



## The Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA)

### Press Release

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### CHURCH OF ENGLAND 'BLESSING' GAY UNIONS WOULD VIOLATE BIBLICAL TEACHING & JEOPARDISE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S CONTINUING ROLE IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

IF the General Synod of the Church of England affirms the House of Bishops' recommendations to 'Bless' Same Sex Marriage, or Civil Partnerships, the Church of England will be in violation of the "*clear and canonical teaching of the Bible*", and it will lead to "*impaired communion with many provinces of the Anglican Communion*".

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, as a "*moral leader, and a figure of unity within the Communion*" will also be "*severely jeopardised*". So says the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA) which covers around 75% of Anglicans across the globe, ahead of the Synod's London meetings, February 6-9.

The House of Bishops' Response to the six-year *Living in Love and Faith* 'listening' process says lawyers have advised them that the official Doctrine of Marriage would remain, despite the Church, from now on "*joyfully welcoming and recognising permanent, stable same sex relationships*" through services and prayers of blessing.

The Most Reverend Justin Badi, Primate of South Sudan, and Chairman of the GSFA responded, saying: "*What the English bishops are recommending constitutes unfaithfulness to the God who has spoken through His written word. Their Response belies the loss of confidence by the bishops in the authority and clarity of the Bible as we have received it. They are re-writing God's law for His creation; laws that are re-affirmed by Christ in the Gospel accounts.*"

Last summer, at the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, the GSFA sounded a global call to re-affirm 'Lambeth 1.10' (the Anglican Communion's official teaching that the only place for sexual intimacy is marriage between one man and one woman for life, and specifically rules out blessing of same sex relationships). Archbishop Badi says the bishops' proposals are "*in clear contravention of Lambeth 1.10*", and "*will lead to consequences for the Communion if the General Synod affirms. We therefore call on Synod to reject the bishops' proposals on blessing same sex unions.*"

Archbishop Badi said the GSFA "*laments the bishops' collective failure to keep their ordination/consecration vows to defend biblical truth by their life and doctrine, and are dangerously accommodating the culture of the day*". He said their 53-page Response: "*turns out to be a farcical compromise, with many contradictions, and no theological case made for blessing same sex unions.*" The GSFA says that the proposed pastoral resource of *Prayers of Love and Faith* for blessing and affirming gay couples, contradicts Holy Scripture taken as a whole, and in particular, the bible's teaching on marriage and sexual ethics.

Theology apart, the GSFA also says the attitude towards the Anglican Communion shown by the House of Bishops in their Response once again demonstrates a problematic relationship between the Mother Province and the world-wide Anglican church.

Archbishop Badi said: "*Anglican ecclesiology requires that provinces don't act independently of each other. Even more so for the CoE in its special historical and ecclesiastical role in the Anglican Communion. Assent by General Synod would show disregard for the wider Communion (the majority of whom hold to orthodox teaching on Marriage & sexuality), and will increase the pressure for the Communion to fragment. Several GSFA provinces are already in 'impaired communion' with revisionist provinces like The Episcopal Church (USA), the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales. If Synod votes to back the bishops' recommendations, then it is foreseeable that several Global South provinces will also be in impaired Communion with the Church of England.*"

However, the primate says this does not mean GSFA provinces will leave the Communion. He added: *"It would only double their desire to reset and revitalise the Communion along biblical lines, and in keeping with its formative theology, ecclesiology and ethos. The Anglican Church has always seen itself as an expression of God's 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.'*

*"GSFA provinces are committed to our calling to be 'a holy remnant' within the Communion, marked by its loyalty to God and the plain teaching of holy scripture – whatever the cultural winds of the day. But a Synod vote in favour of the bishops' proposals would be a major step in revisionism and sadly, alienate the Mother Church from large swathes of the Communion. It will inevitably lead to a re-configuration, and a re-structuring of the Communion as we currently know it."*

Archbishop Badi says it would also remove the Archbishop of Canterbury's moral right to be an Instrument of Unity for the Communion. He said: *"Archbishop Welby cannot compartmentalise his role as Primate of England from his role as 'first among equals (head of the world-wide Communion)'. He says he will not personally use the 'prayers of blessing', but his "extremely joyfully celebratory" welcome of the blessing prayers, and his leadership of the House of Bishops in proposing this Response, means that he is actually advocating false teaching from a biblical point of view."*

The GSFA says if any Communion province was considering changing its Doctrine of Marriage, and/or its Pastoral Guidelines, then this should first be discussed and decided by the Primates' Meeting. That is, if a global Anglican Church as a *'communion of churches'* is to be maintained, rather than *"a loose network, or federation of autonomous national or regional Churches,"* he explained.

To orthodox clergy and laity in the Church of England, Archbishop Badi was keen to send a clear message of encouragement and support. He said: *"The GSFA is committed to care for those who abide by the 'faith once delivered', and who want to be true to the Communion, and its foundational roots, while responding to a changing world. In a word, we seek to continue to 'shepherd' those who want to be faithful to the covenant-keeping God revealed in Christ and the Scriptures. This includes Orthodox Anglicans in England, bishops, clergy and laity. We will do this as best as possible in a non-schismatic way."*

*"We will also be especially mindful to care for, and encourage those who are same sex attracted, but whose love of the Lord, and His teaching, mean they abstain from same sex unions. Our mission of 'truth and grace' in a broken world will also include welcoming and relating to those in some form of same sex relationship. We will welcome them as persons into our church communities, relate to them as they present themselves, and seek to introduce them to the transforming love of Christ that heals our brokenness, and helps **all of us** sinners to be continually transformed more and more into His likeness."*

Finally, the GSFA leader says he believes that particularly over the last decade, the debate on marriage and sexuality has distracted, if not diverted, the life in many parts of the Communion, and certainly the Church of England, from the main task of the Church: proclaiming Christ and making disciples of **all** who live in the nation, including those who increasingly, in a confused and morally ambivalent society, struggle with issues of identity. He concluded: *"The mission Christ entrusted to His Church must cause us to take the Gospel out to those who have yet to know and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ, and to live out the kingdom in a holistic way. We will, in the grace of God, both defend and propagate this death-defeating, life-transforming Gospel."*

The GSFA has recently invited orthodox provinces across the Communion to formally sign up as full Covenant Members of the Fellowship. It is also in the process of offering Associate Membership to Anglican Churches and organisations within revisionist provinces who are seeking to be a 'holy remnant', and who may require support from the global body of Anglicans, including alternative episcopal oversight at some point.

- For more information about the GSFA, and membership, visit [www.thegsfa.org](http://www.thegsfa.org)

**ENDS**

**Further information:**

**Bishop Rennis Ponniah**

Hon Director, GSFA Executive Secretariat

**Revd Paul Eddy**

Hon PR Consultant to the GSFA

[rennis@anglican.org.sg](mailto:rennis@anglican.org.sg)

[paul@pauleddy.uk](mailto:paul@pauleddy.uk)

+44 7923653781