**BISHOPS’JOINT STATEMENT FROM JERUSALEM MEETING OF LINKS DIOCESES 2015**

Between April 27th and May 3rd 2015 the Bishops of Kiteto, Leicester, Mount Kilimanjaro, Trichy and Wyoming and clerical colleagues met in Jerusalem to hold conversations looking to develop further the existing links, building on the agreements made in Trichy in 2014. Time was also given to worshipping together and visiting Christian sites in the Holy Land, reflecting together on these through prayer and the relevant scriptural passages. Jerusalem was chosen not only because it is “neutral territory” for the five dioceses but also because of its significance for us as Christians and because of its multi-faith, multi-cultural context. The context, journeying together to holy sites and being immersed in scriptural reflections, all contributed to continuing to build relationships and mutual understanding in a place of both blessedness and conflict. In so doing we are consciously seeking to model difference without division within the Anglican Communion. The Bishops and colleagues from four continents continue to find these meetings and their partnership in the gospel to be a time of experiencing the prompting of the Holy Spirit, a place of encouragement, learning and promise, and a vital means of mutual understanding at a time in the life of the Anglican Communion when the possibilities of misunderstanding, caricaturing and polarisation are all too apparent. The bishops are committed to work and witness together and refuse to allow (potentially distracting) differences to eclipse their primary unity of faith in Jesus Christ and their common mission and ministry in His Holy name. Further to the conversations the five bishops agreed the following affirmations, commitments and resolutions;

**Affirmations:**

Re-affirm the affirmations agreed in Feb 2014, namely:

1. Joy in the partnerships already shared between dioceses, a continuing honouring of agreements already in place and commitment to more fully realising the promise these global links hold for future mission and ministry
2. The contribution of each other to God’s mission in the world
3. The continuing need to listen, learn and be enriched by each other through a deepening process of engagement
4. At diocesan, church community and individual levels affirming the significance of mutual support, encouragement and challenge in nurturing relationships across cultures as an expression of our communion in the Body of Christ and our openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.
5. The developing of processes at diocesan and local level to enhance local mission (eg in growth of the church, depth of discipleship and engagement with the wider community) through our interactions and mutual resourcing.

**Commitments:**

The Bishops’ re-affirm the affirmations agreed in Feb 2014, namely:

1. A spiritual and theological pilgrimage together of intensifying relationships, modelling a microcosm of the Anglican communion through mutual trust, sharing and cooperation in furthering God’s mission
2. Continually asking how we partner together in ways which keep Jesus Christ as our focus and centre, exploring how we understand Jesus Christ and our following of Christ in our different cultures.
3. Exploring in our own lives and that of our dioceses through these relationships how to develop greater transparency, honesty, mutual accountability, self-critique and openness to transformation.
4. Strengthening bi-lateral and other linkages between the five dioceses as the Holy Spirit leads, taking seriously the work of prayerful discernment and missional experimentation
5. Extending the present partnering more widely to leaders and Christian communities within our dioceses
6. Take seriously one another’s challenges (eg corruption, clergy training, growth, poverty, wealth etc) and collaborate practically, prophetically and persistently on addressing such challenges.
7. Take seriously the differences in modes of communication between our cultures and endeavour to be mutually understanding, flexible and responsive in communicating

**Resolutions:**

The Bishops’ resolve to;

1. Focus on the training and development of ministers and ministry, especially in Kiteto diocese, via bi-lateral as well as multi-lateral work together. This will include visits of curates, young people and others to link dioceses, sharing of resources such as leadership programmes and grass-roots worker training, encourage, recognise and promote women’s ministry and discipleship, and exploring other possibilities such as cross-links sabbatical opportunities, provision of temporary lecturers, sponsoring refresher courses for Kiteto clergy, Trichy clergy visiting Kiteto clergy 1-1 etc
2. Initiate a Links Sunday on the first Sunday after Epiphany (starting 2016) when churches in our five dioceses are resourced with prayers, pictures, maps, videos etc enabling worship on that date to focus on prayer and thanksgiving for our link dioceses, their work and witness. Responsibility for resourcing the Links Sunday will be held by a designated person in each diocese, and Wyoming diocese provided with contact details of this person.
3. Coordinate the Links relationships from Wyoming diocese, which will ensure good communications between dioceses, flag up-coming events and remind partners of their commitments and resolutions.
4. Continue to be in quarterly contact (July, Oct, Jan & May) with one another as bishops between face-to-face meetings through coordinated communications and so forge a sense of on-going relationship and journeying together. These communiques will be prompted by the coordinating hub at Wyoming Diocese.
5. On each future occasion of meeting to focus on a particular theme – such as growth, clergy development, interfaith engagement etc. The theme for Wyoming 2017 is to be agreed in Leicester 2016.
6. In the service of these commitments, it was agreed to meet in Leicester in 2016 when the new Bishop of Leicester is appointed and invite Canon Mike Harrison to facilitate this meeting, subject to the new Bishop of Leicester’s agreement. Beyond this to plan to meet in Wyoming Diocese in Sept 2017, with financial assistance for travel being provided if needed jointly by Leicester and Wyoming dioceses.
7. Share this statement with the relevant church bodies of our dioceses, inviting consideration of the affirmations and commitments outlined above with a view to deeper relationships in Christ between one another’s dioceses.
8. To review and update this document in Wyoming 2017.

……………………………….. Rt Revd Isaiah Chambala, Bishop of Kiteto

……………………………….. Rt Revd Tim Stevens, Bishop of Leicester

……………………………….. Rt Revd Stanley Hotay, Bishop of Mount Kilimanjaro

……………………………….. Rt Revd Paul Vasanthakumar, Bishop ofTrichy

……………………………….. Rt Revd John Smylie, Bishop of Wyoming

……………………………….. Canon David Mnankali, Mount Kilimanjaro Diocese

……………………………….. Canon Sue Field, Leicester Diocese

……………………………….. Canon Michael Madeha, Kiteto Diocese

……………………………….. Revd Suresh Kumar, Trichy Diocese

……………………………….. Very Rev Lori Modesitt , Wyoming Diocese

……………………………….. Canon Mike Harrison, Leicester Diocese

Feast of St Philip and St James: 1st May 2015