

A Preliminary Report from the Bishop and Standing Committee on the Invitation to Join the Province of the Southern Cone

In accordance with the Resolution adopted by our Diocesan Convention, this is our preliminary report on some of the implications of accepting an offer which we received from the Southern Cone shortly before our Convention.

The Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth in November 2007 took the first step toward dissociating itself from actions of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church. This decision was made in response to TEC's failure to heed either the repeated calls for repentance issued by the Primates of the Anglican Communion or the recommendations of the Panel of Reference. The leadership of TEC has threatened us with false claims of canonical power to correct and discipline us while condoning or even promoting in other dioceses false teaching and sacramental actions explicitly contrary to Holy Scripture.

In early November we received an invitation from Archbishop Gregory Venables, on behalf of the Province of the Southern Cone, stating that, as an emergency, pastoral measure we and others like us would have a welcome place within that Province until such time as TEC either changes its direction or a new ecclesial structure within the Anglican Communion is established in North America.

The Province of the Southern Cone includes the countries of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. With a membership of around 27,000 persons, it is one of the smallest provinces of the Anglican Communion in terms of numbers, but among the largest in geographical size.

Following Anglican missionary work in the region during the 19th century, missionary dioceses were formed in each of these South American countries, and bishops were appointed to serve under the direct metropolitan oversight of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1981 these dioceses came together to form the new Province, focused on carrying out the Great Commission and maintaining a strong commitment to the traditional teachings of the Church in all matters of faith and morals. It is led by an elected Presiding Bishop who serves as the Primate and Archbishop of the Province. This office is

currently held by the British-born bishop of Argentina, The Most Rev. Gregory James Venables. He is a principal leader of the traditional, orthodox movement in the worldwide Anglican Communion and has taken an active role in the Primates' Meetings in recent years.

At its November 2007 Synod, the Province adopted a resolution to extend the offer of membership to traditional dioceses electing to leave revisionist provinces. In December, the Province received the Diocese of San Joaquin in California. Archbishop Venables has also received several retired TEC and Canadian bishops into the Province. It was in that context that he recently declared: "Christianity is specific, definable and unchanging. We are not at liberty to deconstruct or rewrite it. If Jesus was the Son of God yesterday then so He is today and will be forever."

We have now had opportunity to review the Constitution and Canons of the Province of the Southern Cone; an English-language edition of those documents is being edited and will be released shortly. Based on our review, we have concluded that the structure and polity of the Province of the Southern Cone would afford our diocese greater self-determination than we currently have under the General Convention of The Episcopal Church. This autonomy would be evident most specifically in the areas of property ownership, liturgy, holy orders, and missionary focus.

While nothing will change in the day-to-day operations of the churches in the Diocese of Fort Worth, we expect a significant change in attitude and focus of the clergy and people of the diocese. Becoming a member Diocese of the Province of the Southern Cone would allow the Diocese of Fort Worth the opportunity and freedom to continue to practice the "Faith once delivered to all the saints" without being constantly distracted by the controversies and divisions caused by innovations hostile to traditional Christian norms. Instead, it would allow the Diocese to concentrate on the call of Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel and make new disciples, while at the same time assuring our continued place in the mainstream of Anglicanism, an assurance The Episcopal Church is unable to give.

Presented by

The Bishop and Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth
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