

Truth and Unity in the Diocese

Dear Friends,

Across the Anglican Communion and in the congregations of the Diocese of Virginia, faithful people are examining what it means to live in unity in Christ amidst the diversity that marks our lives.

The attention paid to the Windsor Report, the 2004 report of the Lambeth Commission appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2003, is one sign of that international emphasis on what it means to live together in unity and what that unity requires in terms of limiting autonomy.

The Diocese of Virginia may be fairly described as a “Windsor Diocese,” although I dislike the division that description implies. Our Annual Council has affirmed the Windsor Report. On the controversial issues that are at the heart of the report, we do not ordain people involved in sexual intimacy outside holy matrimony; we do not authorize blessing of same-sex unions.

But our differences with dioceses that take other views on these issues do not require us to take divisive action. We are one Church whose members are called to listen to each other in mutual love.

Some of our churches are involved this fall in what they call “Days of Discernment” in reaction to decisions of the Episcopal Church’s General Convention.

I hope all of us will engage in prayerful reaffirmation of our identity as one Church family and follow St. Paul’s admonition in I Corinthians 12 to avoid dismissing any part of the body with actions that declare “I have no need of you.”

Ours is not a congregational Church. We are inherently connected, one to another. Gifts of one congregation can be gifts to all. The diversity of our diocese is reflected in the



respect we have for different theological emphases, different liturgical traditions, and different views on appropriate Christian positions on public issues.

Truth and unity are not in conflict in a diocese like ours. With humility, we give evidence that no single Christian, no single party within the church has a monopoly on the truth that is in Jesus. Our loyalty, indeed, our obedience, must be to Christ, and not to any single expression of his truth that inevitably will be partial.

We live in a time of testing for the Church. The temptation—the test—is whether we will dismiss brother and sister Christians who differ from us, even to the point of denying their Christian identity. Our calling is to reject that temptation and to affirm the truth that Christ calls all who identify themselves with His saving death and resurrection to participate, together, in His mission. Remember that Paul’s admonition to Christians to respect differences in I Corinthians 12 is followed in I Corinthians 13 by his eloquent hymn to love and his reminder that faith, hope, love endure “but the greatest of them all is love.”

My prayer for the Diocese of Virginia is that our historic generous orthodoxy and our respect for diversity can combine to offer the wider Anglican Communion an example of faithfulness in unity and in mission.

Faithfully yours,

Peter James Lee



Who we are

In the Anglican Communion

A global community of 73 million Anglicans in 38 member provinces.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Rowan Williams

In the United States

A community of 2.5 million members in 113 dioceses in the Americas and abroad. Organized 1789.

The Presiding Bishop

The Most Rev. Frank Tracy Griswold III

Episcopal Seat: The Washington National Cathedral

In the Diocese of Virginia

A community of more than 90,000 baptized members and 450 clergy in 38 counties of central, northern and northwestern Virginia, serving the world through 194 congregations, six schools, two diocesan centers, and six diocesan homes, and home to the largest Anglican seminary in the world. Organized 1785.

The Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee

The Bishop Suffragan

The Rt. Rev. David Colin Jones

The Mayo Memorial Church House

110 W. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23220-5095,
804-643-8451, 800-DIOCESE, FAX 804-644-6928.

Episcopal Seat: The Cathedral Shrine of the Transfiguration, Orkney Springs

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