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NEWS FOCUS

Edinburgh Episcopal church responds to Anglican Primate's

In a statement the members of Vestry and Ministry Team of St John's Episcopal Church acknowledge the pain the Primate's final communiqué has caused among sexual minorities, urges the Scottish Episcopal Church to continue with its process of canonical revision and thanks the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church for his witness.

The statement follows -

The Primate's of the Anglican Communion met at Canterbury in the week following the First Sunday after Epiphany 2016. While a number of items, all key to God's mission in our time, were discussed, it is the deliberations and decisions regarding human sexuality that have provoked

considerable and diverse reactions. As lay and ordained leaders of St John's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh we cannot ignore the impact particularly the final communiqué has had and continues to have on the church and on the world, in which we live.

The Church of St John the Evangelist is a vibrant Christian community within the Scottish Episcopal Church. We are committed to following the Way of Jesus as received, interpreted, and made relevant for our time through Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. All five Marks of Mission define our work and ministry. There are diverse views on all theological topics present at St John's, which we are able to hold together as a community united in prayer, gathered for worship, and empowered by God for ministry and mission. We trust that God's Spirit has led us to embrace diversity within the idea of "Anglican Comprehensiveness."

Although our community has only been in existence for a couple of centuries, we are conscious of the wealth of tradition and insights present in the history and reality of the Anglican Communion. We value very much the interconnectedness of this global family of faith and we celebrate the Episcopal character of our congregation. Throughout our history we have

had links with Anglican Provinces around the globe and the exchange and relationship with Anglicans outside Scotland has shaped us in significant ways.

Over the past decades, St John's has also embraced an identity as a prophetic community speaking on behalf of those who do not have a voice and advocating for peace, social- and eco-justice. God has called us to challenge the powers and dominions of the world, which seek to destroy God's image in all of us, as much as to challenge the Church, when she continues to inflict pain and suffering either consciously or subconsciously.

Therefore, we, members of Vestry and Ministry Team of St John's Episcopal Church acknowledge the pain the Primate's final communiqué has caused among sexual minorities. Our care is first and foremost for our own LGBTI members, but we also want to reach out to LGBTI Christians and non-Christians beyond St John's. For most of her history and in large parts even today the church has failed and is failing to recognise God's presence in same-gender relationships and has colluded and is colluding with secular governments in the oppression and marginalisation of LGBTI people. We recommit to working for the full inclusion in

the life and sacraments of the church of all, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation. We urge the members of our own General Synod to continue the process of canonical change started at the 2015 General Synod as we believe this to be the movement of the Holy Spirit. We will work to remove discriminatory and unjust legislation that does not recognise the dignity of all.

We furthermore offer our support to those Primates, who did not vote for the sanctions against the US-based Episcopal Church (TEC). We stand in solidarity with our Episcopal sisters and brothers across the Atlantic and want to offer our sincere gratitude for their prophetic ministry in the past decades. We particular want to offer our thanks to TEC's Presiding Bishop for his godly witness during the Primates' Meeting. The bonds of affection between TEC and the SEC are not just historic, but continue to enrich our lives and nurture our ministry to a hurting world.

We welcome the decision of the Primates' Meeting to continue walking with each other. This is not a time to separate, despite our profound differences. We have need for one another - even in our differences (*cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27*). The Christian witness is

diminished when we separate. We call on the Communion to engage in an honest, just, and safe dialogue about human sexuality, which respects all members of the Body of Christ. We remain faithful to one of the most profound truths of the Gospel that in Christ Jesus we can be reconciled with God, with creation, and with one another - even with those, with whom we disagree or who wish us harm (*cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19*). We will continue to pray for the Anglican Communion and all its *Instruments of Communion*. We especially commend to God's care and love Michael, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, and our own Primus and College of Bishops.

And now: Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

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