

Press Gathering Transcript – Prior to A Moderated Conversation with Four Anglican Bishops from East Africa, April 9, 2013

On April 9, 2013 four Bishops of the Anglican Communion serving in East Africa participated in a “Moderated Conversation” sponsored by the Diocese of South Carolina. The following is a partial transcript from the press conference held before the program.

The audio file of this press conference is available here:

http://www.diosc.com/sys/media/4_anglican_bishops_4_9_13.mp3

Photograph album available here:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/117076864764490538014/AnglicanBishopsFromEastAfrica?authuser=0&feat=directlink>

The Bishops were asked if they had a message for the Diocese of South Carolina and their Bishop, Mark Lawrence.

The Rt. Rev. Abraham Yel Nhial, Diocese of Aweil, Episcopal Church of Sudan

My comment to the Christians in the Diocese of South Carolina for what is going on now is: “It will come to an end. It will finish.” When missionaries left Sudan there was only one Diocese in the north and the south – few Christians. We’ve been suffering for more than 50 years because of our identity, and our belief in Christ as our Lord and Savior. More than 2 million died willingly as Christians. We don’t see any point in changing our belief. And today as I speak to you, we are celebrating 31 dioceses in the Sudan and South Sudan. We are also celebrating and thanking God for blessing us with our own new nation – the newest nation in the world – the Republic of South Sudan. It is a gift from our God. My encouragement to Christians and to Bishop Mark Lawrence is to stand firm in the faith. All these trials come and go. Suffering is part of our following Christ. It’s following our belief – we should suffer. We love Mark. We welcome him and the Diocese of South Carolina because he’s stood with Christ and with the Gospel. These are the people we need. We will stand with him. And also we are praying for those orthodox believers, pastors and bishops who are still in the Episcopal Church and we will work with them to help them.

The Rt. Rev. Elias Mazi Chakupewa, Diocese of Tabora, Anglican Church of Tanzania

I'm very grateful to have this opportunity to come to this country and particularly to this Diocese of South Carolina. I read many things on the Internet about this Diocese and particularly in the time of disassociation and I was really praying for Mark and for all the Christians with him in this Diocese. As a Bishop of the Church of God I really pray for God's intervention during this time and I'm sure God is the same yesterday, today and forever. God doesn't change. What I normally tell my people and I would also like to tell the people of this Diocese is that the church isn't just an organization – a governmental organization. The church is a living entity of God himself. The Church is the body of Jesus Christ, of which Christ himself is the cornerstone. We cannot compare the church with any other organization in the world. If you take the church and compare it you are making a mistake. The church is living. The church is God's. God is the owner. Sometimes we make a mistake when we think that the church should look like other organizations. We have politics. We have politicians. When we allow politicians into the church that's when we make mistakes. The church is built on the foundations and the Bible. The Bible leads the church – so we have to follow the Bible. That's why we are with Bishop Mark, because his stand is on the Bible and he's preaching the Bible. I, as a Bishop of our Diocese, I preach the gospel and I encourage Bishop Mark to continue standing very firm. And even those who are staying in The Episcopal Church, as my brother said, those faithful, those trusting the Bible and Jesus Christ as the only way, we shall stand and work with them. But we are not going to work with people who are denying the authority of the Bible, who deny the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. We are not going to work with them at all. When you see the Titanic ship sinking, you have to jump out, whatever cost that may be. We have to stand firm. There is nowhere in the Bible where there is a promise of peace. The church is militant. The church is at war throughout history.

The Rt. Rev. Robert Martin, Diocese of Marsabit, Anglican Church of Kenya

The Kenyan Church does not recognize The Episcopal Church any more. We have no relations. I know that any contact I have with The Episcopal Church may cause me problems in Kenya because we are so shocked and horrified by what is going on and therefore any actions by The Episcopal Church have no validity as far as we're concerned. We recognize ACNA the Anglican Church in North America and we recognize that Bishop Mark Lawrence is part of that same tradition and therefore we stand right behind him in his struggle with the heresies of The Episcopal Church. As my brothers have said we cannot expect peace in this world in terms of standing for the truth. We know that standing for the truth may bring us problems. We are in an area where Islam is strong. We're in an area where traditional religions are strong and therefore as Christians people do take risks particularly amongst the Muslim community if they come to faith. They know that Christianity and suffering go together even though we don't like it and don't want it. The more I hear about what Bishop Mark is doing the more I respect him and the more I am pleased and delighted to be in fellowship with him and give thanks for the fellowship we have. I know that South Carolina enabled us to come to New Wineskins and then to come

and be with our brothers and sisters. I'm sure when you know our situation you will pray for us. But we are very much in prayer for the church in America that the forces of light, being the Lord, are in control and that Bishop Mark stand firm.

The Rt. Rev. Nathan Kamusiime Gasatura, Diocese of Butare, Anglican Church of Rwanda.

Probably if most of you have been following events almost 12 years ago (you know) the Anglican Church in Rwanda was the very first to give support to the people that were leaving the Episcopal Church of the United States, when they fell out and could not agree on the authority of Scripture, on the Biblical Christ-centered nature, on the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the very core, central, Biblical doctrine that the Anglican Church had been defined by for centuries. And when that difference came and some of the clergy began to be excommunicated and fired out of the Episcopal Church due to the unique Rwandan tragedy that it has suffered we decided that since Rwanda suffered the grief of genocide and the whole world stood by not even the church in America or Britain or any part of the world ever came to its rescue to lift a prophetic voice and challenge the international community and the United Nations as they withdrew the 5,500 military (unclear)– at the darkest moment we decided maybe as a church we should never keep quiet while the church of Christ was seemingly undergoing a spiritual genocide so we stretched out our hands and we said, “Brothers, we know America is a great country, but this is a moment to stand for Christ no matter what the consequences.” Rwanda was the first to be able to stretch out our hands to support these brethren and to be able to ordain some of the clergy and consecrate some of the first Bishops in what you might know as Anglican Mission in America. That has been our very clear coherent stand and position. Bishop Mark Lawrence, as he has been going through this trying moment we have through GAFCON, through Global South and through the various respective individual dioceses have been on our knees praying. And actually just about four months ago we were in GAFCON in Dar es Salaam and we wrote a letter that very moment when some of these troubles were at their height to encourage him to really stand firm. We were praying. We were behind him. It was Christ he was standing for and he should really stand firm. The Lord would be able to fight his battle. Even in the midst of such a time of darkness and turmoil the saints will always stand and the Lord will always triumph. So I would like to attach my voice to my dear brothers to say it does not matter what the consequences may be. Mark stands upon God's Word as Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”