

APA Bishop Boyce Explains Why He Joined Common Cause Partnership

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Message from Bishop Richard J. Boyce - Anglican Province of America - Diocese of the West

This message is in response to questions about the position of APA and the Diocese of the West in particular regarding the Common Cause Partnership (CCP).

You have asked each of us for our response in regard to CCP. Although you are aware of my general position already, the following is a statement of why I believe CCP is a necessary commitment for us at present.

1) Biblical Mandate: We are a province which is committed to the authority of Scripture, holding "the One Faith revealed in Holy Writ," maintaining the "Doctrines, Sacraments and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in His Holy Word." (from "Solemn Declaration" of the APA Constitution). That Lord is specific in His desires "that they [believers] all may be one, as You Father are in Me and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (St. John 17:20-23), among other passages, with the thought repeated by St. Paul that we are one Body. Although we have many optional practices, oneness is not, not only because you cannot in fact divide Christ but also because it is crucial to the salvation of those who watch us, "that the world may believe." It is a command therefore that we seek diligently to achieve oneness. Those who resist this are no more followers of Biblical authority than the Jesus Seminar or Spong.

2) Anglican Unity; "We declare this Church to be... in full communion with all traditional Anglicans throughout the world, as an integral portion of the One Body of Christ. **If in particular, we are to be "classic Anglicans" it is clear both from this Declaration and from the very definition of what constitutes an Anglican, that the apostolic and episcopal nature of our Faith requires common cause with other faithful Anglicans.**

If, as we allege, some, such as the TEC leadership, have strayed from Biblical norms and Anglican Tradition and order, we are hypocritical to then do the same along a different path related primarily to Donatism or sectarian self-righteousness rather than sexual and authority issues. In short, Anglicans belong together unless separated by drastic deviations such as TEC has done. We have been going around saying for a decade or so the Global South, REC and Forward in Faith churches are orthodox Anglicans- therefore what excuse can we possibly use to not talk with them about our shared Faith?

3) What Are We Joining?: CCP is not a jurisdiction nor church. It is a voluntary association of orthodox Anglicans. I know some of our people are still traumatized by the big boot of ECUSA leadership back when they left the Episcopal Church. But this is not the same. We

can quit as easily as we can join. To be sure, the clear purpose of CCP is to shape the formation of a new province. That is what Jesus wants (see point #1 above). Surely we don't need to spell out that it should therefore be what we want. **Further, the opportunity to sit at the table and help shape the new province is a wonderful way to do mission for classic Anglicanism. Our input as the "elder brother" of American orthodox Anglicanism is invaluable and could reawaken the traditional sense in people who have had to live with pressure from the other direction for a long time.**

My impression is that Bp. Duncan in particular has gone out of his way to invite our participation in this and it is unthinkable that we would pass it up. Even if our input is not accepted to the point where we could become an integral part of a new province, at least we have had a chance to shape the future of Anglicanism. To withdraw from these discussions, as is now proposed, and then sit back and criticize the outcome when instead we could have shaped the outcome is totally irresponsible. It will have a negative impact not only on the new province but also on us, as we become **a marginalized sect of soreheads** with nothing Anglican to offer.

4) **Polity: We talk of the congregationalist mindset and bewail it.** But if we leave CCP, we have confirmed it as our real polity. Anglicans, as all Catholics, see **the basic unit as the diocese not the congregation.** We have the right to expect the integrity (sorry about the word, but it is a good one even if the wrong people sometimes claim it) of our dioceses and hopefully the decency to respect the rights of others. But we need to be where the Anglican bishops are.

5) Who Loves Ya? as Kojak used to say. The Global South churches have come to our defense, because we proclaimed the Gospel, the same one they proclaim. They have been punished for this and suffered financial loss, many in areas of desperate poverty. It has been a real blow for them, but they have stuck with us. Now are we to proclaim they are not good enough, either, to even talk with us about the Anglican future of America? No wonder the criticism of our stand has been pretty strong.

6) What Are the Fears?

a) Women will rule our altars.

b) People, especially bishops, we don't like are part of this.

c) We will be forced to change- our parishes will be incorporated into other dioceses, maybe even ones which ordain women, or are (choose one) Anglo-Catholic or Evangelical.

d) We will be forced to use the 1979 BCP, and/or wave our arms in the air at prayer.

To answer:

a)

1. CCP is a discussion group. It has no power to force anything.

2. The great majority of orthodox Anglicans in the world do not ordain women as

priests. The situation is the reverse of the ECUSA experience, and it is the minority who ordain women who will be asking for tolerance.

3. Once out of TEC, many who endured women priests have renounced their past (witness Jeffrey Steenson of Rio Grande).

4. The Church of Nigeria does not ordain women *as priests*, despite rumors and silly statements to the contrary.

5. It appears each jurisdiction will be free to follow its own practice but not to enforce it on others; **we could help make sure of this if we sit at the table; some may even phase out women priests.**

6. The fail/safe: In the unlikely event the other 5 reasons all are wrong, we do not have to join a new province if it happens. We would be justified in not doing so if this were imposed on us, having tried in the formation talks to prevent it. It is certainly not a reason to refuse to talk to people, most of whom, like ourselves, find women's ordination incorrect.

b) Not liking some people has been the greatest sin in the Continuum and the primary cause of its failure, from 1977 on, to be more than a fragmented and continually fragmenting bunch of ineffective sects instead of the Anglican voice in America. Much of what is happening now would have happened decades ago and in a better way if it were not for our sinful ego preference to trash personalities instead of preach the Gospel. God in His patience and mercy is now giving us a second chance. Unfortunately, obnoxious people are ever with us, and CCP has no monopoly on them. Let us bear our cross about them, remembering Jesus died for them too. They are never a valid reason for dividing Christ's Body.

c) There is no evidence currently of attempts to force polity or bad theology on us. Indeed the opposite is true. Again, if this happens by some ugly turn of events, all we need to do is leave, having done our best in the formation discussion to avoid it. But leaving in anticipation of an unlikely event when unity and the relevance of our Anglicanism to the rest of the church is at stake is unseemly and unfaithful.

d) This kind of pressure is even less likely.

Rumors bearing: **false witness is not taken lightly by God. All the hen talk about which bishops are really running things and how they will pollute the new province with heresies and bad ideas is beneath us.** I understand some people would prefer to have church by themselves and never confront the mission being asked of them. That feeling in itself defines them as not Anglican. When such people then employ weapons from rumor through threats of withholding money or "quitting the church," **they have by such acts disqualified themselves from contributing to the discussion.** When they do so over simply joining an exploratory group, it is clear they are at the least overreacting. I would appeal to anyone opposed to these talks to review what it is they are really afraid of, given that we can decline joining a new province if it is not going to be truly orthodox. They

may or may not have a case when we are asked to be a part of a jurisdictional structure. They have no case regarding CCP.

8) An Anglican Church: **my group joined APA because it was open to Anglican unity. We need a united voice, a good seminary or two, a Christian education resource, a national magazine, a profile to help announce the Gospel to a needy nation.** We need to be part of a world of inspiring orthodox Anglican leaders. Should I give all that up to join an isolated cult of complainers?

All this is not intended to offend, just to plead with the worried among us to rethink our CCP participation.

**---Written by Winfield Mott Suffragan Bishop, Diocese of the West
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