

A Message from Bishop Mary

More Work of Love for the Pain All Around

Dear friends,

You will no doubt have heard about one of the outcomes of the Primates meeting of the Anglican Communion. For a second time (the first season of sanctions came in 2005), The Episcopal Church has been sanctioned for a period of three years. As reported in Episcopal News Service, a majority asked that TEC will “no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or policy.”

I need to correct some statements in the media that The Episcopal Church has been excommunicated or suspended. This is not the case. We are still part of the Anglican Communion, but are in a very long conversation about the validity of our decision to affirm marriage for same-sex couples. Our change in language at last summer’s General Convention that expresses that marriage is for all people (instead of exclusively between a man and a woman) is unacceptable to many in the Anglican Communion. Since we are a Communion that is governed independently by province, there is little way to express this officially. The sanctions provide that way.

Our Presiding Bishop has released a video where he speaks eloquently of our place in the Communion as the voice that speaks for inclusion of all people. I want to affirm that we are a diocese that sets a wide table. Everyone is welcome to be seated, to feast and to fellowship. While our local conversation around the inclusion of LGBTQ persons is largely completed on an official level, we honor the diversity of personal opinions that are a part of us. We hold ourselves in a relationship of love and trust in God’s grace rather than our own theologies. We respectfully and carefully walk this path with one another and our partners in the Anglican Communion. We will continue to do so.

This moment will be particularly painful for our LGBTQ brothers and sisters. I love you very much and I am sorry for this further assault on your being. Please know that as a diocese we stand with you, even as we stand in this global church.

I titled this article with words from Bishop Curry’s video, “More Work of Love” and added my own, “For the Pain All Around.” I am sorry for the pain in the wider church as a result of our decisions. I am particularly sorry for our friends in our partner dioceses who have been offended or harmed by our actions. On the one hand as a Bishop of the church, I am part of the problem for your provinces, and I ask your forgiveness; on the other hand, I do not regret my inclusive stance and votes at our General Convention. They are a matter of conviction, faith, theology and integrity. My prayer is we can continue to walk together despite our serious disagreement.

In closing, I quote what I wrote in last week’s message:

“In our gospel reading this weekend from Luke 3 when ‘Jesus and all the people’ are baptized, I note that the people come with expectation. They are not afraid of this salvation: they are hoping in it, curious about it, filled with expectation. How wonderful to be fearless in the face of God and the circumstances of the world; filled with expectation at what may come! How many of us instead fear God and the chaos of the planet in these days?”

There is plenty to be afraid of in the world, but fear does not need to govern our response.”

With Epiphany blessings of light and wisdom,

+Mary

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