

The Episcopal Diocese of  
Eastern Oregon

*The Right Reverend William O. Gregg, Ph.D.*  
*Bishop*

June 26, 2006

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The 75<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church is now over. At many levels and in many ways it was both historic and substantively good. Our diocesan Deputation worked hard and both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops did some very difficult work.

Headlines and the media notwithstanding, three significant things we did were to elect The Right Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori to be the XXVI Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; passage of the Resolutions responding to the Windsor Report; and, enthusiastically embrace priorities for mission and ministry, including the Millennium Development Goals. At the end of Convention, my sense was that we had grown and matured as a Church and were clearly committed to moving forward in mission and ministry in the Name of Jesus Christ.

The election of Bishop Jefferts Schori, Bishop of Nevada, was remarkable on many levels. The excellent leadership exercised by the nominees set a positive, constructive tone for the months leading up to and including the election. The House of Bishops meeting in March at Kanuga also served the House well. We listened to each nominee articulate their vision and understanding of being Presiding Bishop and respond to

impromptu questions. On June 18, we gathered, received instructions, prayed, listened to Scripture, and sang hymns. We voted. On the fifth ballot, we elected Bishop Jefferts Schori. I believe that the Holy Spirit moved us to elect the best among a very strong slate of nominees. I have no doubt that Bishop Jefferts Schori will serve The Episcopal Church well and faithfully, as she always has.

It goes without saying that it is good to have a Presiding Bishop from our Province who knows that there is real life west of the Hudson River and understands the challenges and opportunities of large geographical dioceses of small communities and small congregations. We shall continue to have a Presiding Bishop who is clearly committed to our being a Church that welcomes and embraces all of God's children, without exception. We shall continue to have a Presiding Bishop committed to mission and ministry, to the Anglican Communion, and to the hard work of being a dynamic church of immense diversity held together by the steadfast love of the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Most importantly, we shall continue to have a Presiding Bishop who is deeply grounded in faith, Word and Sacraments, and prayer. I bid your prayers for both +Katharine and her husband, Dick, as they enter into this new life and ministry.

Our responses to the Windsor Report were in the form of several Resolutions to which both Houses concurred (See our website for texts). Our responses will now be sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury and a committee he appointed for an "assessment" of whether or to what extent we have adequately responded to the *Windsor Report* (WR).

The complexities are far too great to go into here in any detail. Suffice it to say that WR is an invitation to begin a long and difficult process of learning how to be the Anglican Communion in new and very different ways among Provinces that are extraordinarily different on many levels. It cannot be over emphasized that WR is a *beginning* and not an end. The concerns of WR are both about process and structures – the “how to” of being a Communion and about content (doctrine, discipline, and worship). The range of content includes sexuality, our understanding of Church, the reading, interpretation, and application of Scripture, the authority of Scripture, the nature and meaning of blessing and who or what can or cannot be blessed.

Nothing about WR can be dealt with in 25 words or less, or in a short time. Both The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion are in transition. What is crucial for us to remember is that transition is OK – God is there in the challenges and complexities. Jesus continues, as always, to walk with us. The Spirit continues to move us and illumine us.

The most obvious “hot buttons” were the moratoria on the blessing of same-gender relationships and the election, consent, and consecration of GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered) persons living in openly partnered relationships to the episcopate. Again, various media and groups notwithstanding, it is important to remember that this Church has not authorized either blessing of same-gender relationships nor authorized as a Church rites for such blessings. We have said that such blessings do take place and that rites are

locally developed for such blessings. This remains our position.

Resolution B033 addresses consents to the election and consecration of “any candidate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.” Rife with Anglican ambiguity, this resolution was crafted in the context of our commitment to participate in processes of healing and reconciliation in The Episcopal Church and the Communion. It urges dioceses and Bishops with jurisdiction to withhold consents.

I encourage you to read the Resolutions carefully and prayerfully. I voted for the resolutions, including B033. It seems to me that we did do what we *needed* to do for our sake, for the sake of the Communion, and for the sake of our new Presiding Bishop and Primate. I think that we did what we *could* do at this point. The consequences are several: (1) We were clear that this was a part of a larger and longer process. The Resolutions passed keep the door open and the possibility of conversation alive. (2) The Resolutions explicitly express the seriousness with which we take WR, the Communion, and the issues, both presenting and consequent, to the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention (2003). (3) The Resolutions clearly express both our commitment to continue as a full member of the Communion and to engage in the process of conversation, exploration, and reconciliation to which the WR calls the Communion as a whole. (4) We were clear that we deeply regret the strains on communion consequent to our 2003 decisions and the process by which we came to where we are.

We worked very hard in both Houses to make difficult and painful decisions. No one had a corner on the market of struggle or pain or achievement.

What is different and hopeful for me is that we understood what we were doing, what our struggle and unhappiness are about, and what the vision is that we seek and to which we are committed. It is like flying these days. Recently I was flying from the House of Bishops meeting to see my parents. The trip starts in Asheville, NC and ends in Norfolk, VA. However, to “get there from here” you have to fly to Washington, D.C. first. The Episcopal Church at this point is clearly of a divided mind, especially on the topics of GLBT persons as Bishops, about blessing same-gender relationships, about the nature of the Church, and authority of Scripture.

We are at consensus that we are to be an inclusive Church, one that welcomes and embraces all of God’s children, without qualification. We have left Asheville and are on our way to Washington, knowing that we must reach Norfolk. We can anticipate weather. The truth is, it seems to me, that we do not know the road before us, and cannot. It will have surprises, good and not so good. It will be difficult and challenging for all of us, both within The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. And that is OK.

What is essential is that we continue in faith on the journey. There will be grace, and God’s steadfast love will embrace us for this work. We shall all grow. We shall all change. Sometimes we shall get it wrong, and sometimes we shall get it right. Ultimately, it is keeping our focus on the Father who is present through the Son in the Spirit that will get us through. When it seems to be going

wildly amuck, we need to return to the center and the One who meets us there.

We need to be mindful, too, that this journey of struggle and work is especially born by our GLBT brothers and sisters. God’s love brings justice for all. The Resolutions of General Convention have been made in love, but imperfectly so. There is not yet justice for all God’s children, either in this Church or in the world. Until there is, our work is not done and our journey is not complete.

The 75<sup>th</sup> General Convention also adopted five priorities for mission and ministry for the 2007-2009 triennium. (1) Justice and Peace, (2) Young Adults, Youth, and Children, (3) Reconciliation and Evangelism, (4) Congregational Transformation, and (5) Partnerships (both domestic and among Provinces of the Anglican Communion). These shaped the 2007-09 funding for mission and ministry.

There was considerable energy and focus to embrace mission and ministry that supports the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (Res. 55/2, September 8, 2000). There are eight goals: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, (2) achieve universal primary education, (3) promote gender equality and empower women, (4) reduce child mortality, (5) improve maternal health, (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, (7) ensure environmental sustainability, and (8) develop a global partnership for development. More information can be found through the Episcopal Relief and Development website, and the U.N. website, and by *googling* “Millennium Development Goals”. Every Episcopalian, every parish, and every Diocese is

encouraged to participate in reaching these goals through dedicating .7% of our net disposable income to organizations and projects related to one or more of these goals.

The Diocese of Eastern Oregon has already been participating through our extraordinarily strong support of Episcopal Relief and Development. We can build on this participation even further through creating relationships with, for example, The Diocese of Grahamstown and the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown, South Africa.

I commend to you for yourself, for our parishes, and for our Diocese, serious and prayerful consideration of both the General Convention priorities and the MDGs as we engage our resources and energies in mission and ministry.

All-in-all, General Convention was good. We did some serious hard work. We were not perfect. We did some of what we wanted and some of what we may not have wanted (regardless of one's position on the spectrum) but was necessary for us to do. I am very hopeful for our Church and for the Communion. I believe that there are real and concrete ways that we as Diocese and parishes can build on this work for mission and ministry here and in the larger Church and Communion. There is great opportunity unfolding before us. May God give us the grace to live into the opportunities before us.

Peace and Blessings.

*+William*

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