



## The Episcopal Diocese of Texas Office of the Bishop

July 25, 2022

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34

"I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15

Dear Clergy and people of the Diocese of Texas:

I write to you on the eve of Lambeth. I have been asked by many of you to write on the upcoming Lambeth "calls."

First, the Episcopal Church is clear about its theology on marriage for all people. The Diocese of Texas has a plan that was formed before 2012 called "Unity in Mission" that has guided our friendships and care for one another for a decade now. The bishops and the leadership of the Diocese worked in a dedicated and faithful manner to shepherd us to a place where we can find much joy in our common life together. The Diocese of Texas will see no change after Lambeth regarding marriage. We will continue to support one another in mission, striving to do good in the name of Jesus and to serve the world spreading the Gospel.

We love each other. We love our traditional and progressive members of congregations. We support and love our LGBTQ+ members as we have done for many years. It can be painful for those who have already felt so much pain in their lives to be reminded that our province is somewhat unique in the Anglican communion. In Texas, we stand together as members of this diocese, committed to love and to serve one another. This means when one of our family members is in pain, we need to be attentive. Not unlike General Convention, Lambeth may be upsetting to many of us. Let us hold one another in prayer as parts of Christ's body. Do not be tempted to cast our friendship aside. Or to move quickly to judgment. We have not even arrived to several weeks of working together.

I trust you will, in my absence, speak kindly to one another and to love one another. Perhaps now is the time when you reach across the aisle to a fellow parishioner or clergyperson, traditional or progressive, who may need to hear that they are important to you and to your church community.

I suggest that you not use social media as a platform for any serious Lambeth discussion. Also, realize other bishops and media are not me nor our bishops.

I wish to say two things that are very important to our life as members of the Anglican Church: first on the “calls”, and then on our place in the communion.

### **The “Calls”**

In the Diocese of Texas, we desire to be an active part of The Episcopal Church and The Anglican Communion. This has been stated clearly in our agreed upon core values since 2008. This means that your bishops must be attentive to our shared life among The Episcopal Church dioceses and the wider provinces of the Communion. As such, we offer financial support and participate in leadership who undertake our shared ministry. The Lambeth Conference has been a long time in planning. The Archbishop of Canterbury and his team have been working to bring people together. Your bishops have participated in leading and learning from small Bible study groups over the last year. We have participated in prayer for the Communion and our siblings worldwide.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has for many years been clear (when asked) that when we are together, we will talk about difficult things – the urgency of climate change, mission, evangelism, discipleship, and marriage, among other topics. Moreover, every Lambeth Conference since the second one, held in 1888, has voted on resolutions. The Calls are intended to recognize that there is no power over the churches, but there may in fact be some shared theological perspectives. At Lambeth we have voted. The conversation and voting on marriage have lasted for decades with different themes. Moreover, the Archbishop has been speaking about the Calls for months now. Videos from the Archbishop, website postings, and news releases have, for over a year, made topics and voting no surprise to me. That is not true for others. Because your bishops know the history, read, participate, and prepare, we do not find any of this to be an “urgent” “bait and switch”. We are prepared for Lambeth and the conversations we will have there.

We are not going to turn our back on each other in Texas or in the Global Communion because we disagree on this. Nothing will come of that. We have to show up, speak truthfully and trust our unity is in God. I do not need to tell you that the mission of the church is to be in community and in communion with our sisters and brothers in Christ, and that is what I and my fellow bishops are going to Lambeth to do. There is no greater gift than to be able to literally stand shoulder to shoulder under the roof of the mother church, Canterbury Cathedral, and worship and be in communion with ALL our fellow bishops. We bishops will carry the Diocese of Texas with us into that great cathedral. ALL of you.

“God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree together, so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be united in mind and conviction.” 1 Corinthians 1:10 Christ prays for our unity in John’s “priestly prayer.” Paul’s and Christ’s vision in the Johannine community is that God unites us through the great Comforter – The Holy Spirit.

The last thing I will say about the Calls is that they are not fully formed. We are asked to pray about them and be ready to speak about them. We do not really know but can expect how we might be offered to vote, but we also need to wait and see how this is formulated. I am unwilling at this time to make any comment until the final drafts are finished. I am sure we can and will handle well our time in conversation with our kin from around the

world as we pray, eat, study, and talk with one another. Again, this will not change our support and love of one another in Texas.

### **TEC's Place in the Communion**

I have served in our diocesan office since 2003. I woke up early to read and annotate the Windsor Report to assist then Diocesan Bishop, Don Wimberly, prepare to speak to our clergy. For decades the Anglican Communion has discussed a variety of marriage and sexuality topics – the first time being in 1968 when it dealt with “mixed marriages”. It is no surprise then that marriage will continue as a discussion at this Lambeth. It is not news that The Episcopal Church and a few other provinces are a minority of provinces in the whole communion offering marriage equality. This means that the traditional theological perspective on marriage remains normative for the Anglican Communion family. It is also important to remember that the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, like other dioceses, allows marriage for all people while remaining largely a community of traditional congregations. We are a great example a diverse community who sees God’s dignity in every human being, and who is bound tightly together by our love of Christ.

Your bishops are called to truth and reconciliation. We will be honest and truthful about who we are and who we love. You may read about this and that in the news. Rest in the knowledge that you know and trust us; and that we will report as we go, and that you will hear directly from us. Division is always newsworthy. Yet we are unified on much. I encourage the clergy of the Diocese that as you speak about Lambeth, you find the commonality over mission and Jesus. If you will find our unity and preach Jesus, you will lead your people into truth and reconciliation.

As for me, I will seek humility among my sibling bishops, I will listen to hardship and heartache and speak of justice, and I will show mercy to all bishops. I believe, as did our first Bishop Alexander Gregg, when he traveled to the first Lambeth, that it is important for us to meet, to pray, to study scripture, and to share Eucharist with each other. It will be important to have your prayers as we discern how to deal with each of the “calls”.

So, we go as sibling bishops, eager to learn from one another, to know each other, to understand each other and our shared ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Building lasting relationships is essential to understand and support one another, even when we disagree. Recently, a clergyman suggested it isn’t about love. It may not be all about love, it may also be about loyalty to each other in kinship, care for each other as neighbors, and service to the world as Samaritans – the rest is pretty much about love.

“Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.” Romans 12:10

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

Paul writes, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith,

so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1Cor. 13 Verses 1 to 13) No matter what we face, no matter what we must say, or be called upon to do, we must avoid being clanging cymbals.

Faithfully,

*+C. Andrew Doyle*

C. Andrew Doyle, D.D.,  
IX Bishop of Texas