



Smyrna, Tennessee

St. Patrick's Anglican Church

An Ancient Faith for Modern Times

Letters from the Wilderness

#10

Dear Saints,

Last week Beth and I traveled to Virginia for the installation service for Bishop Martyn Minns of CANA (Convocation of Anglicans in North America). It was a rich experience and I wanted to share with you a few highlights.

Bishop Minns had previously been consecrated Bishop in Nigeria so the point of this service was to grant him his place of authority among the people that he would serve here in the U.S. It's hard to know what to call the ceremony because as one English Bishop put it, "enthronement" sounds too grand and "installation" sounds like you are putting in a refrigerator. They settled on "*The Installation of the Right Reverend Martyn Minns as the Missionary Bishop of CANA*"

The day before the service the clergy of CANA gathered to hear from Bishop Minns and Archbishop Peter Akinola who is the Primate of Nigeria. The differences from my previous experiences of clergy gatherings were numerous and refreshing. First of all the

composition of the clergy is very different. Of the 35 or so priests of CANA about half are Nigerians serving churches here in the US. It was a multiracial and multicultural gathering. Second we were all there because we loved our Lord and wanted to serve Him as Anglicans but found it impossible to do so in The Episcopal Church (TEC). Thus we shared a similar "family" history. There was no posturing or politics and no one was trying to force resolutions on others. We had come to show support and to be strengthened to serve and that is exactly what happened.

Archbishop Akinola spoke plainly about the events that caused him to launch CANA. His response to Ms Schori, who protested his visit, is at the end of this letter. He spoke to us with that kind of clarity. Bishop Minns then cast the vision for our future and it is positive and Gospel driven and Gospel focused. Both Bishops made it clear that our goal is a separate Anglican Province in the United States so that people will have a choice between the faith once delivered to the saints and a church that is driven by the culture; between a Body that is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion and an American sect that has chosen to walk apart; between a Church committed to the Great Commission and an institution that has replaced the Gospel with the Millennial Goals of the United Nations.

The installation ceremony was elaborate. We met in a facility that held 3,500 people and it was at least 2/3rds full. Three aisles lead to the stage that housed the altar and a combined choir of several parishes. 50 priests processed down the left aisle while 35 banners were processed down the right isle, with Beth bearing St. Patrick's banner. Then down the center aisle came an impressive group of bishops accompanying Bishop Minns and Archbishop Akinola. Among the bishops were about 10 Nigerians who paid their own way in order to show their support. One Nigerian bishop even presented Bishop Minns with a check for CANA. I also met a bishop of the Old Catholic Church (which broke with Rome in the 19th century over the doctrine of papal infallibility) and a bishop of the Western Rite Orthodox Church (an Eastern Orthodox Church using the Book of Common Prayer). Both bishops are seeking to be admitted to CANA. The Old Catholic bishop told me that he would

not have missed this historic occasion. He believed that we are seeing as a new Reformation unfold and he wanted to be part of it. Archbishop Akinola echoed this sentiment when he said at the end of the service that this may be the most important thing he has done in his 18 years of being an Archbishop. Other bishops present included a bishop from the Reformed Episcopal Church and one brave TEC bishop, Robert Duncan who is Bishop of Pittsburg and Moderator of the Anglican Communion Network. I sought him out after the service and gave him my sincere thanks for his courage and he said to me "we are in this together."

After being installed by Archbishop Akinola, Bishop Minns preached a wonderful sermon. His vision for CANA is for us to be committed to "radical inclusion" "profound transformation" and "inspired service". I especially appreciated the sermon because it sounded a lot like "invite, train, send" which is our own abbreviated mission statement. Needless to say I knew we had chosen the right home.

It is a distinct honor to be associated with the Christians of CANA. I met and talked with a number of the Virginia clergy who not only face being deposed but they are also facing law suits. Both the Diocese of Virginia and TEC are suing them as churches and in addition the clergy and Senior Wardens are being sued *personally*. Evidently the goal of Ms. Schori is to not only take away their buildings but to ruin these men financially; all for standing up for their convictions. Still these men were filled with joy and confidence that comes from faithfully following the Lord. I also met the wife of a Nigerian bishop who had been beaten and violated by Moslems who attacked her home and paraded her naked through her village. Her beating was so sever that she almost lost an eye and yet here she was in the United States to show support for us and to praise and worship the Lord. As with the others that I met, I could sense no bitterness or anger, just conviction and joy. TEC blogs and articles tried to characterize us as a gathering of malcontents but the celebration that I attended was a gathering of people who were willing to pay any price to follow the Lord. The Church in Nigeria had gone from 7 million to

over 15 million under Archbishop Akinola's leadership and I hope and pray for this spiritual DNA to be passed on to us in the US.

It is a new day for Anglicans in the US. God has provided a new wineskin in which to pour us and we will be able to grow and mature and honor our Lord as we walk with those who know Jesus to be our only Lord and Savior. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for the people of St. Patrick's for taking such a bold stand and for allowing me to be a part of it. There is no one else with whom I would rather share the wilderness.

Peace
Fr. Ray +

Archbishop Akinola Responds to U.S. Presiding Bishop on CANA Installation

Source: *The Church of Nigeria*
2nd May, 2007

The Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori,
Episcopal Church Center
815 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017, USA

My dear Presiding Bishop:

My attention has been drawn to your letter of April 30th ostensibly written to me but published on the Episcopal News Service website.

In light of the concerns that you raise it might be helpful to be reminded of the actions and decisions that have led to our current predicament.

At the emergency meeting of the Primates in October 2003 it was made clear that the proposed actions of the Episcopal Church would "tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and further issues ..." Sadly, this proved to be true as many provinces did proceed to declare broken or impaired communion with the Episcopal Church. Since that time the Primates have established task forces, held numerous meetings and issued a variety of statements and communiqués but the brokenness remains, our Provinces are divided, and so the usual protocol and permissions are no longer applicable.

You will also recall from our meeting in Dar es Salaam that there was specific discussion about CANA and recognition – expressed in the Communiqué itself – of

the important role that it plays in the context of the present division within your Province. CANA was established as a Convocation of the Church of Nigeria, and therefore a constituent part of the Communion, to provide a safe place for those who wish to remain faithful Anglicans but can no longer do so within The Episcopal Church as it is currently being led. The response for your own House of Bishops to the carefully written and unanimously approved Pastoral Scheme in the Communiqué makes it clear that such pastoral protection is even more necessary.

It is my heartfelt desire – and indeed the expressed hope of all the Primates of the Communion – that The Episcopal Church will reconsider its actions – and make such special measures no longer necessary. This is the only way forward for full restoration into fellowship with the rest of the Communion. Further, I renew the pledge that I made to your predecessor, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, that the Church of Nigeria will be the first to restore communion on the day that your Province abandons its current unbiblical agenda. Until then we have no other choice than to offer our assistance and oversight to our people and all those who will not compromise the “faith once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 1:3)

You speak in your letter of centuries old custom regarding diocesan boundaries. You are, of course, aware that the particular historical situation to which you make reference was intended to protect the church from false teaching not to prevent those who hold to the traditional teaching of the church from receiving faithful episcopal care. It was also a time when the Church had yet to face into the challenge of different denominational expressions of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I also find it curious that you are appealing to the ancient customs of the church when it is your own Province’s deliberate rejection of the biblical and historic teaching of the Church that has prompted our current crisis.

You mention the call to reconciliation. As you well know this is a call that I wholeheartedly embrace and indeed was a major theme of our time in Tanzania. You will also remember that one of the key elements of our discussion and the resulting Communiqué was the importance of resolving our current differences without resorting to civil law suits. You agreed to this. Yet it is my understanding that you are still continuing your own punitive legal actions against a number of CANA clergy and congregations. I fail to see how this is consistent with your own claim to be working towards reconciliation.

Once again please know that I look forward to the day when this current crisis is behind us and we can all be reunited around our One Lord and only Saviour Jesus the Christ. Until then be assured of my prayers for you and The Episcopal Church.

In Christ,

Signed

The Most Revd. Peter J Akinola, CON, DD
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of all Nigeria