



FEATURE :
GAFCON –
true
Anglican
Communion
?
by
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Houston McKelvey Today, 4:42 pm

[GAFCON 2013](#) is over, and their [Communique and Commitment](#) is out. It may be premature to parse this document, but I will risk some early reflection and possible scenarios. The Anglican Communion has “instruments of communion” binding it together: primarily (and the only one, for example, formally recognised by my province) the Archbishop of Canterbury. Some GAFCONites have abandoned the understanding of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the primary instrument of communion, (“You don’t have to go through Canterbury to be an Anglican.” GAFCON General Secretary, Archbishop Peter Jensen, on the first day of GAFCON2013).

Now the communique is crystal clear:
We believe **we [GAFCON] have acted as an important and effective instrument of Communion** during a period in which **other instruments of Communion have *failed*** both to uphold gospel priorities in the Church, and to heal the divisions among us.



GAFCON understands itself as **an *effective* instrument of Communion of the Anglican Communion** in a way that the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference, and the Primates’ Meeting have not been. In fact GAFCON has its *own* “Primates’ Council”.

GAFCA has been instrumental in the emergence of the new Province of the Anglican Church in North America, giving formal recognition to its orders and welcoming it as a full partner province, with its



Archbishop having a seat on the Primates' Council.

The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), of course, is not a member of the Anglican Communion from the (ineffective) Archbishop of Canterbury's perspective. But **it is a member** from the (effective) GAFCON perspective. And to GAFCON The Episcopal Church and the Anglican

Church of Canada {member churches of the Anglican Communion from the (ineffective) Archbishop of Canterbury's perspective} are organisations promoting a false gospel. ACNA is the *true* Anglican Communion presence in TEC's and ACoC's territories.

To press the point home, one of the most popular images from GAFCON 2013 is of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of North America concelebrating directly next to the Primate of Kenya, and that at a service at which the Archbishop of Canterbury preached – just in case he might miss the point. [For a while, non-present GAFCON-sympathetic friends insisted that Archbishop Duncan had merely helped distribute communion; they themselves were possibly as blinded to the possibility of such concelebration happening in a service in which the Archbishop of Canterbury had such a prominent place].

Let me do some other helicopter landings through this communique:

...we have resolved to be more than a network...

Examples of work we wish to resource ...supporting a network of theological colleges ...Authorising and affirming faithful Anglicans who have been excluded by their diocese or province. The main thrust of work here would be devoted to discerning the need for new provinces, dioceses and churches – and then authenticating their ministries and orders as Anglican.

...we shall organise around a Primates' Council, a Board of Trustees, an Executive Committee and regional liaison officers, who will be involved in fostering communication among FCAs.

We must, therefore, invite provinces, dioceses, mission agencies, local congregations and individuals formally to become contributing members of the GFCA. In particular, we ask provinces to reconsider their support for those Anglican structures that are used to undermine biblical faithfulness and contribute instead, or additionally, to the financing of the GFCA's on-going needs....

our movement must be committed to... The Jerusalem Statement's expectation that the Primates' Council would intervene to provide 'orthodox oversight to churches under false leadership', the Primates' Council will carefully consider working beyond existing structures as an obedient response to Jesus' commission to take the gospel to all nations... For this reason, the bishops at GAFCON 2013 resolved 'to affirm and endorse the position of the Primates' Council in providing oversight in cases where provinces and dioceses compromise biblical faith, including the affirmation of a duly discerned call to ministry. This may involve ordination and consecration if the situation requires.'

Possible (probable?) scenarios – with a local focus

The Archbishop of Canterbury will respond. The position of the Archbishop of Canterbury has been seriously challenged. His response mentions that all of us fall short of God's will. Recognition of shortcomings will be acknowledged. Bible quotes will be appropriately chosen. GAFCONites say it is too little and too late.

Progress at General Synod Te Hinota Whanui 2014 will be slower than the momentum appeared to be gaining in 2012 on questions of blessing committed same-sex couples, marrying same-sex couples, and declaring "chaste" individuals in same-sex relationships for the purposes of ordination and licensing. But ultimately this province will make those decisions in whole or in parts – and the decisions will be the opposite of those of this communique.

The sanguine attitudes to [our liturgical mess](#) will be sorely tested, as first ecclesiastical tribunals are called to sit, and then secular courts begin to be drawn in, as the church's laissez-faire culture clashes with Parliamentary Acts, and property and finance issues begin to get traction.

The church's lack of legal precision, (already being tested in earthquake-ravaged Christchurch diocese) over who actually owns the property and the funds, start getting some real testing in the courts. The bemused looks of superiority at USA church court battles begin to change. "We are all friends here. We all know each other. All clergy trained at the same theological college and learnt to live together with difference" gives way under the realisation that only 7% or so of the ordained actually go to St John's Theological College, and the line in the sand was drawn about three decades ago and is not going to go away. Nelson Diocese may "secede" (or "continue to be faithful" depending on one's perspective)? Large thriving parishes leave

dioceses? Taking buildings, trust money, and central-diocesan-offices' income with them from already financially-struggling, ageing, numerically-shrinking "official communion" dioceses? Court cases further strain finances – financed on one side by international and local GAFCON supporters.

Not a single one of these scenarios may end up happening. But the communique is clear: this wasn't merely some conference where you could listen to some really cool speakers, do some thorough Bible study, and have some efficacious fellowship. This was affirming GAFCON/GFCA as the true Anglican Communion.

We await formal response(s) from our own bishops whose meeting (minus the Bishop of Nelson) and its agenda (about how to move forward) was revealed not by them, here, via our normal official communications, but by the Bishop of Nelson in Nairobi at GAFCON in a video.



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<http://liturgy.co.nz/gafcon-true-anglican-communion/17080>