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NATIONAL CONVENTION

July 24, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are writing to let you know where we stand on the issues of the day facing the National Episcopal Church, and by extension, our community of faith at Church of the Holy Apostles. We, along with many of you, have been troubled by developments these past few years over the consecration of an openly gay man as an Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire, and the blessing of same-sex marriages in some parts of the country. These are unfortunate events, but only outward signs of a much deeper spiritual rift in the National Church. The election of Katherine Jefferts-Schori as Presiding Bishop at General Convention in Columbus, Ohio last month only further strains the bonds of affection between the National Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion, of which we as Episcopalians are part. She stands in full support of the gay and lesbian lifestyle and same-sex marriage, which is out of step with the Word of God (the Bible).

What does this mean? How does this affect us? What is our response? These are a few of the questions that you may be asking that we want to try to answer.

What does this mean?

It means that the prevalent way of thinking in the post-modern age has infected the Church. The idea that truth is relative, that there is no absolute truth, means people are free to create their own reality. Which means God, His very existence, His mystery made known through His Word, His manifestation in human form through His only begotten son Jesus Christ, His indwelling in us through His Holy Spirit, and the salvation he offers to each of us is only true if you believe it. The Episcopal Church in the United States is in a real battle. Will the truth of God prevail? The good news is "Yes, God is in control". But how He chooses to work His will remains to be seen.

How does this affect us?

We can't answer that on a personal level. Only you, through your value set and the leading of the Holy Spirit, can answer that question for you. As the body of Christ, however, in a corporate sense, we will focus on our mission: We are called to be agents of God, bringing the redemptive power of Jesus Christ to the West Houston/Katy area. We will:

- Reach our neighbors for Christ
- Assist their growth in Christ
- Minister to their needs through Christ
- Train and release them in the ministry of Christ

So in some ways, it won't affect our day-to-day ministry. Of course, when bad things happen, there are always ripple effects. The fact that these issues play out on a national and international stage, with a fair amount of media coverage, may affect the perception of those we are trying to reach in our community.

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What is our response?

We are called to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in all situations, and even moreover in times of trial. And let our light so shine that people may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. We must be ever faithful and obedient to teachings of Holy Scripture and Jesus Christ. If we do that, God will take care of this situation in His time and in His way. We support and stand with our Bishop, The Right Reverend Don Wimberly who seeks to maintain the integrity of the Anglican Communion. We have signed the following declaration along with other Churches in the Diocese of Texas which speaks to the heart of our relationship with God the Father.

We, the undersigned clergy and laity of the Episcopal Church within the Diocese of Texas contend for the "faith once delivered to the saints," and, as disciples of Christ, believe that we are ever constrained by the plain sense of God's Written Word.

We proclaim our allegiance to Jesus Christ, who alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Savior of all who call upon Him, and to His Word - the Bible.

We pledge that we will teach, both in doctrine and ethics, only that which is in accord with the Holy Scriptures. We will work to preserve an authentic witness to Jesus Christ and His Gospel in our parish families and in the communities in which God has most graciously placed us.

We make this statement humbly acknowledging that we are all sinners standing in need of God's mercy and forgiveness offered through the Cross of Christ.

We affirm our identity with the worldwide Anglican Communion, and we are committed to the development of an Anglican Covenant which affirms these beliefs as called for by The Most Rev. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We look forward to working with our own diocesan bishop, The Rt. Rev. Don Wimberly, and others committed to the same.

We encourage each of you to take this opportunity to reflect on your own set of values and beliefs and rededicate yourself to our Christian community of faith that was modeled so well by the 1st century Saints: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). In conclusion, we are going to stand firm on the authority of Holy Scripture and the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that you will do the same.

Throughout our 12-year history we have never given to the National Church. The Diocese of Texas makes a provision for churches like ours that are concerned with the activities of the National Church. While we still pay our annual assessment to the Diocese, the funds that would have originally gone to the National Church are distributed to church and mission start-ups within the Diocese of Texas.