



September 2015

We, as African Anglicans, Episcopalians from the United States, and members of other African churches, met in consultation in Africa for the third time in four years, this time in the shadow of Elmina Castle, the stronghold used by European slave traders on the Cape Coast of Ghana. Once again, we studied the Bible together, prayed, worshipped, and listened to the stories of individual Christians who have struggled to form their consciences and deepen their faith in churches that frequently deny the very humanity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

We are deeply grateful to Bishop Victor Atta-Baffoe of the Diocese of Cape Coast who invited us to his diocese, and to his staff who supported our gathering.

Reflecting on several days in which we steeped ourselves in scripture, we now call to mind the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and contemplate together the ways that each of us—as individuals Christians, as participants in faith-based networks, and as members of churches that claim to follow the manifesto of Jesus delivered in Luke 4: 18-19—is called to be a good neighbor to the suffering people in our midst.

As members of Anglican churches and those of other denominations in Africa, and as Episcopalians from the United States, we call upon our faith communities to make either public commitment or private arrangement to serve as places of sanctuary for those who live under the threat of violence for working on behalf of the gospel. We understand this group to include LGBTI people, women and men living with HIV, ethnic, racial and religious minorities on both continents and those who are potential victims of gender violence.

We call upon Episcopalians on all levels of the church to commit themselves to fulfilling **Resolution A051** of the recently concluded General Convention, which calls upon the church to use resources developed by African Anglican leaders and organizations working to curb anti-gay and anti-transgender violence, discrimination, and marginalization; to build relationships with and learn from African Anglican scholars who are already offering biblical interpretations that affirm the dignity and humanity of LGBTI people; and “to pray for the safety of our LGBTI sisters and brothers, their families and communities, and for the scholars and activists who tirelessly work on their behalf.”

Additionally, we have committed ourselves to a range of immediate and longer-term goals including publications, collaboration in developing biblical and theological resources, and helping communities organize against violence.

The church must be ever mindful of its own history as an oppressor even as it pursues its vocation as a liberator. As part of our program, we visited Cape Coast Castle where millions of enslaved Africans were imprisoned in fetid dungeons before being forced onto slave ships that bore them to lives of slavery in the west. Within the walls of this slave fort, a church was built directly atop a dungeon, making achingly clear the complicity of the Anglican church in the enslavement of Africans.

And because we understand that the church must not only act as Good Samaritans to those who are robbed and beaten but also work at the systemic level to make safe the road from Jericho to Jerusalem that is walked by everyone who strives for just and fair societies and full inclusion in the Body of Christ, we pledge to work collaboratively in opposing the legacy of colonialism and its present day manifestations, to stand against all principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12, Romans 8:38-39), and to understand that these evils are rooted in ideologies of power and domination that have no place in the church or in our societies.