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September 27, 2007
Portage, Michigan

Robert R. Gepert, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan, recently attended the House of Bishops meeting held in New Orleans, LA from September 20-25. Gathering with the Bishops was The Most Rev. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, recognized as head of the world-wide Anglican Communion. Bishop Gepert indicated how important it was that the Archbishop accepted the bishops' invitation to attend their meeting, and said, "We were blessed by his presence."

The bishops approved a communiqué on the last day of their meeting which included a strong desire on the part of the bishops to remain part of the Anglican Communion. The document was close to unanimous in adoption. Gepert said, "The bishops worked really hard to stay an autonomous branch of the Anglican Communion, according to the Constitution of the ECUSA." Details of the document are available on the national church website at: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_90457_ENG_HTM.htm. An excerpt is attached below. As the bishops gathered at round tables for their deliberations, members of the Anglican Consultative Council were present. At Bishop Gepert's table was the ACC member from Uganda.

Other important work, and the most meaningful part of the House of Bishops for Bishop Gepert, was participating in the continuing rebuilding efforts following Hurricane Katrina. The Bishops and their spouses worked on projects in both Louisiana and Mississippi. "What we saw was appalling" Bishop Gepert commented. The Bishop of Louisiana, Charles Jenkins, told the group that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast will not be rebuilt for the next 10 years. Bishop Gepert urges the people of Western Michigan to petition our national legislators to release the funds allocated for the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and to continue to support Episcopal Relief and Development. "Although the insurance companies have paid off many mortgages for many of the homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina, there is no money available to rebuild them. They are in need of skilled volunteers, electricians, plumbers, etc., to donate their time to the rebuilding effort", said Gepert. Individuals can go to the Dioceses of Louisiana or Mississippi websites for information about how to volunteer.

Excerpt from Statement from the House of Bishops:

Introduction

The House of Bishops expresses sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Archbishop of Canterbury and members of the Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates for accepting our invitation to join us in New Orleans. By their presence they have both honored us and assisted us in our discernment. Their presence was a living reminder of the unity that is Christ's promised gift in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Much of our meeting time was spent in continuing discernment of our relationships within the Anglican Communion. We engaged in careful listening and straightforward dialogue with our guests. We expressed our passionate desire to remain in communion. It is our conviction that The Episcopal Church needs the Anglican Communion, and we heard from our guests that the Anglican Communion needs The Episcopal Church.

The House of Bishops offers the following responses to our Anglican Communion partners. We believe they provide clarity and point toward next steps in an ongoing process of dialogue. Within The Episcopal Church the common discernment of God's call is a lively partnership among laypersons, bishops, priests, and deacons, and therefore necessarily includes the Presiding Bishop, the Executive Council, and the General Convention.

Summary

- We reconfirm that resolution B033 of General Convention 2006 (The Election Of Bishops) calls upon bishops with jurisdiction and Standing Committees "to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion."
- We pledge as a body not to authorize public rites for the blessing of same-sex unions.
- We commend our Presiding Bishop's plan for episcopal visitors.
- We deplore incursions into our jurisdictions by uninvited bishops and call for them to end.
- We support the Presiding Bishop in seeking communion-wide consultation in a manner that is in accord with our Constitution and Canons.
- We call for increasing implementation of the listening process across the Communion and for a report on its progress to Lambeth 2008.
- We support the Archbishop of Canterbury in his expressed desire to explore ways for the Bishop of New Hampshire to participate in the Lambeth Conference.
- We call for unequivocal and active commitment to the civil rights, safety, and dignity of gay and lesbian persons.