

Southwark Declaration posted on doors of Canterbury Cathedral

Press release from Kent Vicar speaks of sadness at having to call C of E leaders to account.

It is with great sadness that I posted the Southwark Declaration in Canterbury Cathedral. This building that stands sentinel over the Church of England has been a symbol of Anglican leadership with, perhaps, the greatest global reach for centuries. Now it has become synonymous with abdication and dereliction of duty; it stands accused as a distracted and negligent parent that has abandoned its children.

The apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders to "pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." The faithful under-shepherd is to guard the flock against the wolves that would seek to enter the fold. Chillingly, there also would be those within who would ascend, "speaking twisted things, to draw away disciples after them."(Acts 20:28-30, ESV)

Each presbyter at his ordination promises to, "be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word; and to use both publick [sic] and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given." We are not merely to assert biblical truth. We who have been entrusted with the precious gospel that speaks life into the hearts of wretched sinners are also called to drive away anything that would lead the flock away and into judgement.

God never calls his people to innovate in matters of first importance. If a leader of the church does this, he has misunderstood his calling. We are to hold out the radically inclusive gospel that leads to repentance and faith. Playing fast and loose with what God really meant when he said what said never turns out well.

As for me, I will continue to ask those souls entrusted to me to hold me to scriptural account. And now we call upon all leaders of the church in our denomination to stand firm, hold out the gospel of salvation and courageously drive away all that is contrary to God's word.

Reverend Stephen Rae

Vicar of St James' Church, Westgate-On-Sea

Notice accompanying the Southwark Declaration posted on Cathedral doors

From a priest in the Church of England :

500 years ago Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses to a church door in Germany. He did it because the church had become corrupt.

Today a Declaration is being fixed to a cathedral door here in England because the Established Church in our land is becoming corrupt. The Church of England claims it has not changed its doctrine but its practice on the ground has already changed : clergy are already adopting lifestyles which are not biblical and teaching that such lifestyles are holy in the sight of God.

This revisionism is causing a crisis not only in Southwark Diocese but across the whole of the Church of England. It is weakening and destroying the church as it has done in the United States of America and Canada. When the church redefines sin and eliminates repentance, it can no longer offer the good news of eternal salvation from sin in Jesus; the church no longer remains distinctively Christian; it is no longer salt and light in the world - see Matthew 5:13.

The Southwark Declaration has been signed by a good proportion of clergy and Parochial Church Councils of Southwark Diocese to affirm and defend traditional teachings about the Bible and marriage and the kind of relationships God wants for his people.

The Bishops of the Church of England now have a very narrow window - from now until General Synod next February - to regain the confidence of Bible believing Anglicans in this country and around the world and to avoid a rupture in the church.

It is often said: Leadership abhors a vacuum. Where leaders refuse to repent and submit themselves to the Word of God, the Lord raises up new leadership for His church and new structures: just as He did through Martin Luther 500 years ago.

Soli Deo Gloria.

First published on Reformation
Day, 31st October 2017

The Southwark Declaration

We affirm the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and their supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. We affirm with Canon A5 that ‘the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures.’

We affirm, with Article XX, that ‘it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written.’

We affirm the teaching of Scripture (Genesis 2.24, Mark 10. 7, Matthew 19.5), the Book of Common Prayer, and Canon B30 (‘Of Holy Matrimony’) that marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. We affirm it is the one God-ordained context for sexual intercourse. We affirm resolution 1.10 on human sexuality of the Lambeth Conference (1998).

We call upon all the Bishops, Archdeacons, and the senior staff of the Diocese, alongside all clergy and licensed lay ministers, to affirm these truths, live by them, and to teach in accordance with them.

We call upon the Bishops to appoint to positions of teaching authority only those who hold to these truths in good conscience.