



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

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For immediate release

DIOCESE REAFFIRMS PURSUIT OF APO

FORT WORTH, Texas – The Executive Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth has adopted a statement of the diocesan Standing Committee calling for the diocese to move forward with its appeal for Alternative Primatial Oversight (APO).

The Bishop and Standing Committee of the diocese first appealed for APO at the General Convention in June 2006. That appeal was endorsed by the diocesan Executive Council in September 2006 and by the Diocesan Convention in November 2006. The Bishop and diocese remain firmly convinced of the need for alternative oversight; therefore, the Standing Committee, meeting Monday, May 14, adopted the following statement as an assessment of the current situation and a proposal to actively pursue all viable options. It was adopted by the Executive Council in its regular bimonthly meeting. The mood of the council was both thoughtful and sad, yet it was considered prudent to “explore the possibilities and count the costs.” According to the Constitution of the diocese, the Executive Council “exercises the powers of the Convention between meetings thereof.”

The text of the statement is as follows:

Where are we with the appeal for Alternative Primatial Oversight?

When the Diocese of Fort Worth first appealed for APO at the General Convention in June 2006, it was hoped that a special pastoral relationship could be established with an orthodox primate, in the interest of preserving unity and fostering mission, in the face of an impaired relationship with the newly elected Presiding Bishop. The original appeal was made in good faith and was directed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of the Communion and the Panel of Reference. (Subsequently, it was decided not to approach the Panel of Reference about this in light of other pressing cases already before it.)

As seven other dioceses made similar appeals during the course of the summer, it was agreed to combine them into one appeal, asking the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a commissary who would act on his behalf, providing a special primatial relationship with the appellant dioceses. He arranged a summit in New York in September with interested parties to discuss the matter in an attempt to come up with “an American solution to an American problem.” This meeting failed to reach an agreement, with the PB-elect claiming that she has no primatial oversight of TEC dioceses and cannot therefore give to another what she does not have. Subsequently, representatives from the appellant dioceses met in November with the steering committee of the Global South Primate to present their requests for APO. This meeting ended with the assurance that they would respond with a plan to address the expressed needs of the appellant dioceses.

On November 18, 2006, the Fort Worth Diocesan Convention voted overwhelmingly in support of the APO request that the Bishop and Standing Committee had made in June. A second New York meeting was held later that month, but none of the appellant bishops attended because no proposal had been made for discussion. This meeting ended with the Presiding Bishop offering a plan for a Primatial Vicar, to be appointed by her and be accountable to her. The appellant bishops rejected the proposal as unacceptable.

The APO requests were presented to the Primates Meeting in Dar es Salaam in February 2007. At the conclusion of the meeting, a Communiqué was issued that proposed the establishment of a Pastoral Council, which would oversee the ministry of a Primatial Vicar, to be selected by the Windsor Bishops coalition and be accountable to the Council. This plan was rejected by the House of Bishops at their March meeting at Camp Allen even though their approval was not sought. Nothing further has been heard about this from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Every attempt to find “an American solution to an American problem” has failed. Following the two meetings in New York and the House of Bishops’ rejection of the Primates’ proposed Pastoral Council at their March meeting, it now seems clear that there is no desire on the part of the present TEC leadership to provide an acceptable form of Alternative Primatial Oversight within The Episcopal Church.

The Presiding Bishop of this church has refused to accept the key recommendations of the Windsor Report, has failed to seek implementation of the essential requests of the Dar es Salaam Communiqué, and has denied basic tenets of the teaching of the New Testament. By her statements and actions, the course she wishes to pursue is clear: to lead TEC to walk apart from the Anglican Communion. This is a course we cannot follow. For all these reasons and others, we do not wish to be affiliated with her, nor with anyone she may appoint or designate to act on her behalf.

So where does this leave the Diocese of Fort Worth’s appeal for APO?

While we remain open to the possibility of negotiation and some form of acceptable settlement with TEC, it appears that our only option is to seek APO elsewhere. This may entail a cooperative effort with other appellant dioceses in consultation with Primates of the Anglican Communion, to form a new Anglican Province of the Communion in North America. A second possibility would be for the diocese to transfer to another existing Province of the Anglican Communion. A third possibility would be to seek the status of an extra-provincial diocese, under the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, as presently recognized in several other cases.

We believe that we must now explore these possibilities.

The Bishop and the Standing Committee of
The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth
May 14, 2007

The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth consists of 55 congregations serving 24 north central Texas counties. The major cities in the diocese include Fort Worth, Arlington, Hurst-Euless-Bedford, Wichita Falls, Grand Prairie, Richland Hills, Brownwood, and Stephenville. The Rt. Rev. Jack L. Iker has served as the third Diocesan Bishop of Fort Worth since 1995. The diocese enjoys companion relationships with the Dioceses of Northern Malawi and Northern Mexico.

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