

Draft Proposal for Overseas AEO

To: Ekklesia Society Primates and Bishops
NACDP
From: Alison Barfoot
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Background on the Need

The number of clergy, congregations with priests, and unincorporated congregations without priests who are looking for alternative episcopal oversight and affiliation through the Global South Anglican community is increasing. There have been occasional incidences where a priest and a congregation have been "picked up" by an "offshore" bishop and diocese, e.g., Bolivia, Uganda (Bunyoro-Kitara), Malawi, etc.

With the growing interest in these kinds of relationships, it seems prudent to discuss a streamlined process in which these relationships can be pursued, facilitated, and accountable, particularly with African bishops and dioceses who have been so supportive and forthcoming with a willingness to help.

After several conversations with Bill Atwood of Ekklesia, John Guernsey, Martyn Minns, and some clergy seeking "offshore" AEO, this proposal is being submitted as a draft for consideration of a process and protocol for establishing Overseas AEO as an interim stage on the way towards the realignment of Anglicanism in North America and the re-establishment of biblically orthodox faith as normative in North American Anglicanism.

This draft proposal reflects initial tentative steps and recognizes that there is still a lot of work to be done to think through structures that release Great Commission mission and ministry.

Draft Proposal

The analogy of citizenship seems helpful in this discussion. Ecclesiastical citizenship is being equated with canonical residency.

The process of moving into "Offshore" AEO would consist of one to three phases, depending on the situation.

Phase One is the phase of "Dual Citizenship", and for some clergy, this may be all that is necessary. For others it is the first step towards full AEO. The concept of "dual citizenship" is that a priest stays canonically resident in his or her ECUSA diocese, but also becomes canonically resident in an offshore diocese. The precedent for this is the many ECUSA clergy who are already honorary canons of overseas dioceses. The question then becomes: Which offshore diocese? And, how is that diocese and bishop selected? The proposed governing principle would be that these connections follow the lines of pre-existing relationships. If a priest does not already have a pre-existing relationship with an offshore bishop who is willing to participate in this process, then a match needs to be made.

This proposal suggests that CAPA (Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa), in consultation with Ekklesia, take an active role in this process. The proposed role of CAPA would be to recommend a bishop, if a priest and/or congregation does not already have a relationship with a Global South bishop. There would need to be some American NACDP structure that recommends a priest and/or congregation to CAPA as a recipient of AEO.

Phase Two: Rector/Vicar leaves ECUSA for the offshore diocese, ideally with Letters Dimissory, but not necessary, since the priest already has offshore "citizenship". The non-property owning congregation leaves with the priest. If the priest has a church with property and leaves ECUSA for an offshore diocese, it would be expected that the ECUSA bishop would probably depose the priest. The offshore bishop would not recognize the deposition, and then would transfer the priest to a Network bishop and diocese, who then provides AEO (a la David Moyer, Central Africa, and Pittsburgh). This would prevent "offshore" bishops from becoming involved in property disputes.

Phase Three: The season of AEO. The "offshore" bishop would delegate most of the day-to-day responsibility of spiritual oversight to the NACDP.

1. The U.S. will be divided up into geographical and non-geographical archdeaconries that are coterminous with the NACDP convocations.
2. Convocation Deans have "dual citizenship" and wear two hats – one as Convocation Dean, and the other as Archdeacon of a Diaspora Archdeaconry.
3. The overseas bishop will delegate spiritual oversight to the Archdeacon, who will exercise ministry and authority on behalf of all the overseas bishops who have churches in that archdeaconry. So, as Archdeacon, he or she will have delegated spiritual oversight of all clergy and churches who are affiliated with offshore dioceses, in addition to the spiritual oversight of NACDP congregations in that convocation.
4. Any overseas bishop who is part of this plan may visit any congregation on behalf of that congregation's overseas bishop to perform Episcopal ministry. In the absence of a visiting overseas bishop, a Network bishop may be asked to provide Episcopal ministry on their behalf.
5. Clergy and churches who are part of an overseas diaspora archdeaconry in the US will be affiliate members of the NACDP with seat and voice, but no vote – it will be like they are "Green Card" permanent residents. They are not members of the Network because they are no longer part of ECUSA, and the NACDP is still operating within ECUSA. However, they will be encouraged to attend all NACDP clergy gatherings and NACDP conferences and meetings to say in relationship and fellowship, as the ultimate aim is the reunification of orthodox Anglicanism in the US. (Parenthetically, perhaps other Anglican jurisdictions could also affiliate in this way.)
6. Clergy and churches that are part of a diaspora Archdeaconry would be invited to participate in Convocation gatherings of clergy and churches in order to encourage ongoing fellowship and relationships.

7. Clergy who are affiliated with an "offshore" diocese would travel to their home diocese once a year for a clergy conference. Church representatives should also travel once a year for a mission trip, and perhaps a consultation on missionary work in North America.

The additional role of CAPA would be to:

1. Keep track of clergy and congregations serving as missionaries and missionary outposts in North America
2. Facilitate and coordinate the mutual recognition of Episcopal ministry by Global South bishops on behalf of other Global South bishops
3. Communicate standards of care and oversight to the Archdeacons, who will be providing care on behalf of all the "offshore" bishops who have clergy and congregations within that Archdeaconry.