus of his followers in restricting our sexual activity to marriage between one man and one woman.



Some relevant scriptures

Jesus endorsed marriage as being, from creation, between one man and one woman, when he said, *'at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'* (Matt.19).



His Apostle Paul was clear, unrepentantly living in a lifestyle of greed or homosexual practice, is not a lifestyle in which anyone can be saved. He wrote, *'Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God.'* (1 Cor.6). This means same-sex marriage is a salvation issue and not just a secondary issue. The Bishops claim the proposals involve no change in the C. of E. doctrine of marriage. But no one is fooled. What we pray is what we believe. The prayers sound like a marriage service and everyone knows they are for blessing what God forbids in his Word, namely homosexual relationships.

The New Testament letter Jude says, *'Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago, have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord'* (Jude 1). This is exactly what has happened in the C of E. Bishops have been appointed who, despite their consecration oaths to drive away error, are changing God's grace into an excuse for immorality forbidden by the teaching of Christ's Apostles entrusted to us in the Scriptures. They often do so in the name of unity - trying to keep unity between 'liberal' churches who abandon Biblical authority and 'evangelical' churches seeking to live under it – a unity they claim in themselves rather than in the gospel. They're also clearly trying to maintain the civic role of being the national church by compromising with a secular culture and government increasingly at odds with our Creator's design for our flourishing in the Bible. In trying to please everyone, they've unsurprisingly managed to please no-one.

Jesus has warned us it is not only sin, or the tolerance of sin that incurs his wrath, but *tolerance of those whose teaching misleads people into sin* e.g. *'Nevertheless I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality....'* (Rev.2). We must not be a church which expressly or tacitly tolerates false teaching on salvation issues such as unrepentant sexual immorality. A denomination is not a church and so we are not in breach of this command automatically by membership of the C of E so long as we are publicly contending for the faith and not tacitly approving of false teachers.

The House of Bishop proposals are offensive and lamentable to Evangelical Christians for three primary reasons:

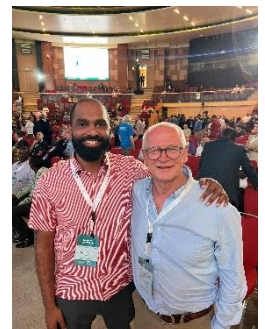
- a) The C of E bishops are rejecting the plain teaching of God's Word, and the historic teaching of the Christian church in every age and culture regarding marriage;
- b) Their proposals claim God is willing to bless sinful lifestyles which, in reality, without repentance, lead people to hell;
- c) They are undermining the courageous godliness of same-sex attracted believers who endeavour to live courageously in obedience to God's Word;

After months of prayerful consultation and discussion our Governing Elders (bar Stephen Hatherall who was absent with ill health from the final deliberations) have decided unanimously as follows

Executive summary: if the House of Bishops do what they have proposed and introduce prayers of blessing for same-sex relationships, without a credible alternative structure for orthodox Christians, we will leave the C of E and join the Anglican Mission in England in Jan.2024 (the full more technical statement is on p.4).

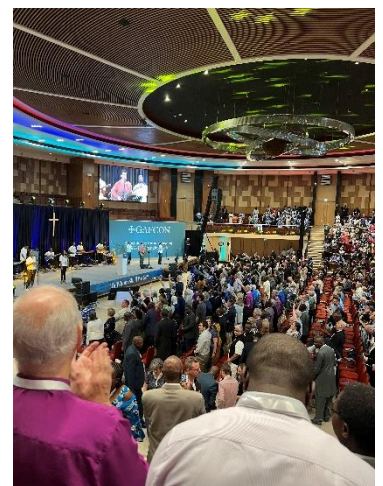
GAFCON KIGALI 2023 – we stand with the vast majority of global Anglicanism

Santhosh and I attended the fourth Global Anglican futures conference (known as GAFCON) in Kigali in April. Over 1300 Archbishops, Bishops, clergy and lay leaders gathered for five days from around the world, representing 85% of the global Anglican communion i.e. 75m people.



Essentially the GAFCON 2023 statement said...

- a) **homosexual practice is sin** - '...any refusal to follow the biblical teaching that the only appropriate context for sexual activity is the exclusive lifelong union of a man and a woman in marriage violates the created order (Gen.2:24; Matt.19:4–6) and endangers salvation (1 Cor.6:9)...'; so...
- b) **the C of E Bishops have failed** - 'public statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other leaders of the Church of England in support of same-sex blessings are a betrayal of their ordination and consecration vows to banish error and to uphold and defend the truth taught in Scripture'; so...
- c) **the C of E has walked away from Biblical faith** - 'we cannot 'walk together' in good disagreement (as the Archbishop of Canterbury has said) with those who have deliberately chosen to walk away from the 'faith once for all delivered to God's holy people' (Jude 3); so...
- d) **we support those who living celibately in obedience to God** - 'we are thankful to God for all those who seek to live a life of faithfulness to God's Word in the face of all forms of sexual



temptation. We pledge ourselves afresh to support and care for one another in a loving and pastorally sensitive way...' – it's so important we support one another in being celibate outside marriage rather than claim to change God's word and say we were foolish being celibate; so...

- e) **we will support Anglicans in England who remain faithful** - 'in view of the current crisis, we reiterate our support for those who are unable to remain in the Church of England because of the failure of its leadership. We rejoice in the growth of the ANiE and other Gafcon aligned networks [e.g. the Anglican Mission in England]. We also continue to stand with and pray for those faithful Anglicans who remain within the Church of England' – this means, although the global communion has now ended it's partnership with the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury and the C of E, if we contend for the faith of the Bible, whether we stay in the C of E and fight or leave the C of E to join the alternative in England provided by Gafcon called Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) – the global Primates will support us as part of the wider global communion! For although we feel a minority in the UK, the vast majority of the Anglican Communion is with us: we are the true Anglicans and the C of E is leaving orthodox, biblical Anglicanism.

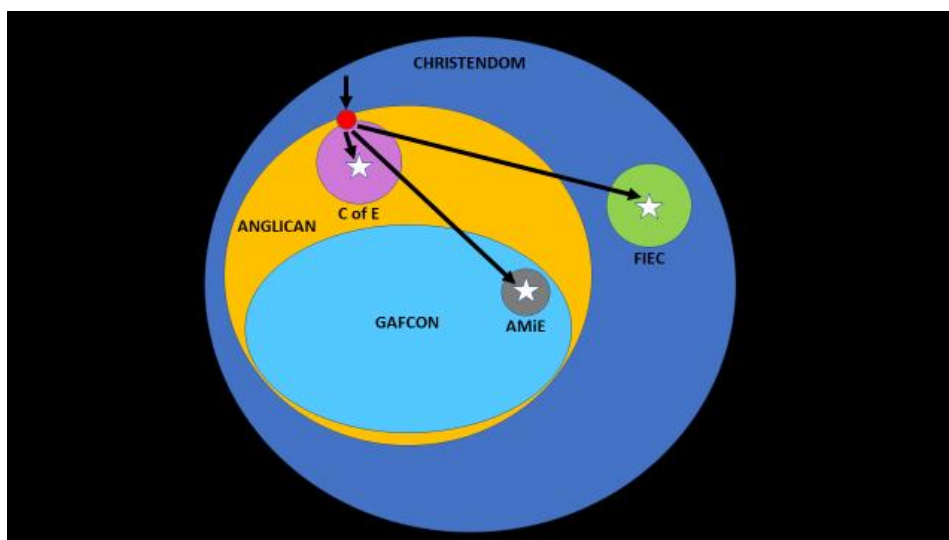
The final conference statement sadly concludes,

'...despite 25 years of persistent warnings...repeated departures from the authority of God's Word have torn the fabric of the Communion. These warnings were blatantly and deliberately disregarded and now without repentance this tear cannot be mended. The latest of these departures is the majority vote by the General Synod of the Church of England in February 2023 to welcome proposals by the bishops to enable same-sex couples to receive God's blessing. It grieves the Holy Spirit and us that the leadership of the Church of England is determined to bless sin...' **Kigali Statement 2023.**



Considering our options

Leady has helpfully produced the following diagram to illustrate our options – the current position of Dundonald Church being indicated with the red spot:



We carefully considered whether to make no changes, or more actively engage in the C. of E., to join AMiE or become an independent FIEC church. We sought the counsel of outstanding senior representatives of each of the above options, who graciously gave us their time and wisdom.

Through this process our elders and pastors came to a shared understanding that our Anglican evangelical heritage and convictions are precious and worth preserving but we can no longer in conscience 'walk together' with the C. of. E and its Bishops if they proceed along the tragically unbiblical and immoral path they have proposed.

FINAL RESOLUTIONS BY DD GE'S:

Executive summary: if the House of Bishops do what they have proposed and introduce prayers of blessing for same-sex relationships, without a credible alternative structure for orthodox Christians, we will leave the C of E and join Anglican Mission in England in Jan.2024

FULL STATEMENT:

'We the Governing Elders Council of Dundonald Church declare that, if the Church of England's General Synod or House of Bishops (HOB):

- a) permits liturgical provision for the celebration, dedication, blessing or solemnisation of any sexual relationship other than marriage between one man and one woman, or liturgical provision for the blessing of those in such relationships; or
- b) removes the bar on clergy being in such relationships; or
- c) produces pastoral guidance that is indicative of a departure from the Church of England's doctrine that marriage between one man and one woman is the proper context for sexual intimacy; or
- d) amends Canon B30 so the Church of England no longer affirms that "according to our Lord's teaching marriage is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong, for better for worse, till death them do part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side" ...

...some of which they have proposed to do at General Synod this year, we believe any such actions represent a departure from the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the ancient creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness.

Since we desire to remain faithful to the Scriptures, and therefore to contend for this Anglican inheritance in full communion with those Anglican Provinces who remain faithful on these issues, we will continue to resist all attempts to introduce any of these changes or to marginalise those who, in their own teaching and practice, uphold the received doctrine of the Church of England and the teaching of Jesus on marriage. We at Dundonald Church are, by God through his Holy Word, *compelled to resist*.

Furthermore, we resolve that, if:

- A) the Church of England's General Synod or HOB acts in any of the ways outlined in a)-d) above (as the HOB has already proposed in January 2023 to do); and
- B) no credible, distinct and structural alternate oversight has been provided by 18th January 2024 (being twelve months after the C of E press release announcing the HOB proposals and sufficient time for repentance or such appropriate provision) such as a diocese or province outside the jurisdiction of any Arch-Bishop or Bishop in favour of any of those actions outlined in a)-d) above, then:
 - 1) we wish to clarify that, irrespective of any confusion in recent years about our relationship to the C of E, Dundonald Church will from 18th January 2024 not be part of the C of E; and
 - 2) because we desire to be faithfully Anglican in accordance with Holy Scripture and in full communion with those Anglican Provinces who remain orthodox, we will seek membership of the Anglican Mission in England (being authorised and overseen by the GAFCON Primates) as representing the faithful, global Anglicanism from which the C of E has tragically departed, as soon as is reasonable after 18th January 2024;'

What will change if, as expected, we join AMiE?

Much 'on the ground' would stay the same – in terms of our public worship, staffing and general ethos as a church. Our values and convictions are already aligned with AMiE and the global Anglican movement of which they are a part. Of course, there will be various practical and logistical realities to work out as we seek the oversight of AMiE bishops and look to play our part in this fledgling fellowship.

We may attract some criticism from Southwark Diocese and other C of E churches, though I expect, on theological grounds they will not grieve us leaving and will claim we were never really part of the C of E (though we were);

I expect Anglicans from faithful provinces abroad, especially in the global South, to approve of our decision and be more willing to join us;

Most importantly, if we do this for the right reasons of faithfulness to God and his word, I expect our heavenly Father to approve and to bless us – if not now, in eternity.

We may need to respond to new factors as they emerge in the coming months; and there will be much to work out in the coming months about how membership of AMiE would work. Please do pray for our Elders and staff as they prayerfully engage with these issues.

FINALLY...

Let us keep our unity in the Spirit - '**stand firm** in the one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way but those who oppose you' (Phil.1);

Let us pray, '*don't be anxious about anything., but in every situation by **prayer** and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God*' (Phil.4); and...

Let us continue preaching the gospel that rings salvation and flourishing to all people, '*go and **make disciples** of all nations...and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*' (Mat.28).

May be glorified in these decisions and their consequences,

Richard Coekin (on behalf of the Governing Elders) – May 2023