



The Bishop's Page

The Bishop's Staff

Our Location

Churches

Community

Documents &
Publications

Calendar

Diocesan Convention

Around the Diocese

From the Bishop

DALLAS PLAN AMENDED

I am delighted to inform you that Bishop Stanton and I have recently adopted a very important amendment to the Dallas Plan, which allows for parishes and aspirants to go either way when there is an impaired relationship with the diocesan bishop over the issue of the ordination of women priests. As you know, the original plan (agreed to in 1996) directs women aspirants for the priesthood from Fort Worth to the discernment process and ordination in the Diocese of Dallas, and any parish in this diocese calling a woman priest to serve the congregation to be placed under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Dallas. The amended plan now allows for male aspirants in the Diocese of Dallas who are opposed to the ordination of women to enter the discernment process and be sponsored for ordination in this diocese, and any Dallas parish in impaired communion with its Bishop over the issue of women priests to be placed under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Fort Worth. Bishop Stanton and I believe this is a very important step forward, and it provides a model for other parts of the church that remain divided on this issue. The Archbishop of Canterbury and his Panel of Reference have been notified of this new development.

We welcome Fr. David Allen and the people of St. Francis Church in Dallas as the first congregation to come to Fort Worth under the provisions of this new agreement. Their diocesan assessment will be evenly divided between the two dioceses, and for all practical intents and purposes they will be treated as members of this diocese. Links to the revised plan are posted below.

BISHOP'S SABBATICAL PLANS

With the consent and support of the Standing Committee, I have announced to the Executive Council my plans to take a sabbatical in the summer of 2008. I will be away from regular duties in the diocese from the beginning of May through the end of August. In addition to a varied program designed for study, reflection and refreshment, I will also be attending the Lambeth Conference of Bishops half way through the sabbatical time away. Bishop Wantland will do one visitation per month during my absence and will spend the following Monday morning in my office seeing people by appointment as may be needed. We are indeed grateful to him for this ministry.

My visitation schedule for 2008 has nearly been completed, and it will be distributed to you in the near future. All parishes will receive a confirmation visit next year, but some of the mission congregations

will not have an episcopal visitation. Candidates for confirmation from these congregations should be presented when Bishop Wantland or I are in a neighboring parish. If all clergy are conscientious in preparing candidates, our number of confirmations and receptions should remain constant.

My last sabbatical was taken in the seventh year of my episcopate in 1999, and this one will be taken as I begin my sixteenth year as a bishop. We will have a diocesan wide celebration at the Cathedral on April 27, 2008, the Sunday nearest the 15th anniversary of my consecration on April 24th. Solemn Evensong will be followed by music and refreshments, and all of you will be invited to participate. I continue to thank God for this strong and faithful diocese, and I am deeply grateful to have the opportunity for the re-creation and refreshment that this sabbatical will provide.

The Rt. Rev. Jack Leo Iker
Bishop of Fort Worth

The revised Dallas-Fort Worth Plan

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