

The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana

Friday morning, September 19, 2008
Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury

To the Clergy of the Diocese, the Standing Committee, and members of Diocesan Council

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This is being sent to you from the House of Bishops meeting in Salt Lake City, and is to provide preliminary words from me about what has transpired here. Many have no doubt read the House of Bishops voted yesterday to depose the Bishop of Pittsburgh, the Rt. Rev'd Robert W. Duncan, on charges of "abandoning the Communion." The vote was by roll call, and consisted of 88 in favour, 35 against, and 4 abstentions. I voted in opposition to the resolution to depose.

Much time, in fact a tremendous amount of our time here was spent on this matter, which had been added to our original agenda. Also added was a "hearing" on this matter with the Council of Advice, and in my capacity as chair of this body, I presided over this 1-1/2 hour session.

There was much debate over the rightness of this entire allegation, and considerable opposition to the charge against Bishop Duncan. The resistance to the action being taken was centered more on what was seen as pre-emptive action pertaining to the interpretation of Constitution and Canons of General Convention (2006) and failure to provide due process. Without going into tremendous depth at this stage, I will state the pre-emptive action as applied to the canons, and failure for proper process, rest in the fact that Bishop Duncan was never Inhibited, nor did he have the right of trial made available to him. There is much more to be shared, and will be done later.

In the course of the session during which the charge was addressed, the Presiding Bishop's ruling to depose was challenged, and I was amongst those to support this challenge, and this being based upon the irregularities stated above. This action failed as a two-thirds vote of the House was required to overturn. This was subsequently followed by a request for a roll call vote was asked for by nine bishops, myself included.

A question now is where this will lead, and this is unknown at the moment. What we do know is the Diocese of Pittsburgh will face many challenges, and sadly,

challenges that will be disruptive to the ministry of the Church and proclamation of the Gospel in word and action. Our prayers for Bishop Duncan, his family, and the people of the diocese, are important and urged.

I must stop for now as the remainder of the meeting is before me, and my flight home to follow shortly thereafter. I will however, close with a concern. The concern that I have is the fact that by this action, a dangerous precedent has been established as applied to the interpretation and execution of the Constitution and Canons of the Church. The danger in this is that it can, and unless terminated, will lead to the living out of a polity and governance in a manner that is not a part of our heritage nor the intent of the Canons as established by General Convention.

May we hold one another in prayer today and always, and not permit distraction to the ministry to which God has called us.

Faithfully in Christ Jesus,

+Bruce MacPherson