

**A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Leo Frade
concerning the September meeting of the House of Bishops**

October 5, 2007

Dearly Beloved:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him.....He will also strengthen you to the end so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (I Corinthians 1: 3-9)

I write to you today after the completion of the meeting of the House of Bishops held September 19-25 in New Orleans, Louisiana, in order to provide a response to the questions asked of the American Bishops by our brothers and sisters of the Anglican Communion. I have waited to give a formal address to this diocese until receiving the report from the Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Primates to the Archbishop of Canterbury concerning the response of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church.

We were joined in New Orleans at our request by the Most Rev. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and by various representatives of the Anglican Consultative Council, one of the four authoritative branches of the Anglican Communion. Those attending were the Rt. Rev. John Paterson, Chairman of the AAC and of the ACC’s Standing Committee, Canon Kenneth Kearon, General Secretary of the Anglican Communion, eight members of the Joint Standing Committee of the ACC and three Primates. All came from around the world to listen to the House of Bishops, as well as to share with us their assessment of our church and to emphasize the need for a clarification of our statements from the past General Convention in response to the Windsor Report.

The last days of our meeting in New Orleans were intense, but in the end our House of Bishops was able to come to a new consensus in order to further the mission of the church and to preserve the unity of our Communion. Bishops of different persuasions were able to come to a place where we could faithfully follow the commitments that were made. This was done by showing an extraordinary charity towards one another as the statement was carefully crafted through many drafts for the sake of Christ’s Church.

The completed statement of the House of Bishops was then received by the members of the Joint Standing Committee of the ACC and the Primates for evaluation, and this week they sent their report to the Archbishop of Canterbury. I am very happy to tell you that with only one dissenting opinion the members of the Joint Standing Committee have given a positive response to the statement that the Bishops of our American Province arduously produced in New Orleans.

The following are excerpts of the report of the Joint Standing Committee:

Re: the response of the Episcopal Church:

“...we believe that The Episcopal Church has clarified all outstanding questions relating to their response to the questions directed explicitly to them in the Windsor Report, and on which clarifications were sought by 30th September 2007, and given the necessary assurances sought of them.”

Re: the response to “uninvited bishops”:

“ As a joint Standing Committee, we do not see how certain primates can in good conscience call upon The Episcopal Church to meet the recommendations of the Windsor Report while they find reasons to exempt themselves from paying regard to them.”

The report’s conclusion:

“With the response of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church in September 2007, the Communion should move towards closure on these matters, at least for the time being. The Communion seems to be converging around a position which says that while it is inappropriate to proceed to public Rites of Blessing of same-sex unions and to the consecration of bishops who are living in sexual relationships outside of Christian marriage, we need to take seriously our ministry to gay and lesbian people inside the Church and ending the discrimination, persecution and violence against them. Here, The Episcopal Church and the Instruments of Communion speak with one voice. The process of mutual listening and conversations needs to be intensified. It is only by living in communion that we can live out our vocation to be Communion.”

I encourage you to read the full texts of the statement of the House of Bishops and the report of the Joint Standing Committee. These documents are linked to our diocesan website at http://www.diosef.org/house_bishops.html

I do agree with the Joint Standing Committee of the ACC and the Primates that it is time to seek closure on these matters and to continue with the mission of our church. As your bishop, I am committed to continue making this diocese a place where all persons are included and treated with respect, regardless of their theological convictions or other preferences. We will continue with our mission and vision to bring Christ to all sorts and conditions of people in our very diverse Diocese of Southeast Florida.

I invite you also to follow the advice that we have received from our brothers and sisters of the Anglican Communion and move towards closure on these matters for the time being. We must concentrate on the mission that Christ has given us and share our ministries in his holy Name. The world does not need us to be preoccupied with the predictions of doomsayers and those who have predetermined the sad outcome they desire. Instead, a world that is crying out for the Good News of God’s love needs urgently for us to be occupied with loving, serving and attending to the needs of all our neighbors, near and far. Let us continue being enriched in the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and grow in fellowship with Him and with each other. Amen.

+Leo Frade