

## **Thoughts on the Way Forward** **August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

For several months, orthodox clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have been meeting in various formats to take counsel together, and to place matters of our Church before God in prayer. We find ourselves in a season where fundamental differences of faith and practice have torn our Church and our Communion, perhaps beyond mending. Decisions of great consequence are now upon us.

As we finish this season of discernment, God has made us aware that 'how we now walk' is linked to 'where we shall walk.' Indeed, we believe that God is reshaping and repositioning us for a new season of ministry ahead. Discernment of our future is still unfolding, and perhaps there is a fork in the road ahead that may divide our fellowship. How we act in the next months is important to our ability to navigate even more difficult moments further down the road.

In this light, we affirm the following principles to guide our actions:

### **Believing: We will follow the leading and live in the faith of Jesus Christ.**

Our primary concern has been to understand what the Lord has been doing in these events so that we can follow His lead and serve His purposes. Hearing His voice is neither simple nor easy, especially when our passions, fears and opinions are deeply stirred and can cloud our discernment. So we are spending extended time in prayer and fasting, study and council, listening above all for His voice. We will continue to do so.

As we listen, we remain fully confident in the Holy Scriptures. We will repeatedly test all things in the light of the 'God's Word written' (Articles of Religion 21). We happily live in 'the faith once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3) and affirmed in the historic Creeds of the church. We will also listen carefully and receptively to the guidance of our own Bishops, and of our other Bishops and Primates, whose leadership has remained true to the historic faith of the church.

### **Belonging: We will work for the health and unity of the Church.**

We have come to a deepened appreciation of our worldwide fellowship in Christ. We see the Anglican Communion as a precious gift of the Gospel, a fruit of the Holy Spirit living within His Church. We believe that the Church's health and unity are linked by God in the life of His church, that His truth and love are essential partners in maintaining this unity, that 'clarity and charity' go together. We will pursue them both.

Tragically, it appears to us that our Church is choosing to 'walk apart' from the fellowship and life of the Anglican Communion. In response, God appears to be calling many of us to disassociate with the Episcopal Church while at the same time He is calling others to remain as missionaries within an increasingly hostile ecclesiastical culture. We believe both actions to be prompted by the Holy Spirit for the healing of the Church and the future of the Gospel. We will respect, honor, and support one another in these matters, acting together whenever possible, speaking well of each other always. We trust God to bring us together, in His due time, in a biblically-rooted, mission-minded

jurisdiction of the Anglican Communion . We long and look for that day, and will work towards it.

**Behaving: We will walk in humility and grace.**

We are concerned that the history of the church is littered with the wreckage of strife and division, and we do not wish to add to the ruins. We are mindful that our own hands are not clean in the development of this history, and are particularly brokenhearted over the pride that has too often accompanied our witness. Even as we stand in the shadow of emerging divisions, we beg God for the forgiveness we need and the opportunity for a different future than the one we fear is rapidly coming upon us.

We are mindful of God's weakness displayed in Christ's Cross, and of the Apostle Paul's consistent advocacy of the weakness of the Cross as the way of Christian life and ministry. Because of this, we forsake the spirit of condemnation and the opportunity for litigation. We look instead for clarity and charity towards all, and will work towards any prospect for just mediation. We pray to God for the heart to bear any difficulties with joyful grace, peaceful spirits, and confidence in His provision.