



# DIOCESE · OF · MID-AMERICA

## *The Reformed Episcopal Church*

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† The Rt. Rev. Royal U. Grote, Ordinary †  
The Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton, Coadjutor

July 17, 2009

Dear Brethren,

You may have already received a letter dated July 15, 2009, from our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Leonard W. Riches about the creation of the Province of the Anglican Church in North America. I am not yet aware of the content of that letter, but because of questions coming from some people in the Diocese of Mid-America, I have prepared the following comments for our parishes.

On December 10, 2008, Bishop Riches wrote the following words to our Parishes in the Reformed Episcopal Church.

“The new Province called for by GAFCON is now a reality. On December 3, 2008, in suburban Chicago, IL, the Province of the Anglican Church in North America was inaugurated. The GAFCON Primates’ Council, meeting in London on December 6, 2008, welcomed the establishment of the Province with their blessing. The Reformed Episcopal Church, as a member of the Common Cause Partnership, stands as a founding member of this new Province. This historic event marks the dawning of a new day for faithful Anglicans in North America and around the world. A new reformation of the church is underway, and God has granted us the privilege of participating in it from its earliest stages of its planning and development. *“The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”* (Psalm 126:3)

It is of significance to note that within the relationships of this new Province the integrity of each member jurisdiction is retained and protected. In particular, Article VIII of the Constitution of the province stipulates that ‘the Province shall make no canon abridging the authority of any member dioceses...with respect to its practice regarding the ordination of women’.

On June 19-25, 2009 the Inaugural Assembly for the Anglican Church in North America was held at the Cathedral of St. Vincent in Bedford, TX. Representatives from each Diocese in the Reformed Episcopal Church were present. By action of that Assembly a new Anglican Province for North America was formed. Constitution and Canons for the new Province were adopted. The Most Rev. Robert Duncan was elected by the ACNA College of Bishops and installed as Arch-Bishop of the New Province on June 24<sup>th</sup> by the REC Presiding Bishop Leonard W. Riches. The reformation of Anglicanism in North America has formally begun.

This new Reformation is based on a number of fundamental declarations which are made in Article I of the Constitution.

“As the Anglican Church in North America (the Province), being a part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, we believe and confess Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father but by Him. Therefore, we identify the following seven elements as characteristic of the Anglican Way, and essential for membership:

1. We confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, containing all things necessary for salvation, and to be the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life.
  2. We confess Baptism and the Supper of the Lord to be Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself in the Gospel, and thus to be ministered with unfailing use of His words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
  3. We confess the godly historic Episcopate as an inherent part of the apostolic faith and practice, and therefore as integral to the fullness and unity of the Body of Christ.
  4. We confess as proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture the historic faith of the undivided church as declared in the three Catholic Creeds: the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian.
  5. Concerning the seven Councils of the undivided Church, we affirm the teaching of the first four Councils and the Christological clarifications of the fifth, sixth and seventh Councils, in so far as they are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures.
  6. We receive The Book of Common Prayer as set forth by the Church of England in 1662, together with the Ordinal attached to the same, as a standard for Anglican doctrine and discipline, and, with the Books which preceded it, as the standard for the Anglican tradition of worship.
  7. We receive the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of 1571, taken in their literal and grammatical sense, as expressing the Anglican response to certain doctrinal issues controverted at that time, and as expressing fundamental principles of authentic Anglican belief.
- In all these things, the Anglican Church in North America is determined by the help of God to hold and maintain, as the Anglican Way has received them, the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ and to transmit the same, unimpaired, to our posterity.
- We seek to be and remain in full communion with all Anglican Churches, Dioceses and Provinces that hold and maintain the Historic Faith, Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”

It is on this foundation that the members of the Federation of Common Cause Partners in North America organized the New Province of the Anglican Church in North America. Those initial partners are: The American Anglican Council, The Anglican Coalition in Canada, The Anglican Communion Network, The Anglican Mission in the Americas, The Anglican Network in Canada, The Convocation of Anglicans in North America, Forward in Faith – North America, The Missionary Convocation of Kenya, The Missionary Convocation of the Southern Cone, The Missionary Convocation of Uganda, and The Reformed Episcopal Church. As I understand the process, ratification of the ACNA Canons still needs to be accomplished by the various member jurisdictions. For the Reformed Episcopal Church, this means that our ratification by the Reformed Episcopal General Council does not occur until 2011. This gives us a significant window of time to evaluate and work on issues of concern.

This new Province is composed of some 700 parishes located in 28 Dioceses with a number of Dioceses belonging to sub-Jurisdictions which retain their own governmental structure. The Anglican Mission in Americas, Forward in Faith North America, Convocation of Anglicans in North America and the Reformed Episcopal Church fall into this category. Effectively, it means that while we are part of this New Province and working actively to advance the work of the Province, we are still governed by our own Constitution and Canons. This provision, in the ACNA Constitution and Canons, makes our relationship federative in nature. Each Jurisdiction governs itself but works cooperatively with the other jurisdictions which compose the province. This also means that we remain the Reformed Episcopal Church, but now have membership in a larger family both in the United States and Canada and around the world. Our worldwide Anglican Family approaches 50 million people.

In the ACNA family there is a common DNA. That DNA is listed in Article I. Like any family, there are

also differences. These center around issues of common prayer worship, degree of charismatic emphasis, resident or non-traditional approaches to the theological education of Clergy and, last but not least, ordination of women.. These matters will need to be addressed over time in order to advance to an increased level of unity. This will require dialogue and debate through godly interaction. Until these matters are satisfactorily settled, the Reformed Episcopal Church retains its own identity and operates as a sub-jurisdiction of the Province of the Anglican Church of North America.

As we work diligently toward that end, please pray for those who are involved in the several Boards and Committees of the new Province. We have a number of our clergy and lay persons involved at every level of leadership in the Province. Pray also that we might work out the difference among us according to biblical and godly principles. History teaches us that the work of Reformation does not occur overnight. It took the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation in England over 100 years. It also teaches us that failure to work cooperatively together results in sectarianism and further fragmentation as evidenced by the multiplicity of Protestant denominations and sects which came out of the Continental Reformation.

I encourage our parishes to get to know their new family members and, to the degree that it is possible, to work together for the advancement of the Gospel in winning this lost and dying society to Christ Jesus.

Faithfully in Christ's Service

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Royal U Grote Jr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Royal U Grote Jr  
Bishop Ordinary