

A REPORT

on the Forward in Faith/NA Council Meeting and Assembly June 16-19, Belleville, IL and the Council of Bishops and Inaugural Assembly of the Anglican Church in North America June 20-25, Fort Worth, TX

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Forward in Faith/NA

In his Address to the Assembly, Bishop Keith Ackerman said, “We are giving birth to the promise of a secure life as orthodox Anglicans in a new province which will be born next week in Fort Worth.”

FiF/NA is now a two pronged effort:

1. Those who are associated and affiliated parishes, both in and out of TEC. This prong will be represented in ACNA. Its purpose will be to help TEC parishes get out, and to witness to the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium.
2. A Missionary Diocese of All Saints, in formation. Father William Ilgenfritz will be consecrated as its Bishop on August 22. This Diocese is one of the 28 jurisdictions in ACNA. The Missionary Diocese of All Saints will witness, along with many others in ACNA, to the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium.

The Missionary Diocese of All Saints, along with other like minded dioceses, will be free to form a sub-province within ACNA, with the following safeguards, guaranteed by the ACNA Constitution and Canons:

1. Integrity of Holy Orders
2. Synod for the sub-province, as desired
3. Traditional Anglo-Catholic theological education
4. Separate ecumenical relations, if desired

These are the safeguards that FiF/UK proposes for a third province of the C of E. A third province would be in the C of E, but as separate as it needs to be regarding these four points. In other words, a sub-province would relate to ACNA as the third province would relate to the C of E.

Regarding (1) above, this safeguards those who are orthodox on the ordination of women and are in impaired communion with, or are not in communion with, those who ordain women. In the C of E, the flying bishops of FiF/UK, the nucleus of a proposed third province, are in impaired communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, even though they are his suffragans.

At this time the DHC and its parishes are (i) overseas affiliates of FiF/UK, (ii) in a covenant of intercommunion with FiF/NA, (iii) in communion with all the jurisdictions of FACA (ACA, APA, EMC, AMiA and REC, the latter two of which are now in ACNA) and (iv) affiliates of FiF/NA (giving us seat and voice in the FiF/NA Assembly). My status with FiF/NA is that of “Episcopal Adjunct.” Being the FACA Moderator gives me, in ACNA, both seat and voice. In addition, in ACNA, I serve on the Ecumenical Relations Task Force. DHC therefore has an important complex of relationships with ACNA. FACA has applied to be a Mission Partner of ACNA, with Bishop Walter Grundorf (who addressed the Assembly in Fort Worth) as the representative.

The Province of the Anglican Church in North America

Archbishop Duncan has great strengths as a consensus builder and over the years he has patiently and diligently worked to bring this new province into being. The final great push to enable the Province came from GAFCON and the global south primates, many of whom were in attendance to speak and to endorse the new province.

The single most important thing about ACNA is that in every way it is set up for the mission of the Church. Its structure supports the mission; the mission does not support the structure. The focus is on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, ACNA cannot be thought of as a static entity. It is part of a world-wide movement, the re-alignment of Anglicans and believing Christians of all streams. For example, the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, born out of GAFCON last year, will rally Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics in London next month, to join in a common witness to the Gospel and the One Great Tradition. Moreover, as Archbishop Duncan said, “God isn’t just bringing Anglican Christians together. Across the Church, people are re-embracing Scripture’s authority. Christians are once again discovering the beauty, wisdom and grace of our 2,000 year-old tradition.” This is in evidence throughout the world, as Pentecostals and Evangelicals discover, in astonishing numbers, the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium, the paradigm for unity endorsed by Pope John Paul II: “as we enter the third millennium, we overcome the divisions of the second by embracing the consensus of the first.”

Bishop Jack Iker, our host, said the emphasis of ACNA is on evangelism and mission. “This is the beginning of the recovery of confidence in Anglicanism as a biblical, missionary church. Our desire is to bring the whole Gospel to the whole world...we are a biblical, missionary movement.”

Dr. Michael Howell, Executive Director of FiF/NA, noted a strong sense that the differences in the movement, some of them significant, are going to be addressed as believing Christians. They are not going to be swept under the carpet. Archbishop Gregory Venables said, pointedly, that we should not just get this province going, “to get by,” but to “get it right.” Getting things right means bringing them into full accord with Scripture and Tradition.

Our largest difference is of course on the ordination of women. One can hear many questions pointing to its resolution, to a growing desire to come to terms with a Catholic theology of Holy Orders: When did the Episcopal Church go off the rails? Was it in 2003 or before? How can we become more aware of the grief and dysfunction that began in 1974 and 1976? Is there a relationship between the homosexuality issue and the ordination of women? How can we make ACNA biblically faithful in every way? How can we not just get by, but get it right? How can we grow in our relationships with our ecumenical partners who do not ordain women? If only men can be bishops in ACNA, and if Holy Orders is all-of-a-piece, what does this say about women priests and deacons?

Until these questions are resolved, the new Province is, in a sense, an administrative and missional umbrella. It will not be a sacramental province until it comes to the mind of Christ on Holy Orders, and all the bishops in it are in full communion with one another.

More evidence for the impulse to get it right on Holy Orders came from Archbishop Duncan’s build-up to the arrival of our ecumenical guests. “I want everyone to notice,” he said, “how all our ecumenical guests are traditional with regard to the ordination of women.” Our guests, and endorsers, were the Roman Catholic bishops of Pittsburgh (David Zubik) and Fort Worth (Kevin Vann), the Rev. Rick Warren of California’s Saddleback Church, the Rev. Donald Green of the Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania, Dr. Samuel Nafzger of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, and His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah of the Orthodox Church in America. Metropolitan Jonah spoke for 45 minutes to hold our feet to the fire on the ordination of women and latent Calvinism, and to open the doors to an official dialogue with Anglicans in North America. “Our arms are wide open to you. What will it take for a true ecumenical reconciliation? I am seeking an ecumenical restoration by being here today. This is God’s call to us.”

What Forward in Faith/NA will do, as a founding partner of ACNA, is (i) call for the study on women's ordination and help with it, (ii) teach and witness to the Catholic theology of what the Priesthood is and (iii) help build a sub-province for jurisdictions of our constituency. Of 28 jurisdictions in ACNA, 22 do not ordain women to the Priesthood, and 6 do.

DHC is (i) promoting the biblical ministries open to women and widening and holding open the door to them, (ii) supporting the Prayer Book Society (who were present in Fort Worth), to uphold the significance of our historic Liturgy, and (iii) thoughtfully and creatively sharing the experience and the lessons of our many years in the wilderness as a reconnaissance to the main body of the army.

FACA's role is the same as DHC's, and in addition, (i) keeping ACA, APA, EMC and DHC working together, (ii) serving as a vital link between ACNA and those jurisdictions and (iii) encouraging the ACC, PCK and UEC to keep working together.

I believe that God is bringing together the various facets of the movement, the great reform that began in St. Louis in September of 1977, which is in turn a part of the greater re-alignment of Anglicanism, and of the entire Body. It is amazing to see this happening, and more than once or twice, when asked what I thought of the proceedings in Fort Worth, I replied, "I never thought I'd live to see this." As Dr. Michael Howell said, "Only God could have brought this about."