

**MISSION IN CRISIS: OUR COMMUNION IN GOD THE HOLY TRINITY IS  
OBSCURED AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR COMMON MISSION  
SEVERELY HINDERED.**

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**INTRODUCTION.** Thank you for your invitation. In this presentation, I intend to show how the recent developments regarding the debate and actions related to human sexuality would obscure the good news of our faith in the Holy Trinity and severely hinder our mission in Africa and indeed in the Global South. I will end by proposing a way forward role of the Evangelical voice for the future of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

**1. OUR COMMUNION IN GOD THE HOLY TRINITY IS OBSCURED.**

The Churches in the Anglican Communion share in the faith of the Triune Godhead: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God in three persons. Having been taught and defended by church fathers that the Africa continent produced in the early centuries of the Christian Church, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a cherished *historical pride to us in Africa*. It is also a great *vehicle of evangelism*. In that, it underlines the Good News we preach. *First, the Good news that we have God the father, the almighty and creator*. We stress to our people, that in Christianity we are saved from the futility of worshiping the created or creation. Rather we worship the Creator, one who is all-powerful and the God who need not be supplemented by efforts of belief in other gods. And that since this The God who is able to create ex-nihilo, is most able to recreate and intervene in the re-creation and in our lives. We are indebted to be good stewards of that which God created. We are not surprised when God performs that which we cannot easily explain but call a miracle. This inspires us for mission,; that all human beings are created in Gods own image and therefore it is a human right that all on the face of the earth and if there are any in other planets, should be given the opportunity to hear the gospel. The gospel commissioned by our Lord Jesus Christ, saying “ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Matthew 28: 19]. This has proved to be great news to our people in Africa. This is in view of the fact that some of them are traditionally burdened with the complicated traditional beliefs involving the veneration of lots of created things, intimidated by hosts of spirits that need to be appeased if life is to be as comfortable as possible. Therefore any messages that imply, that this almighty God is not all that able to re-create and address effectively that which is distracted by the curse of human original sin and the enslavement of sinful lifestyles obscures at the core, this Christian message we have been preaching to our people in Africa.

*Secondly, the Good News that, we have God the Son.* And that “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that who so ever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” [John 3:16]. At the Cross of Calvary Jesus Christ paid the price of our sin. That it is God who took the initiative to save humankind. The cross is a fact of Gods decision. God made and holds on to important decisions in Gods relationship with those who will accept the message of the Cross. That God decided to forgive sin and treat the sinner as if the sinner never sinned. God counts the sinner as own child and belonging to God’s kingdom [Justifies]. That in Jesus Christ, we are saved from the curse of the original sin. We are cleansed from the weight of the guilty of sins. “ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” [Romans 8:1]. In Christ Jesus we are declared delivered from the slavery of sinful lives and lifestyles. We are given a place where the burdens of sins are lifted from us. God’s love at the event of the cross inspires us to respond with our love for God and for one another. We are reconciled to God and one another. The message of the cross, seen and presented in this light has effectively proved great news in Africa, in view of the traditional belief systems. African traditional beliefs often involve belief in curses and fear of all kinds of curses that may be believed to be causes of various calamities in the families. The beliefs involved detailed, frequent, and expensive sacrificial rituals to appease God and the spirits. It is great relief to learn Jesus Christ the second person in the Trinity “ Offered for all time one sacrifice for sins...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy” [Hebrews 10: 12-14]. That the creative word of God that declares a sinner justified also effects that declaration by a growing transformation of that life towards righteousness. We have witnessed lives lifted from the mire of sinful lives into transformed lives witnessing to great victory over sin and sinful lifestyles. Any compromise to this witness with the message that implies that there are some effects of original sin and practice that should be accommodated rather than transformed, obscures this Gospel at the core not only for the rest but also for those who live with those temptations. We consider it unloving if not cruel to deprive a person living with homosexual temptations, the transforming message of the cross. It is not an act of love to tell such person just to formalize his or her acceptance to live like that rather than accept and claim God’s power to transform into what God clearly intended when “God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” [Genesis 1:27]. We must underline the fact that the cross was an event of God’s important decision concerning God’s relationship with humankind. Similarly those who come to faith must treat the event of the cross as a place of taking decision to turn to faith in repentance and faith. The difference between a road junction and a roundabout is helpful visual aid. Unlike in a roundabout, you cannot make a u turn on a junction. Rather, you must make a decision to go to a different direction from where you came. There are times when we make the mistake of conceiving the cross Jesus Christ as a roundabout where one can go and make roundabouts including going back the same way we came and continue with sinful life and lifestyles without repentance and faith.

*Thirdly, the Good News that in the Triune Godhead, we have God the Holy Spirit.* God is made imminent to the believers in the Third Person in the Trinity. God the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and convinces us on the need to repent. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell the body of Christ, The Church and the individual believers, to make as it were, effectual that which God has declared and promised those who God has justified on the fact of the sacrifice of Gods Son on the cross. To continuously fill believers lives and to continue cleansing them from all filth of sin [Sanctification]. To be a helper, one who walks alongside [the paraclete] and be God in us and with us in our day-to-day lives. To be to us “ A seal of ownership” on the believers that they belong to God [2 Corinthians 1: 22]. To grow and mature in us, believers, the fruit of the Holy Spirit [Galatians 5:22] in order to bear witness to God’s transforming work in the body of Christ, the Church and Christian social and individual lives to be able to increase in God’s likeness. To equip believers with the gifts of the Hoy Spirit for the up building of the body of Christ and for mission in the world. In Africa, and indeed in many places, the cultural beliefs tend to give a background of a transcendent God, God who is far from the people and has to be reached by myriad of intermediaries in the form of all kinds of spirits and the veneration of the spirits what John Mbiti describes as “the spirits of living dead” [Mbiti: African Religion and Philosophy]. Many are burdened with the weight of the sense of filth and guilt and desperate with hopelessness of ever getting a chance for change. The good news comes handy that we have God the Holy Spirit who indwells and transforms lives for the better. Any message that waters down this by implying that some behavior and lifestyle, which is far from God’s revealed teaching in the Holy Scripture, the Bible, is beyond these expectation of this Good news obscures the same to the core.

## **2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR COMMON MISSION SEVERELY HINDERED.**

I had a taste of severely hindered mission in Mombasa, Kenya, the morning when the Kenyan mass media, carried the news that “ The Anglicans have ordained a person who lives in same-sex union as their Bishop. I was in my pastoral visit to the Coast General Hospital in Mombasa. As I walked about in my Anglican Clerical shirt and collar, people turned around whispering mockery “See the Anglican Church while pointing to the Newspapers. My prayer ministry to the sick was received with a lot of suspicion. Those opposed to the Christian gospel made sarcastic and jeering remarks. Our common mission is severely hindered particularly in the following aspects;

2.1 *Our mission to the moral life of our societies is severely hindered.* Our societies in Africa have traditional cultures, that did their best to limit sexual immorality in their midst. Incidents of same sex intercourse were always treated as a taboo and harshly judged, in many African cultures. This was because it was no ordinary sexual misbehavior. It was a deviation from natural order and highest expression of sexual decadence in an individual and a society. The gospel we have been preaching all along won a lot of credibility. That it is by God’s grace that we are saved and that this grace “

Teaches us to say No, to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope..." [Titus 2: 11-14]. That God in our Holy Scriptures judged sexual sin and homosexual practices, as was in the example of Sodom and Gomorrah [Romans 1]. To try and teach that the Christian gospel could accommodate some faithful homosexual unions will take Christian sexual behaviour way below any credible sexual moral behaviour in any known societies in Africa. It will largely leave us with virtually no moral mission to any society apart from those affected and trained in homosexual agenda.

2.2 *Our pastoral mission to the family life of our societies is severely hindered.*

*Our African Societies still value family units.* The population of African continent is largely rural. It is in the family units, that members are nurtured, learn their language and find their identity. The families grow by natural procreation. The father and male figure is clear. Similarly the mother female figure. This understanding, which is very close to the family life described in the Bible, has been a great entry point for the Christian gospel and teaching regarding family. Through this pastoral mission to family life, we address and challenge the traditional cultures that put women and girl child at disadvantaged position by underlining the Biblical teaching that underline gender identity [created male and female and in God's image] gender equality, monogamous marriages, loving and committed relationships between husbands and wives and responsible parenthood. To introduce a doctrinal concept that accommodates a family unit that can be made up of a same sex union, that will depend on adoption of a child if they should wish to have children is most difficult to sustain and will severely hinder our common pastoral mission to the family life of our people.

2.3 *Our mission to non-Christian faith communities is severely hindered.* Our effort to reach the no-Christian communities with the gospel of Christ Jesus is severely hindered. We have not witnessed that amount of sarcasm and scorn from non-Christian faith members concerning Christian sexual morality more than the one generated recently against us, when it was reported that some members of our Anglican Communion have resolved to accept in Church leadership those involved in the practice of homosexuality. This has continued to erect a formidable communication barrier for the gospel of Christ, we preach.

2.4 *Our worldwide Anglican Communion partnership in mission is severely hindered.* It should be noted that Anglican Churches in Africa are traditionally proud of our belonging to the Anglican Communion. It gives us the sense of being local and global, vulnerable and formidable. As one piece of my Episcopal robes I wear the Canterbury cap to make the point. However we have been disappointed and felt betrayed by some of our Anglican Communion members in the Global North. After the passing of the Lambeth 1998 resolution 1.10, on human sexuality, the Anglican Churches in Africa and indeed Anglican Communion in the Global South, breathed a sigh of relief that the unity in the Anglican Communion was strong enough to carry out even the homework directed by the spirit of the resolution. The homework

of holding to our official teaching that “ Homosexual practice was incompatible with scripture and we cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex union nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions. And listen to the experiences of homosexual persons and ministering pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation”. Before we settled to our homework the tables were shaken by the hurricane of official statements and actions of ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada, which went in the opposite direction to the spirit of the said resolution. The mass media made sure the news reached the grass roots level of people, making a mockery of our witness on the ground.

We have been listening but we have not been listened to. We continue to listen to the socio-political challenges facing the Global North church. In fact there is a sense in which we feel that we have no choice but to listen because we often do a lot together on the ground particularly in Theological Education, Information Technology, HIV and AIDS and Community Development Programmes. We have made encouraging progress in these programmes as a result of financial partnership with the North. We praise God and thank the Churches in the North, for spending God’s resources in these programmes. We have listened but continue to raise important questions and concerns particularly in the following reasons often given by those who have chosen to walk contrary to our common expectations:

*That their history made them and their society extremely sensitive to any action that may trigger any memory of segregation, limit individual rights etc. We ask isn’t our freedom, freedom in Jesus Christ? Rather than freedom to do what we feel most tempted to do?*

*That their bishops and primates have far less powers to influence their special decision making processes than in other provinces in the Global South. We ask, have we been wrong in our observation when we visited and studied in USA, Britain and Canada and visited churches there? That the revisionist proponents are not people at parish level leadership but are at Diocesan level leadership in persons of Bishops and Theological college professors? Is this a polite admission by the Bishops that they indeed lit the fire, which they are now finding most difficult to extinguish?*

*That they have many in their midst both lay and ordained who are very suspicious of orthodox interpretation and views of the authority of the biblical text. They give account of past misuse of the Bible to support injustices of race, colour and gender. We ask, is the misuse of the Bible corrected by total disregard of the same? Do two wrongs make a right?*

*That homosexual attraction is God created and should not to be expected for a change. Listening to homosexual experiences, homosexual lobbyists and some social and scientific researches arrive at this conclusion. We ask, could we not apply similar argument for defence of any other sinful tendencies? What about the testimonies of those transformed homosexuals? And is this not denying the very hope we have in Jesus Christ to help us in every temptation and transform us towards Gods will?*

*That the debate on homosexuality is similar to the debate on ordination of women, which we have gone through and now commands wide acceptance across the Anglican Communion.* That there is clear connections of the homosexual debate with the ordination of women debate and ardently hope and trust that it will end up by being given similar accommodation in the life of the Anglican Communion. We ask; is this not trying to compare two different things? And as our Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi once asked, is it not trying “ to weigh the weight of sugar by using a thermometer?

*That their actions are consonant with paragraph (b) of the Lambeth 1998 1.10 resolution about giving pastoral care.* We ask, the fact that it is (b) does it not mean that there is an (a)? And was it meant to be interpreted with total disregard of (a) that stated, “we cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions”?

*That the cultures they live in their contexts, have accepted and in fact made legal provisions for same gender unions.* We ask, do we have to accept in the church, all that is generally accepted in our cultures? Is this acceptance based on convenience rather than conviction? What difference will the church make to the cultures if we go by convenience? What will happen to the church’s prophetic role? Will this not lead to the danger of destroying the church similar to the danger faced by a ship on the high seas, which has allowed all the ocean water to flow into the ship? These are a few points and questions we are raising to illustrate that we mean it when we say that we have been listening. Did we hear them right? We hope we did. However we feel we have not received any substantial share of the Anglican Communion constituency in the global north. [See also our Report to the ACC, 13 in Nottingham, on the position of the Anglican Church of Kenya [ACK] on human sexuality].

**2.5 Our South-South Anglican Communion partnership may not at this stage be severely hindered but non-the less threatened.** Anglican Dioceses in the Global South have had partnership with one another and dioceses in North. Discussion and disagreements on how to react on the current debate and official stand taken by ECUSA and The Anglican Church of Canada, have strained relationships between dioceses in our south-south partnership. Some provinces and diocese have refused financial help on the basis of conviction. My guess here are those convictions of not associating with those would claim to belong to the same faith with you but choose with impunity to live in disregard of the core moral ethics of the same Christian life [I Corinthians 5: 9-13]. There are those, who while making their disapproval and disagreement clear still accept financial help on the basis that they are dealing with emergency situation. That the poverty and financial need of their people is so severe that they can only be busy receiving any help from anyone to save lives. The emergency situation, does not allow the time, if not the luxury time, of analyzing the source of the help. These differences on how to react are generating strain on the South-South partnership in mission.

2.6 *Our mission through the programs that depended on funding from the North is severely hindered.* Programs particularly concerned with the fight against HIVAids, Theological Education by Extension [T.E.E] and Theological Training, are severely hindered. Our loud and conservative stand on human sexuality has continued to be an embarrassment to some of our partners in the Global North particularly those who are under revisionist leadership. For understandable human nature reasons, this has reduced their enthusiasm in raising the financial support for us. Not to receive financial support for God's work from those who have made their official stand against what we feel are the essentials of the very Gospel we preach, has in many cases more or less reduced the said programs to a halt.

### **3. WAY FORWARD FOR THE EVANGELICAL VOICE AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION WORLD WIDE.**

What could be the evangelicals' role in this worldwide Anglican Communion in the face of the current challenge that is threatening the future of the communion? Is it to break the communion and form Global South and Global North Anglican Communion? Is it to replace the place of the See of Canterbury with other historical Sees such as Alexandria, Jerusalem, Rome and Antioch? The following are but my personal reflections and proposals for a way forward.

- 3.1 *Call for the re-commitment.* The whole constituency of those associated with the Anglican Communion worldwide should be called to re-commit themselves to some form of a binding Anglican Communion covenant. A covenant that binds even the decision-making processes of the various provinces against taking contradicting unilateral decisions that affect the communion.
- 3.2 *Call for the redefinition of the powers of Anglican Communion instruments of unity.* The four instruments of unity: The historical see of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, Primates meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council are all consultative and coordinating forums. They don't seem to have any legislative powers that bind the membership. You remember even the Primates Meeting in Dromantine was still under the mercy of the response of her members who had taken a decision that disappointed the meeting. The meeting could only "request" her member to "voluntary withdraw". Suppose the member decided not to cooperate?
- 3.3 *Support the Global South gatherings and consultations.* We are calling South-South partnership in the Anglican Communion to meet, reflect deliberate and dialogue more on their common reaction to the current developments in the Anglican Communion, which are challenging their stand and even their unity. There is, for an example, a planned Global South Anglicans partnership gathering in Egypt in October 2006. To raise finances to enable all invited to attend, will be a big challenge.
- 3.4 *Support self-support income generating projects in the Global South.* We are challenging ourselves in the South against dependency syndrome. That we should increase in our commitment to stewardship and financial self-support programs. We are calling those financially able partners in the North and

South who are with us in our stand on human sexuality to help in filling the financial gaps. In our partnership we should seriously consider supporting capital development initiatives that are being taken by the Global South in their income generation projects. Such projects are often discriminated against by the financial policies of our partner organizations in the North. For an example, you can get lots of help to support medical supply and other needs for the campaigns against HIV/Aids pandemic. However, you can hardly get any financial help for capital development for income generation. I have experienced this myself. I am a founder bishop of a new diocese, the Anglican Diocese of Taita Taveta, Kenya, some twelve years ago. Our priority project was an income generation offices building project. It has taken us 12 years to reach half way. And yet once finished, the project will generate enough finances even to take care forever, the above-mentioned HIV/Aids and Theological development programs. The financial challenge may be a matter of time since “ God’s work done in God’s way and for God’s glory will not lack resources”

*3.5 Support a Multi-faced partnership.* We are aware of faithful members of Anglican Dioceses, parishes and individual Anglican Christians even in those provinces and diocese who have taken official position contrary to our common understanding and practice on human sexuality. I am calling for what I would call multi-faced partnership in the Anglican Communion. In this malt-faced partnership, Anglican Provinces and Diocese in the South can net work and partner with Dioceses, Parishes and even individual Christians in the North who by their spiritual conviction are saddened by the official positions taken by their home Provinces, Diocese and Parishes. This will allow evangelical encouragement, inspiration and support that will take to and draw from, evangelical support to and from the backyards of even revisionists’ constituencies.

*3.6 Support the maximum evangelicals patience and initiative to partner and inspire one another without breaking from the Anglican Communion.* In a situation of crisis in any association the concerned may end up with all kinds of reactions. First there are those who would quickly think of breaking away for reasons of impatience, desperation, fear of betraying their strong convictions and or an opportune space to take leadership position in the break away constituency. This often leads to many subsequent break away associations and leaves the remaining a free field for the operation of those whose actions initiated the break. Secondly there are those who would give up their concerns and convictions for reasons of quest for peace at the cost of their convictions, fear of the cost of being counted or and on the basis that “ When you cannot defeat them, you join them”. As a result, the association is then left without challenging voice and could degenerate into its worst of its weakness with impunity. Thirdly, there are those who would choose to remain part of that association but strategizing themselves a fresh within the association to prayerfully, patiently and using every possible opportunity to influence the association with their convictions. The example of East Africa Revival in our missionary founded churches in eastern Africa is a good

example of this. When it began, East Africa Revival was a suspect and was opposed and often persecuted by church leadership of the time. The members of the revival made it as one of their policies that they would not leave their Churches to form one of their own. They formed their committed partnership, revival fellowships and strategically placed themselves to spread their convictions through conventions within their churches. This long patient journey has given great dividends in influencing the missionary founded churches with the East Africa Revival spirituality. Today, ninety percent of the said church leadership is nurtured and influenced by the said revival spirituality. [See also in my book: Reorienting A Church for Accelerated Growth, Uzima Press, 2003]. It is this third, reaction I would recommend for the Evangelical voice in the world wide Anglican Communion as we struggle in the current challenges facing the communion.

*May God bless us all. Amen*

Bishop Samson M.Mwaluda, 1 October 2005.

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