

## Conservative Anglicans Unite For Ministry In Italy, Africa And USA



Florence, Italy—A new alliance between conservative American and African Anglicans was instituted by Scott McLaughlin, archbishop of the Episcopal Orthodox Church in the USA and Maternus Kapinga, bishop of the Diocese of Ruvuma in the Anglican Church of Tanzania on Ash Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> in Florence, Italy. The “Agreement of Intercommunion and Mutual Labor” formally places the two groups in close collaboration.

The first result of the Agreement is the founding of the Episcopal Orthodox Mission in Italy, composed of Italian Anglicans formerly affiliated with the Episcopal Church USA’s Convocation of American Churches in Europe. The two bishops will share Episcopal oversight of the Italians and appointed the Very Revd Claudio Bocca as Vicar General for the Mission. The founding of the Italian mission was celebrated at a solemn Evensong hosted by Claudio Maniago, the Roman Catholic suffragan bishop of the Archdiocese of Florence, at Santa Maria Maggiore church. For its worship services, the Roman Catholic bishops have granted the Episcopal Orthodox Mission in Italy the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence and the historic church of San Paolo fuore della muro (the church of “St. Paul Outside the Walls”—erected on the site of St. Paul’s burial). The Mission has members in Florence, Rome, Lucca, and San Marino.

Another historic step was taken Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup> when McLaughlin and Kappinga were joined by Roman Catholic archbishops Tommasi and Castellani in an Evensong service at the church of San Michele (St. Michael) in Lucca, Italy. It was the first time in the history of the archdiocese of Lucca that Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops have prayed together in a public worship service.

A second result of the Agreement is the appointment of bishop Kappinga as suffragan (assistant) bishop of the Episcopal Orthodox Church in the United States and the appointment of archbishop McLaughlin as Cathedral Canon Emeritus in the Diocese of Ruvuma in the Anglican Church of Tanzania—actions which the two bishops were able to take immediately. The Agreement between McLaughlin and Kappinga is thus significant for Anglicans in the United States, since it creates a ministry with official ties to the Anglican Communion while remaining independent of the Episcopal Church USA.

The consecration of V. Gene Robinson, an acknowledged homosexual, as a bishop in the Episcopal Church USA last fall provoked the creation of the new alliance forged by the Agreement, giving Episcopalians a recognized alternative to the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) is a member of the Anglican Communion, composed

of about 70 million Christians in 38 provinces around the world. Bishops in the more conservative global south—Africa, Asia, and South America—have officially broken ties with ECUSA due to Robinson’s consecration, which they see as an heretical action contrary to biblical morality. This has caused a crisis in the Anglican Communion, with many Episcopalians in the United States looking to the global south for new leadership. The Episcopal Orthodox Church (EOC) is one of several groups in the United States that have broken away from ECUSA due to doctrinal and ecclesiastical irregularities. Although other groups in the US have developed ties to other African Anglican churches, the alliance between McLaughlin and Kappinga represents the most conservative expression of Anglican faith and order, since both affirm the importance of biblical moral teaching and traditional catholic liturgical practice while rejecting the ordination of women and homosexuals.