

House of Bishops' Spring Meeting
Camp Allen, Texas
March 15, 2005

A Covenant Statement of the House of Bishops

We have received the Windsor Report as a helpful contribution to our relationships with Anglican brothers and sisters across the world. We recognize its recommendations as coming from a broadly representative commission inclusive of bishops, clergy, and laity and as an attempt to speak as equals to equals. We experience it as being in the best tradition of autonomy within communion and as helpful in our efforts to live into communion. Likewise, we appreciate receiving the communiqué from the February meeting of the Primates and take seriously the perspectives and convictions stated therein.

It is our heartfelt desire to be responsive and attentive to the conversation we have already begun and to which we are being called and as a body offer the following points.

1. We reaffirm our commitment to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 and each of its individual points. We reaffirm our earnest desire to serve Christ in communion with the other provinces of the Anglican family. We reaffirm our continuing commitment to remain in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and to participate fully in the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference, and the Primates' Meeting, and we earnestly reaffirm our desire to participate in the individual relationships, partnerships, and ministries that we share with other Anglicans, which provide substance to our experience of what it is to be in communion.

2. We express our own deep regret for the pain that others have experienced with respect to our actions at the General Convention of 2003 and we offer our sincerest apology and repentance for having breached our bonds of affection by any failure to consult adequately with our Anglican partners before taking those actions.

3. The Windsor Report has invited the Episcopal Church "to effect a moratorium on the election and consent to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same gender union until some new consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges" (Windsor Report, para. 134). Our polity, as affirmed both in the Windsor Report and the Primates' Communiqué, does not give us the authority to impose on the dioceses of our church moratoria based on matters of suitability beyond the well-articulated criteria of our canons and ordinal. Nevertheless, this extraordinary moment in our common life offers the opportunity for extraordinary action. In order to make the fullest possible response to the larger communion and to re-claim and strengthen our common bonds of affection, this House of Bishops takes the following provisional measure to contribute to a time for healing and for the educational process called for in the Windsor Report. Those of us having jurisdiction pledge to withhold consent to the consecration of any person elected to the episcopate after the date hereof until the General Convention of 2006, and we encourage the dioceses of our church to delay episcopal elections accordingly. We believe that Christian community requires us to share the burdens of such forbearance; thus it must pertain to all elections of bishops in the Episcopal Church. We recognize that this will cause hardship in some dioceses, and we commit to making ourselves available to those dioceses needing episcopal ministry.

4. In response to the invitation in the Windsor Report that we effect a moratorium on public rites of blessing for same sex unions, it is important that we clarify that the Episcopal Church has not authorized any such liturgies, nor has General Convention requested the development of such rites. The Primates, in their communiqué "assure homosexual people that they are children of God, loved and valued by him, and deserving of the best we can give of pastoral care and friendship" (Primates' Communiqué, para. 6). Some in our church hold such "pastoral care" to include the blessing of same sex relationships. Others hold that it does not. Nevertheless, we pledge not to authorize any public rites for the blessing of same sex unions, and we will not bless

any such unions, at least until the General Convention of 2006.

5. We pledge ourselves not to cross diocesan boundaries to provide episcopal ministry in violation of our own canons and we will hold ourselves accordingly accountable. We will also hold bishops and clergy canonically resident in other provinces likewise accountable. We request that our Anglican partners "effect a moratorium on any further interventions" (Windsor Report, para. 155; see also 1988 Lambeth Conference Resolution 72 and 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution III.2) and work with us to find more creative solutions, such as the initiation of companion diocese relationships, to help us meet the legitimate needs of our own people and still maintain our integrity.

6. As a body, we recognize the intentionality and seriousness of the Primates' invitation to the Episcopal Church to refrain voluntarily from having its delegates participate in the Anglican Consultative Council meetings until the Lambeth Conference of 2008. Although we lack the authority in our polity to make such a decision, we defer to the Anglican Consultative Council and the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church to deliberate seriously on that issue.

The bonds of affection are not ends in themselves but foundations for mission. Therefore, we re-commit ourselves to work together throughout the communion to eradicate HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and to address the other efforts mentioned by the Primates' Communiqué (para. 20). We dedicate ourselves to full and open dialogue in every available venue through invitations for mutual visitation, intentional exploration of the theological perspectives and spiritual gifts that our diverse cultures offer, and collaborative partnerships for the purpose of shared mission in Christ.