

## Conservative Anglicans Envision Western Hemisphere Alliance

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IN ANOTHER REMARKABLE CHAPTER in Anglican realignment, a "Covenant of Understanding" has been signed calling for a formal alliance for mission and ministry in North and South America and the Caribbean.

The pan-American fellowship is envisioned as a mechanism to link those of similar theological perspective and could eventually include more than 1.5 million Anglicans in the hemisphere. It is being organized under the guidance of two Primates (provincial leaders) of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Drexel Gomez of the West Indies and Presiding Bishop Gregory Venables of the Southern Cone of America.

Inspired by the influential Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), led by Nigerian Archbishop Peter Akinola, the new Council of Anglican Provinces in the Americas and the Caribbean (CAPAC) will be open to provinces, dioceses, networks and ministries that are committed to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to historic Anglican formularies. Given the Communion's current crisis, a call to conform to theological standards outlined in the Windsor Report is also being emphasized.

Initially developed at a recent conference in the Bahamas, the agreement to form CAPAC will be presented to Provincial structures in the West Indies and Southern Cone for discussion and ratification. The alliance is intended to support members and share resources in mission, ministry, and theological education; enable constituents to speak as one on common concerns; and seek to "provide regional solutions to regional needs," including those arising from ongoing challenges to orthodox faith in North America.

Among the chief concerns motivating this initiative is the need for adequate episcopal care for faithful Anglicans "in serious theological dispute" with their bishop or province, a provision endorsed by Anglican Primates. With the international weight it will now bring to any task, CAPAC will seek to promote such care in cooperation with official Anglican structures, notably the Panel of Reference charged with monitoring substitute bishop arrangements.

"One of the great misconceptions has been the ridiculous assertion that those who remain committed to the faith of the Communion are somehow 'dissidents.' By providing a mechanism to join together, it makes it obvious that those of historic Biblical faith are part of the overwhelming majority in the Anglican Communion," observed Archbishop Venables.

"In addition to addressing the isolation that some conservative congregations experience," Venables continued, "CAPAC will provide a way to work together and reach out more effectively with the Gospel."

THOUGH MODELED on CAPA--a leading orthodox voice amid the Communion's current crisis over homosexuality and authority--CAPAC will differ from it by not automatically including all the Anglicans in the region. This is necessary because of the actions of ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada that do not conform to historic faith and practice. Another difference is that affiliate status is envisioned for those who, though they are outside the "official" Anglican structures, share a common theological perspective and commitment to historic Anglican formularies.

While CAPAC will not be designed to supersede or subsume constituent groups or bodies, it will aim to strengthen ties and cooperation among faithful Anglicans fragmented by history and the ill effects of liberal revisionism, and ultimately "to provide a solution in the context of the wider Anglican Communion."

Archbishop Gomez said, "It is crucial for the future of the Anglican Communion that we find a way to forge links based on shared theological commitments. Despite the fact we have shared some elements of history in the Communion, the current crisis has arisen because we do not share a common theological bond with those who are unilaterally seeking to change the faith."

A first step for CAPAC has been the production of a "Covenant of Understanding." It has been agreed to by the two Archbishops and the Moderators of the Anglican Communion Networks in Canada and the U.S. The next step is for the provinces or any other group desiring membership in the pan-American fellowship to ratify the covenant.

The initiative is drawing support from the Networks' "Common Cause Partners," comprised in the U.S. of Episcopal Church (ECUSA) organizations such as the American Anglican Council and the traditionalist Forward in Faith, North America (which forms a separate convocation within the Network), and at least three bodies outside ECUSA: the Anglican Mission in America, Anglican Province of America, and Reformed Episcopal Church. Allies in Canada include both Anglican Essentials Canada partners (The Federation and the Network) and the Anglican Communion in Canada.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has been kept abreast of developing plans and was notified of the intention to inaugurate CAPAC shortly before this report was issued.

Nigeria's Archbishop Akinola, CAPA Chairman, was among primates who warmly welcomed the new pan-American alliance. "The formation of this new regional body should be greeted with applause and strong support from across the Communion," he said.

CAPAC will not conflict and may eventually link with the convocation that Akinola is launching in the U.S. for expatriate Nigerians unable to find a compatible church home in ECUSA.

Archbishop Yong Ping Chung of South East Asia echoed Akinola's welcome, adding, "What is wonderful is the coming together of many different groups. We are very encouraged to see this level of cooperation."

Spokesman for CAPAC organizers, Canon Bill Atwood of the international Ekklesia Society, said, "We owe a great debt to CAPA and other global South provinces that are really and truly focused on mission that is based on Anglican theological formularies. Their example has demonstrated that a shared theological perspective can produce a rallying point for mission and ministry. We need to move away from decline and irrelevance into mobilizing to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone in the Americas and Caribbean."

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