

Presiding Bishop of ECUSA reflects on Primates' Meeting

The Primates of the Anglican Communion have called for the formation of a "Pastoral Council" that would work in cooperation with the Episcopal Church to facilitate and encourage healing and reconciliation, particularly for those who feel unable to accept the ministry of their bishop or the presiding bishop.

The request came in a communiqué issued at the close of the Primates' February meeting near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during which extended discussions were devoted to the Episcopal Church's response to the Windsor Report, a document that recommends ways in which the Anglican Communion can maintain unity amid differing viewpoints.

The Primates also supported a proposal to name a primatial vicar who would assume some pastoral duties in the Episcopal Church at the Presiding Bishop's direction.

ENS international correspondent Matthew Davies spoke with Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, who offered some reflections on the meeting.

An audio stream of the interview is available at http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_59911_ENG_HTM.htm

The full text follows:

ENS: Bishop Jefferts Schori, thank you for this opportunity. What is your sense of how the meeting has gone?

JEFFERTS SCHORI: It was a challenging meeting. It began in some graciousness. We heard from three other bishops of the Episcopal Church, the whole meeting did. That was a difficult time for some, to hear the diversity and intensity of viewpoints. The Primates were clear -- a number of them were clear -- about wanting additional clarity in the responses the Episcopal Church made at its General Convention last summer.

ENS: What will the communiqué mean for the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion? What are the next steps?

JEFFERTS SCHORI: The next steps are really for the Episcopal Church to receive it, for the House of Bishops to respond in ways that they've been asked. The House of Bishops meets in a few weeks and it will be an opportunity for us to begin to engage and discuss the possibilities.

ENS: For you, what has been the highlight of this week?

JEFFERTS SCHORI: The visit to Zanzibar was really quite profound. To be worshiping in a place that 200 years ago was a slave market; to see underground cells where people were held for sale was really quite shocking. But also to know that the Anglican Church, especially through the ministry of David Livingstone, and Bishop Steer and others, were instrumental in ending slavery in Zanzibar. It is a great reminder of the power of the witness of our faith.

ENS: To those observers back in the US -- in particular the people in the pews, who may be confused about what is happening in their Church -- what is your message to them right now?

JEFFERTS SCHORI: Be of good faith. We're entering Lent and there's probably not a better time for us to receive this communiqué from the Primates' Meeting. It will be hard news for a number of members of this Church; it will be welcome news for other members of this Church. This is a season to remember who is the focus of our faith and it is not we ourselves.

ENS: Is there anything else you would like to add?

JEFFERTS SCHORI: It was a joy to meet people from around the Communion; to get a larger sense of the variety of their contexts and the faithfulness with which they operate and minister and worship and serve God and God's people around the world. It was a great blessing.