

Anglicans reject move to 'separate' U.S. church

Kevin Eckstrom Religion News Service | Jul. 28, 2010

Anglican leaders meeting in London have rejected a move to separate the Episcopal Church from the wider Anglican Communion, a proposal that officials called premature and unhelpful.

The proposal was offered Saturday (July 24) by Dato Stanley Isaacs, a member of the Anglican Communion's Standing Committee from the Province of South East Asia, according to a statement issued Monday.

The Episcopal Church has come under fire from sister Anglican churches for its decision to consecrate an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire in 2003, as well as a lesbian assistant bishop in Los Angeles earlier this year.

In June, the U.S. church was removed from Anglican panels that host ecumenical dialogue with other Christians, as well as a committee that determines doctrine and authority.

But the 13 members of the Standing Committee -- who are elected from the 44 member churches of the 77 million-member Anglican Communion -- said formally exiling the U.S. church was not the proper response.

Committee members acknowledged the anxieties felt in parts of the Communion about sexuality issues, the statement said. Nevertheless, the overwhelming opinion was that separation would inhibit dialogue on this and other issues ... and would therefore be unhelpful.

The U.S. church has two representatives on the Standing Committee: Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and Bishop Ian Douglas of Connecticut.

At the Standing Committee's last meeting, just days after the Diocese of Los Angeles elected its lesbian bishop, the panel called for gracious restraint on actions that would test the fragile unity of the communion.

When that statement failed to make any difference, Egyptian Bishop Mouneer Anis resigned from the panel, saying it had no desire ... to sort out the problems which face the Anglican Communion and which are tearing its fabric apart.

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