



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

The Rt. Rev. Ryan S. Reed, D.D., *Bishop of Fort Worth*

### **Resolution from the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth (ACNA) calling for full communion within the Anglican Church in North America**

*"I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3)*

At the formation of the Anglican Church in North America in 2009, the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth recognized the need for the highest degree of communion among Anglicans in North America, and pledged to work toward that goal through provisional membership in that new province (see addendum). The clergy and people of the Diocese of Fort Worth together with her bishop believe the time has come for full communion within the Anglican Church in North America. We believe that this goal can be realized through the bishops implementing a moratorium on the ordination of women to the priesthood until such time as the college of bishops can come to a common mind on the theology of the practice. We believe that the beginning of a new archepiscopal term affords an opportunity to build consensus toward the goal of full communion within the province.

At the formation of the province in 2009, the reality of the ordination of women in parts of the province (with some dioceses not recognizing the orders of female clergy in other dioceses) meant that full communion was not possible. Full communion necessitates the interchangeability of clergy and sacraments from bishop to bishop and diocese to diocese. Without the mutual recognition of orders, there can be no *communicatio in sacris*.

In the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, which established a basis for entering into ecumenical dialogue with other Christian communions, certain "inherent parts of this sacred deposit" of faith and practice were established describing minimum criteria of what constitutes a church at the most fundamental level. Number 3 is "The two Sacraments,--Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,--ministered with un failing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him."

We recognize that baptism is a sacrament that can be administered by a layperson. But the consecration of the Holy Eucharist requires a validly ordained priest. The practical problem of the ordination of women is that we have some churches and altars where this sacrament of the Supper of the Lord is not recognized as true and valid throughout the province, bringing up the question: Can we even consider ourselves a church, by definition, as long as this is the case?

These are salvific rites, as noted in the provincial catechism, *To Be a Christian*. "123. What sacraments were ordained by Christ? The two sacraments ordained by Christ that are 'generally

necessary to salvation' (1662 Catechism) are Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist). These are sometimes called 'sacraments of the Gospel.'"

As this committee stated in our resolution of December 19, 2023, we restate today:

*We affirm that these are first order issues in the Church, affecting the validity of sacraments and the grace that is (or is not) bestowed in such rituals. . . . The Church never has, does not now, nor ever will have the authority to change any doctrine whatsoever. These are truths revealed from heaven. As mother and teacher of the faithful, the Church's only role is to define, explain, and proclaim doctrines as divine revelation from God. And she should always seek to conform her pastoral practice to the truth of doctrine.*

At the formation of the province, a Task Force on Holy Orders was established that completed a five-year study of the issue of the ordination of women in 2017, followed by consideration by the college of bishops. As a result of that meeting, the bishops noted in their statement:

"Having gratefully received and thoroughly considered the five-year study by the Theological Task Force on Holy Orders, we acknowledge that there are differing principles of ecclesiology and hermeneutics that are acceptable within Anglicanism that may lead to divergent conclusions regarding women's ordination to the priesthood. However, we also acknowledge that this practice is a recent innovation to Apostolic Tradition and Catholic Order. We agree that there is insufficient scriptural warrant to accept women's ordination to the priesthood as standard practice throughout the Province. However, we continue to acknowledge that individual dioceses have constitutional authority to ordain women to the priesthood."

With the bishops across the province, we strongly affirm the role of women in ministry and leadership throughout Church history, and we celebrate the key ministry and leadership roles of women throughout our diocese, parishes, and congregations. This is essential to our mission, witness, life together, vocational practice, and strategic planning for the future. But innovations in faith and order impair the communion God willed for us in Christ.

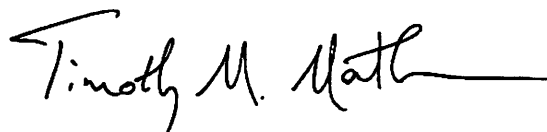
With the bishops not coming to a consensus, the status of impaired communion as a province remained the status quo. As Bishop Jack Iker noted in his address to the 2017 annual diocesan convention:

"We are in a state of impaired communion because of this issue. The Task Force concluded that 'both sides cannot be right.' . . . it is no longer possible to have 'business as usual' in the College of Bishops due to the refusal of those who are in favor of women priests to at least adopt a moratorium on this divisive practice, for the sake of unity."

We recognize that a common mind and heart on this issue of the ordination of women will take more time and will take inner conversion as we seek more clearly the mind of Christ. We also recognize that the call to full communion and the call to be the church in her fullest sense within our province rests heavily upon us.

Therefore, we call upon the college of bishops, under the leadership of the next archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America, to agree to a moratorium on the practice of the ordination of women in order to facilitate full communion throughout the province as we come to a common mind on this issue.

*Adopted unanimously on 4 June 2024.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy M. Matkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Rev'd Timothy M. Matkin,  
*President of the Standing Committee*

**Addendum**

*Resolution of the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, submitted to and adopted by the 27<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the diocese in 2009:*

WHEREAS, this Diocese continues to desire to maintain the highest degree of communion possible with other Anglicans in North America and throughout the world,

AND WHEREAS, this Diocese recognizes that certain theological differences exist among the constituent membership of the newly constituted Anglican Church in North America, as well as in the wider Anglican Communion,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, meeting in its 27th Annual Convention, does hereby commit to continued participation in the development of the Anglican Church in North America, acceding to the Constitution and Canons thereof during this process,

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Diocese maintains its status as a member diocese in the Province of the Southern Cone while the formal process of recognition of this new province continues in the Anglican Communion.