The Episcopal Church in North Texas
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The Rt. Rev. J. Scott Mayer, Bishop

The Second Sunday of Easter, April 24, 2022

> *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

Dear People of God,

In the fall of 2021, I called together a discernment group of clergy and lay leaders to begin the process of identifying and evaluating options for the future of the Episcopal Church in North Texas. This group eventually concluded that exploring a relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Texas (EDOT) made sense.

The Diocese of Texas has been a great friend and ally of ours as we rebuilt, inviting our clergy to their clergy conferences, opening Camp Allen to us, offering financial support when needed. The response of Bishop Doyle to my question was immediate and positive - the Diocese of Texas was delighted to explore something new with us.

So, in January of 2022, the Discernment Group sent to the Standing Committee a recommendation that the Episcopal Church in North Texas reunite with the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. By early April, attorneys for the Episcopal Church and our diocese signaled that, though litigation with ACNA is not concluded, sufficient progress has been made to allow discernment to continue.

On April 12, the Standing Committee voted to engage in conversations with the Diocese of Texas about potential reunification. On behalf of the Standing Committee, I reached out to Bishop Doyle with an invitation to visit our diocese and open formal conversations between the dioceses.

Exploring Reunification

As you can see, this decision has not been made in a vacuum. In addition to the Discernment Group, I have consulted with the Standing Committee, the clergy of the diocese, the Corporation, and the Executive Council. All have agreed this is the right move for us.

I have asked Deacon Dana Wilson, president of the Standing Committee, to assemble a group of lay and ordained leaders to work with the Diocese of Texas to create a reunification agreement document. We are listening to your questions already, as we work on this agreement.

Episcopal Diocese of Texas bishops and leaders know that we bring great gifts to the table. We are being welcomed into the Diocese of Texas as partners with the mutual goal of sharing the message of God's unconditional love in North Texas. After reunion, our diocese will become a

region/convocation of EDOT, with an office, a regional bishop, and a staff. I will continue to serve as bishop of the North Texas region, with my title changing from Bishop Provisional to Assisting Bishop. I will remain as Bishop Diocesan in Northwest Texas.

Over the past 13 years, the Episcopal Church in North Texas has forged an identity of creativity and innovation, sacrificial service beyond ourselves, and standing for full inclusion. God loves all. We are being welcomed gratefully and gladly into a diocese that shares our values. Diana Butler Bass says that 'hospitality is the kind of practice that transforms both the [one] who receives hospitality and the [one] who gives it.' This reunification will strengthen both parties.

What comes next?

On April 29, I will meet with the clergy and people of small congregations in the diocese. On May 3, I will meet with all Episcopalians who wish to attend a 7 pm meeting at Trinity Episcopal Church in Fort Worth. Bishop Doyle and other leaders from Texas will visit us on May 4 and 5.

Once the legalities of reunion have been worked out to the satisfaction of both dioceses, we will hold a Special Meeting of the Diocesan Convention to vote on reunion. The Diocese of Texas Diocesan Council -- their convention -- also will meet to vote on reunion. Once both dioceses have agreed, the decision to reunite must be affirmed by a majority of the bishops and Standing Committees of The Episcopal Church.

What can you do?

Pray for me, Bishop Doyle, the clergy, and the lay leaders of our two dioceses. The decisions being made will shape the future of The Episcopal Church in this region of the country.

Reflect on your own experience in this diocese. Mourn what we have lost, celebrate all that has flourished despite adversity. Invite God to prepare your heart for what comes next. Give thanks for the Diocese of Northwest Texas and all the other folks who have wisely, generously brought us this far.

Share your thoughts with your clergy and convention delegates. Ask questions of the Standing Committee via reunion.questions@ecntx.org.

Finally, know how proud and grateful I am to be your bishop. You have taught me much about unconditional love, courage in the face of grief and loss, and resilience based in deep faith. You are a gift to the whole Church, and the Church knows it.

As we move toward this new future, we will walk together, bound in love and faith.

Amen.

J. Scott Mayer, provisional bishop
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