

The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas
104th Annual Diocesan Council
San Antonio, Texas February 21-23, 2008

ACTION SUMMARY

The 104th Annual Council of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas was held February 21-23, 2008 at the Municipal Auditorium in San Antonio, Texas. The Council was hosted by Christ Church, San Antonio. The theme throughout the Council was, “*Deny Yourself, Take Up Your Cross, and Follow Me.*”

ELECTIONS

Council elected the following persons to serve in the positions indicated:

Standing Committee: Betty Mosty and The Rev. Ramiro Lopez.

Executive Board: The Rev. Paul Frey, The Rev. Adrian Amaya, Garry Schnelzer, Kelley Bartell, Robert Browning, Curt Mowen.

Deputies to General Convention: The Rev. David G. Read, The Rev. Ram Lopez, The Rev. Nancy Coon, The Rev. Don Lee, Richard Mosty, Susan Hardaway, Kelley Bartell, Karen Lee.

Alternates to General Convention: The Rev. John Badders, The Ven. Milton Black, The Rev. Ripp Hardaway, The Rev. James Murguia, Mr. Robert Browning, Mr. Drew Cauthorn, Marthe Curry, John Warren.

Trustees of the Episcopal Church Corporation: The Rev. Don Lee, Rob Schneider,

Trustees of TMI: The Ven. Milton Black, The Rev. Paul Frey, Rebecca Treadway (unexpired term).

Trustees of the University of the South: Kathleen Foster

Delegates to Province VII Synod: The Rev. Adrian Amaya, The Rev. Scott Penrod, The Rev. Chris Roque, The Rev. Jonathan Wickham, Stacy Dowdy, Lisa Mason, Cathy Chatham, Jenifer Wickham,

Alternates to Province VII Synod: The Rev. Earl Mahan, The Rev. Mary Margaret Mueller, The Rev. Chuck Sharrow, The Rev. Dori Zubizaretta, Blaine Bennett, Gayle Gottlich, Rachel Graves, Lou Taylor.

The Bishop’s Address

Bishop Gary Lillibridge gave his third Bishop’s Address since being installed as the diocesan in 2006. In laying out the Council theme of “Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me,” the

bishop said Jesus calls us all out of our “comfort zones.” He recommended that the diocesan family study the Gospel of Matthew for the rest of the year.

Core Values

Lillibridge announced the diocesan core values, as discerned in a series of meetings throughout 2007, including seven convocational meetings held around the diocese in October with 350 persons in attendance, as:

Faith: We pattern our lives on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ;

Scripture, Prayer, and Worship: We are grounded in Scripture, prayer, and sacramental worship;

Evangelism: We proclaim, by word and example, God’s saving love revealed in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit;

Mission: We reach beyond ourselves to serve all people in our communities and throughout the world;

Reconciliation: We are a community committed to living in reconciled relationship with God and all people.

“I intend,” said the bishop, “to keep these core values in front of us in the years ahead,” and he encouraged congregations to develop their own core values.

Guest Sundays

The bishop declared April 20 and September 21 as the designated Guest Sundays for 2008, but added that “every Sunday should be a guest Sunday.” “The important thing,” he said, “is to create a mindset that inviting someone to church is one of many important ways to participate in being a witness.”

Camps and Conferences

Attendance records were set in 2007 at both Camp Capers and the Mustang Island Conference Center family camps, the latter of which is in Phase II of its development plan. This \$5.4 million will double housing capacity at the conference center and add other facilities.

The diocese is entering into a partnership with the University of the South at Sewanee for an internship program to create and teach curricula on environmental stewardship.

In addition to the gift of the Brinsmade Ranch on the Blanco River, we also have access to a property near Duck Lake, Colorado, for senior high trip camps.

All of this will require the addition of a staff person as Director of Camp and Conferences, and a search committee is evaluating a list of qualified candidates for the position.

Congregational Development

Four major congregational changes are underway:

Sts Thomas and Martin, Corpus Christi, closed its doors in December after 50 years of serving Christ in their community;

Holy Spirit, Dripping Springs, entered into union with the Council as a parish at this 104th Council;

Christ Church Hill Country has been organized under Canon 17, Section 1, which permits the bishop to give consent for the holding of regular services to a congregation either on a temporary basis or working toward mission status. The Rev. Eric Fenton is priest-in-charge of the congregation, now meeting in the chapel at St. Jude's Children's Ranch in Bulverde.

In 2008 the diocese will begin steps to establish a new congregation on 23 acres of land adjacent to TMI-The Episcopal School of Texas. An eventual parochial school on the site would be a feeder for TMI.

Diaconate Study Group

The committee studying the place of the vocational or permanent diaconate in the diocese has completed its work. Part of the committee's recommendations are that for the vocational diaconate to be viable in the diocese, considerable involvement on the part of the bishop would be required. Lillibridge said he is reflecting on whether he can commit that involvement at this time.

The Anglican Communion

Nearly half of the bishop's address focused on the current conflict with the Anglican Communion today. "Our own house is a mess," he commented. "If we, the body of Christ, cannot live as a reconciled people, why would the unchurched or lapsed want to join us?" He announced that he has been invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury to serve on the Windsor Continuation Group, a group of six bishops who will work on the "unanswered questions" arising from the Anglican Communion primates' responses to the Episcopal Church House of Bishops meeting in New Orleans in September 2007. The group will "take certain issues forward to Lambeth," the once-a-decade meeting of all bishops in the Anglican Communion in July 2008.

Bishop Lillibridge presented some thoughts from a clergyman named Giles Fraser who concluded that during the English civil war, the English church decided that "anything is better than conflict." The American culture, on the other hand, learned from its civil war that "if your cause is righteous, you must fight for it, no matter how sanguinary (bloody) the outcome." These two conflicting views of how to settle disagreements, said Lillibridge, "call into question whether we have the will needed for reconciliation over coming years."

"There must be a better way than either of these alternatives," said Bishop Lillibridge.

He reminded his listeners of the words of St. Paul that Christ is "our peace; in his flesh he has . . . broken down the dividing wall, that is, hostility, between us." Although people claim to belong to groups at odds with each other, "Christ is not divided no matter what is going on with us," said Lillibridge. "Godly reconciliation begins with Christ and the cross." The statement, "Christ is not divided," he said, "offers the beginning point from which our divisions should be addressed." He warned against "linking" and labeling – thinking that if someone is theologically

conservative he is homophobic or intolerant, or if someone is theologically liberal, he or she is automatically thought to be denying the divinity of Christ or as being heretical. “We need to make sure we are building on solid biblical Christology as to what we hold in common regarding Jesus as Lord,” he said.

He quoted Henri Nouwen as saying, “Loving the church is our sacred duty. Without a true love for the church, we cannot live in it in joy and peace.”

Lillibridge said he is not interested in winning, he is interested in healing. “We are called and we are sent to a great venture in mission,” he said, “and it will demand many of things from us, not the least of which is hope.”

New Parish Welcomed!

Church of the Holy Spirit, Dripping Springs, founded as a Mission in 1985, was joyfully accepted as the newest Parish of the Diocese of West Texas.

Presentation of New Clergy to the Diocese:

The Ven. Milton Black introduced clergy who have joined the Diocese since our last council: *The Rev. Steve Bilsbury, The Rev. Jim Friedel, The Rev. Jonathan Melton, The Rev. Claude Patrick Ormos, The Rev. Matthew Frey, The Rev. Scott Kitayama, The Rev. Randy Melton.*

Keynote Speaker

Baroness Caroline Cox addressed the Council on her travels and ministries in some of the darkest reaches of the world. Through pictures and stories Cox led the Council members to places where Christians are severely persecuted: Armenia, Sudan, northern Uganda, and Burma. Her call to the Council was to be a “Light in the Darkness” and to remember “The Privilege of Making a Difference.” Bishop Lillibridge presented Baroness Cox with a check for \$10,000 from the Council Eucharist offertory and other gifts.

The Council was also heard the story of Mr. Peter Alier, one of the “Lost Boys of Sudan.”

Council Eucharist

Nearly 1,000 souls attended the Council Eucharist held on Thursday evening at First Presbyterian Church. Bishop Lillibridge was the preacher, and Bishop Reed was the celebrant. Copies of Bishop Lillibridge’s sermon will be available at www.dwtx.org.

Conversation with the Bishop

On Friday afternoon, Bishop Lillibridge led his popular “conversations with the bishop,” focusing on the council theme of “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.” Clergy and delegates reflected on several questions having to do with the theme. Two excellent videos from Nooma on aspects of Christianity were viewed at this council, one on Friday afternoon, and congregations were given copies of the videos for their own use. The bishop’s Friday afternoon meditations and questions will be produced on DVD and distributed to all congregations within the next few weeks.

Youth in Action

For the second year the Diocese invited junior and senior high students to join Council on Friday night and Saturday. On Friday youth gathered for a concert and party at Christ Church. On Saturday the youth gathered on the floor of Council and were commissioned by Bishop Reed to “deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ.” Youth served at the Good Samaritan Community Services.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 1-2008 Support for Habitat for Humanity – Phase III passed unanimously. It calls upon the Habitat for Humanity Task Force and the Christian Faith in Action Department to prepare a Phase III plan. 21 Habitat homes have been built by the diocesan Habitat task force and diocesan congregations since 1995.

Next Council: St. John’s, McAllen invited the Council to that city for the 105th Council, February 18-22, 2009.

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