



**The Episcopal Diocese
of West Texas**
THE BISHOP JONES CENTER

September 17, 2009

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are writing to you as your elected leadership in the Diocese of West Texas. Your bishops, Executive Board, Standing Committee, Trustees, and General Convention deputies met together in Corpus Christi on September 9 to address the challenges before the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church. These include the divisions in the Communion regarding the authority and interpretation of Scripture; the questions surrounding human sexuality and the types of relationships that are appropriate for the Church to bless; the election and consecration of partnered gay bishops; and what it means to live together as a Communion of Anglican Churches. We discussed the impact these challenges are having on our own diocesan life and the commitments we have to one another as a diocesan family. We want to give you a brief report of how we see the complex and shifting landscape before us. We will also continue to communicate with you as we live together as a diocesan family. This letter is being sent to all 13,000 households on *The Church News* mailing list.

How are we doing as a diocese? The overall anxiety level in the diocese is relatively low at this time, with most at this meeting reporting little or no anxiety in their own congregations, though some reported moderate to high anxiety. This does not mean that people, including us, are not concerned and passionate about these things and our life together. We agreed that the anxiety level would be very high if the diocese were moving strongly in one direction or another. (For example, if the bishop considered allowing same-sex blessings or if we considered taking the diocese out of The Episcopal Church.) As the elected leadership of the diocese, we continue to express our great support of, and appreciation for, our bishops and the way they are guiding the diocese through these difficult days. We also want to call your attention to the Bishop's column in the September-October edition of *The Church News*, where he notes the good health of the diocese compared to other dioceses in the General Convention's recent "State of the Church" report. (Available on the diocesan website, www.dwtx.org, under Current News.)

What are our commitments to the historic faith? We reaffirm our beliefs in the core doctrines of the Christian faith: that Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God (Luke 1.35); that He is the perfect image of God and is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14.6); that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1.15); that He "gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5.2); and that He was raised for our salvation (Romans 4.25). Further, we invite all members of the diocese into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and dedicate ourselves to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28.19). We reaffirmed our five diocesan core values (see www.dwtx.org) of Faith, Scripture-Prayer-Worship, Evangelism, Mission, and Reconciliation.

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What are our commitments to one another and the diocese? We are committed to abiding in Christ (John 15.4ff) and to abiding with one another (John 17.20ff), strengthening the “bonds of affection” both within the diocese and in the wider Communion. But it is not enough to simply hold together, and so we rededicate ourselves to the life-giving mission of the Church and encourage you to join us. We believe our diocese has much to offer the wider Church, and we are committed to offering this witness as a “constituent member of the Anglican Communion” (from the Preamble to The Episcopal Church’s constitution) and from within The Episcopal Church. We remain grateful for the Archbishop of Canterbury’s statement that the diocesan bishop is the “organ of communion” with the wider Church.

What about the Anglican Covenant process? We continue to support the ongoing covenant process. A final form of the covenant is expected by the end of this year. We will then dedicate significant time to the covenant proposal at February’s Diocesan Council. We also believe that this year’s Diocesan Council should not be dominated by resolutions and reports; rather it should provide ample time for deep engagement of the issues before us.

We are committed to “staying the course” together and hope that you share this commitment as well. For the sake of Christ, there is little to be gained and much to be lost if we do not. We are a complicated lot, but we are a solid family. We share a blessed history as a diocese and are the beneficiaries of a wonderful legacy. Even so, our focus must be on the future. We all share in shaping and building our common life, and we pledge ourselves to you in this high calling. There will be much more to say and do in the months ahead, but we want to assure you of the diocesan family’s good health and of your leadership’s strong commitment to the mission of God as it is lived and expressed through our shared diocesan life.

Faithfully (those in attendance),

The Rev. John Badders
 The Rev. Milton Black
 The Rev. Nancy Coon
 The Rev. Willie Davila
 The Rev. Rick Dunham
 The Rev. Paul Frey
 The Rev. Ripp Hardaway
 The Rev. John Hardie
 The Rev. Michael Hoffman
 The Rev. Don Lee
 The Rev. James Murguia
 The Rev. David Read
 The Rt. Rev. David Reed

The Rev. Jonathan Wickham
 Mrs. Patricia Brooke
 Mr. Robert Browning
 Mr. Ted Burkhart
 Mr. Drew Cauthorn
 Mrs. Cathy Chatham
 Mr. Mike Davies
 Mrs. Susan Hardaway
 Mrs. Thurma Hilton
 Mr. Mike Horridge
 Mrs. Kelley Kimble
 Mr. Richard Mosty
 The Rt. Rev. Gary Lillibridge

Mr. Curt Mowen
 Mr. Bill Pettus
 Mr. Gregg Robertson
 Mr. Steve Roederer
 Mr. Rob Schneider
 Mr. Garry Schnelzer
 Mrs. Helen Schnelzer
 Mrs. J.B. Townsend
 Mr. Ron Tribo
 Mr. John Warren
 Mrs. Rebecca Warren