

**A STATEMENT OF THE RECTOR AND VESTRY OF ST MATTHIAS' CHURCH, DALLAS, TEXAS**  
**IN RESPONSE TO THE 2006 GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
– adopted unanimously 14<sup>th</sup> August 2006 –

The Rector and Vestry of St Matthias' Church, Dallas, Texas, believe that it is our responsibility to our parish family, and to our Diocese and Bishop, to make clear our position regarding the current state of crisis that exists within the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA) and the Anglican Communion because of actions taken by the leadership of ECUSA. This statement presents our understanding of the faith that we hold; our relationship with the Anglican Communion; our assessment of actions taken by General Convention 2006 (GC 2006); and our plan for moving forward as a parish.

*OUR FAITH*

Our faith springs from Holy Scripture and from that deposit of two-thousand years of theological reflection, liturgical prayer, and devotional practice consonant with Holy Scripture which make up what is known as the Sacred Tradition of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. As such, we affirm that the Bible is God's Word written down by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is unerring and unchangeable in the Truth which God reveals to us through it. The Bible is the absolute authority in matters of doctrine and manner of life. The Church's Sacred Tradition illuminates, teaches, and forms us in God's Truth. As God's people we seek to profess and live in accord with only that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all Christians of whatever century who have remained faithful to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:42).

*OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION*

We rejoice in being part of that stream within the great river of Christ's Church known as the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of Dioceses, Provinces and regional Churches stemming from the Church of England, upholding and propagating the Church's historic Faith and Order. We affirm with Geoffrey Fisher, late Archbishop of Canterbury, that

*"The Anglican Communion has no peculiar thought, practice, creed or confession of its own. It has only the Catholic Faith of the ancient Catholic Church, as preserved in the Catholic Creeds and maintained in the Catholic and Apostolic constitution of Christ's Church from the beginning."*

We both desire and intend to remain a part of the Anglican Communion.

*OUR ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL CONVENTION 2006*

At General Convention 2003 (GC 2003), the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops consented, by large majorities, to the election of V. Gene Robinson – a divorced man living in a homosexual relationship – as Bishop of New Hampshire. On October 16<sup>th</sup> of that year, the Primates of the Anglican Communion asked the Episcopal Church not to proceed with his consecration. They declared that such action violated both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and that it would tear the fabric of the Anglican Communion. The leadership of the Episcopal Church, however, ignored the Primates and proceeded with the consecration.

Predictably, this action precipitated a crisis which led the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish a commission to find a way forward. The result was the **Windsor Report**, which, among other things, called upon ECUSA to demonstrate its desire to remain in the Anglican family by doing three things: (1) to repent of its unilateral approval of a sexually active and partnered homosexual person as bishop; (2) to declare a moratorium on any further actions of this nature; and (3) to cease the condoning and/or approval of the blessing of same-sex unions. Time was given for ECUSA to reflect upon and repent of its actions.

General Convention 2006 was the moment of truth for the Episcopal Church – a time to demonstrate repentance, or to declare its intent to continue down the renegade path of innovation in theology and unilateral

decision making upon which it has been set for decades. It chose the latter. Its actions clearly demonstrate its rejection of the Windsor Report. There was no real statement of repentance. Resolution B033, which asked bishops and standing committees to refrain from consenting to the election of someone whose manner of life would be problematic for the rest of the Anglican Communion, was a last ditch effort to give the illusion of compliance. B033 is a resolution, not a law, and the new Presiding Bishop-elect, Katherine Jefferts Schori, has pointed this out. It is telling that this Convention, which passed Resolution B033, consented to the election as bishop of the Diocese of Northern California of a man who has been married three times, and divorced twice.

Other resolutions showed equal disregard for Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Anglican Communion. Resolution A095, while rightly upholding the dignity of homosexual persons and the need for adequate protection under civil law, goes on to oppose any legislation which prohibits same-sex civil marriage or civil unions. Another resolution, C001, declared various portions of Holy Scripture to be anti-Semitic, and, to rectify this, called upon ECUSA's Liturgical Commission "to collect and develop materials to assist members of the Church in addressing the anti-Jewish prejudice expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian Scriptures and liturgical texts, with suggestions for preaching, congregational education, and lectionary use."

Further, the General Convention failed to take action on Resolution D063 which would have rescinded the Episcopal Church Executive Council's January 2006 decision to join the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Hence the Convention, rather than taking a stance against abortion, tacitly endorsed unrestricted access to abortion.

Resolution D069, on the authority of Scripture, was passed only after striking the phrase, "That the 75<sup>th</sup> General Convention acknowledges that the Bible has always been at the center of Anglican belief and life, and declares its belief that Scripture is the Church's supreme authority, and as such ought to be seen as a focus and means of unity." The Resolution as passed was watered down to read: "That the 75<sup>th</sup> General Convention acknowledges the authority of the triune God, exercised through Scripture."

The Committee considering Resolution D058, which called upon the Convention to acknowledge salvation through Christ alone, refused to discharge it for consideration, claiming it was too "controversial" and "counterproductive to the Church's mission." In doing so, Jesus' own claim was rejected: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

Further, the Convention elected as Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, whose ministry as a bishop many in the Anglican Communion cannot recognize. In addition, Ms. Schori supported the consecration of Gene Robinson and has authorized the blessing of same-sex unions in her diocese. In her first address to the Convention, Ms. Schori referred to Jesus as "our Mother Jesus," and in her first public interviews has laid out an agenda for the Church which is nothing more than a call for social and humanitarian aid to those in need (*see* TIME, July 17,2006). While the Church can and should play a role in such causes, Ms. Schori's agenda is bereft of any hint of a proclamation of the saving work of Christ. She also rejects Christ's declaration of himself as the redeemer of mankind (John 14:6). Her exact words are: "We who practice the Christian tradition understand him as our vehicle to the divine. But for us to assume that God could not act in other ways is, I think, to put God in an awfully small box." (*see* TIME, July 17,2006) She places Christ on a par with Buddha, Mohammed, and any other human leader one might wish to name. She takes salvation out of Christ's hands, and places it in the hands of the individual.

In sum, General Convention 2006 continued the trajectory upon which the Episcopal Church has been moving for several decades, a trajectory not only separating the Episcopal Church from the Anglican Communion, but from the Church of Christ. We will not follow.

#### *OUR PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD*

Following GC 2003, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Primates worldwide offered wise counsel and issued a call for repentance to the leadership of the Episcopal Church, allowing a generous amount of time for ECUSA to heed that call. GC 2006 leaves no doubt that the leadership of ECUSA has deliberately rejected that counsel and call. They have chosen to walk apart from the Anglican Communion.

Reflecting upon the actions of GC 2006, the Archbishop of Canterbury has stated that the time may have come for the “*ordered and mutually respectful separation*” of those elements within the Church who have irreconcilable differences. Indeed, the Church cannot be about its proper business of taking the Gospel message, as received by and handed down from the Apostles, to the far corners of the earth with such deep and irreconcilable theological divisions as now exist among us.

Following General Convention 2003, the **Anglican Communion Network**, of which St Matthias’ is a part (as is our Diocese), was created at the suggestion of the Archbishop of Canterbury to hold together those who cannot and will not embrace the revisionist agenda of ECUSA. On July 16<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Bishops of seven Network dioceses transmitted a joint appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, which called in part for the recognition of the Network as that portion of the Episcopal Church which does remain faithful to the Anglican Way (referred to as “enduring ECUSA”, in distinction from “innovating ECUSA”). It is our fervent hope that the Archbishop and the Primates will, upon counsel together, recognize the Anglican Communion Network as *the* legitimate body of Anglicans in the United States.

The Rector and Vestry of St Matthias’ Church believe it is imperative that we secure now an effective disassociation from the innovating Episcopal Church. We emphatically agree with the Standing Committee of our Diocese, which has stated:

*“We believe the mission of this Diocese, as well as the spiritual health and growth of its congregations, are both compromised and jeopardized by association with leaders and institutions that, by their words and actions, have confused, changed or contradicted the Apostles’ teaching.”*

Therefore,

- I We intend to work with our Bishop and Diocese in an attempt to secure for the Diocese a meaningful and recognized form of disassociation from ECUSA as quickly as possible.
- II We are looking to the October 2006 Convention of our Diocese to give us clear indication of whether or not this is the will of our Diocese.
- III Failing such clear indication to us, we will then seek an agreement with our Bishop for an ordered and mutually respectful separation from our Diocese. We would then seek to align ourselves with a portion of our Communion with whom we are at one in Faith, in Order, and in the service of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We pray that the Archbishop and the Primates will act quickly and decisively to end the strife that tears at the fabric of the Communion. We pray for the present leadership of the Episcopal Church and for those whom we believe have been lead down the path of apostasy by them. We pray for our Bishop, James, that he will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in this time of crisis, which is making such great demands upon him. And we pray for guidance from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for us all.

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The Rev’d Fr Dwight D. Duncan, *Rector*

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Donna Wheeler, *Rector’s Warden*

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John Stotz, *People’s Warden*

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Michael Beller

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Robert Lea

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Sara Luce

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David Luckey

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Kenneth Matticks

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Van Neinast

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Meredith Whited