

Vestry Resolution on St. Luke's Episcopal Church as an Inclusive Congregation

On January 14, 2016, the global Primates of the Anglican Communion voted to suspend the Episcopal Church from any formal decision making in, or representation of, the Anglican Communion for three years. This sad vote occurred in response to the Episcopal Church's decision to allow for the celebration and blessing of same-sex marriages.

In response to this action it is important for people to know that the Primates' decision will have no effect on the inclusive practice of St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

Therefore be it resolved that. . .

We, the duly elected Vestry of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, meeting on January 14, 2016 wish to affirm to

1. Our Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Wayne M. Hoagland, Jr., Ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Western Michigan;
2. our parishioners; both canonical members and those who while not officially members either attend regularly or think of St. Luke's as their spiritual home; and
3. our friends, neighbors, and guests;

that we are committed to St. Luke's Episcopal Church being an inclusive congregation which strives to be "a house of prayer for all people" (Isaiah 56:7), understanding with St. Paul that, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)." We further affirm that all disruptive forces, of which racism, sexism, and homophobia are sad examples, persist in all places. We work to reject those evils by welcoming all people in keeping with our Baptismal Covenant (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305).

Our Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry's remarks to the global Primates of the Anglican Communion.

"Many of us have committed ourselves and our church to being 'a house of prayer for all people,' as the Bible says, when all are truly welcome. Our commitment to be an inclusive church is not based on a social theory or capitulation to the ways of the culture, but on our belief that the outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross are a sign of the very love of God reaching out to us all. While I understand that many disagree with us, our decision regarding marriage is based on the belief that the words of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians are true for the church today: All who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, for all are one in Christ.

For so many who are committed to following Jesus in the way of love and being a church that lives that love, this decision will bring real pain. For fellow disciples of Jesus in our church who are gay or lesbian, this will bring more pain. For many who have felt and been rejected by the church because of who they are, for many who have felt and been rejected by families and communities, our church opening itself in love was a sign of hope. And this will add pain on top of pain.

I stand before you as your brother. I stand before you as a descendant of African slaves, stolen from their native land, enslaved in a bitter bondage, and then even after emancipation, segregated and excluded in church and society. And this conjures that up again, and brings pain.

The pain for many will be real. But God is greater than anything. I love Jesus and I love the church. I am a Christian in the Anglican way. And like you, as we have said in this meeting, I am committed to 'walking together' with you as fellow primates in the Anglican family."