

# Recap of the Business Meeting of the 175<sup>th</sup> Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas

*Election Results are at the end of this Report.*

**The Business Meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by the Bishop of Texas.**

**Following the Order of Business as printed, the meeting proceeded and as follows.**

- Opening Prayer and Reading of Scripture, by Beth Holden (Dean of Spiritual Life at Episcopal High School), appointed by the Bishop of Texas.
- Korey Wright announced readiness for testing for voting and Andrew Ellis provided instructions for testing.
- Organize for Business
  - A. The Rev. Cn. Marcea Paul declared a quorum upon a delegate from all churches represented stood to confirm their presence.
  - B. The Rev. Cn. Marcea Paul announced that there were no assessments are owed by congregations in attendance.
  - C. Bishop Doyle declared that Council was organized for business, and appointed Leigh Woodward as Parliamentarian.
  - D. Bill Fowler provided the report of the Committee for Dispatch of Business.
  - E. The Rev. Cn. Announced that there was no unfinished business from the 174<sup>th</sup> Council, and she certified the minutes in Journal II.
  - F. Bishop Doyle had no appointment of regular committees of Council to fill vacancies.
- Bishop announced Bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon as a guest and that he seeks to bring Nigerian congregations together. He is currently serving as a Bishop in Residence at Houston's St. John the Divine. The bishop acknowledged Chancellor David Harvin.
- Joann Saylor provided the report on new parishes, missions, and fellowships.

**Organized for Business, the Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle provided his address at 9:11 a.m.**

## **Bishop's Address - In Summary:**

The bishop started expressing being so spiritually moved by Bishop Monterroso's sermon from the 175<sup>th</sup> Council's Eucharistic Worship service, referring to those missionaries who preceded us in the Diocese of Texas. With that, Bishop Doyle decided to address that context, echoing the address of the 100<sup>th</sup> bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, the Rt. Rev. John Hines. The bishop especially recalled how we, the Diocese of Texas stuck together in years past, and continues to do so.

In his message, Bishop Doyle recounted several accomplishments and successes the diocese has realized during his leadership. Among those include that

- We join in prayer and provide real support in mission, financial support.

- Today, we are reunified with our brothers, sisters, and siblings in Fort Worth, and while reunited, conversations are not over as we have come together.

He discussed how God has done - through us - amazing things. He recalled that it was once said that we wouldn't find resources for our work in mission. He remembered when there was too much time and energy being spent towards a health system. He recalls listening to the frustrations, and while there had been six attempts to sell the system already, it ultimately succeeded. He continued:

- We sold the Episcopal Health System with a bold vision, leaning into greater health needs, releasing the asset into new mission and support, through grants and expertise to the people across the diocese and state of Texas to the tune of about \$35M/year.
- Since that time, nearly \$1B has been gifted by the Diocese of Texas, with assets still valued at its sale price.
- With our influence, and by not taking a political stance, the diocese has helped to take care of the pre- and post-natal care of women, and we have prevented maternal mortality. We have decreased maternal death in Texas!

#### **Great strides have been made to assist clergy:**

- Clergy insurance was previously paid by clergy, with insurance rates steadily climbing. The diocese created a \$200M endowment to care for clergy and their families. Every church with a full-time priest is receiving at least \$20K from the Diocese of Texas. If there is more than one priest, then even more money is assigned.

#### **Giving to churches in our diocese and to The Episcopal Church**

- The diocese slowed budget pressure, raising giving to our churches, and is paying full assessments to The Episcopal Church. Engaged in mission work across the globe.

#### **Engaged in Mission Work Across the Globe - Giving through a Commitment to Mission**

- We have become part of a wider community, he explained. We are both Episcopalian and Anglican. Today, we are making **pilgrimages**, not mission visits.

#### **A Leader in Educating Clergy**

Discussing how God is in the middle of this work, he cited IONA and Seminary of Southwest (SSW) successes, lauding

- SSW is one of the largest seminaries in the country.

#### **Changing Our Face**

- We have changed the face of the diocese, looking more like the people we serve.

#### **Growth, Formation, and Discipleship**

- We established over 75 missional communities during COVID, and many are still going and growing.
- 27 campus missions have been established and are active, with the hope to grow more this year.

The bishop expressed his belief that our most important mission is campus ministry.

- In 2012, we began planting churches. Since that time, over 24 congregations have been established, with 18 church plants underway.

The bishop expressed his gratitude for all these blessings, and how we now stretch from the Gulf of Mexico to the Red River.

- A new position has been launched in Bishop Ryan's office centered around reimagining discipleship. The diocese has identified the funds, with an endowment created for this work.
- More dollars have also been funded for reunification.

### **Strides in Racial Justice and Reconciliation – Repairing the Breach**

- We are committed to helping to fund our historical Black churches, and this has been demonstrated, in part, through the \$13M initiative for racial and justice and reconciliation. We are actively repairing the breach. Through this fund, we are funding deferred maintenance projects.
- We are funding students and seminarians.
- We have implemented trainings and programming.
- We have realized our first college graduates from our first group of scholarship recipients.

### **About Hope!**

In 2023, the Hope series of videos was launched. The content of each video was the result of his bishop's visitations. These were stories of hope from the people of the diocese.

Highlights about hope:

- The church is not dying. It is alive. God's power is flowing through us!
- In 2023, 68 churches in the diocese realized growth!

This is because of the amazing things God is doing.

### **The challenges ahead:**

The bishop acknowledged that 2024 is the beginning of a post-COVID event yet also living with it as the virus changes. He explained that we are changing, the world is changing. He reminded us, that's always been true and that we are not the first generation to deal with adverse events. We must develop humility.

God is constantly making the church new, and we must believe it. We just can't just say it. **We must believe it.** The only way to focus on what's ahead is to focus on faith, be the church, and explore.

We bring cultures into our churches. The values of cultures come in through us, and without us changing this, we will become like others. Faith, hope, and love all make us different: a different kind of people. We must recognize God's love for us, as we are not at our best sometimes. We must return to being ourselves and to the Lord and go deeper. With mercy, and through God's love we can change.

The bishop shared that as he looks ahead, he is doing so with goals and measurables, and will share, but also encourages congregations to engage in that work as well, not just at the diocesan level.

The greatest thing, he says, is evangelism, but it is the one thing where we're worst. Bishop Doyle offered that we need no more committees; rather, we should pray and ask God. We should ask Him where is His grace? We should find God. Join people and tell them how amazing our Church is. The bishop says we must do this work. "By placing evangelism first, everything else will figure itself out."

We're the church, he remarked. "We need to be the church!"

He sees and finds hope through the formation of the new initiative that is currently underway. He suggests that we must reject some nostalgia and recognize that our work is not the same as it was 30 years ago. Times are different.

He believes that there is strength in community gatherings. Hope is found in relinquishing; understanding that God doesn't abandon us at the grave. Ultimately, we must understand this from the vantage point of the cross.

Love begins with the outpouring of God's love. We realize that whatever our story is, no matter what it is- sin, shame - God has taken that upon His cross for us. You and I are loved.

The bishop further found hope recently in a very profound way through a letter written to Bishop Monterroso. The woman wrote, expressing gratitude, to the people of St. Thomas the Apostle, and how she has been saved and delivered. She expressed that her heart overflows with Christ's love. She wrote that all she can do is breathe in the love. Carried from being a young woman of losing parent to suicide, she has been healed. She wants to spend the rest of her life to humble service to Jesus Christ. She will go wherever God leads her, and to that end, she is now leading the Lenten series at her church.

Bishop Doyle shared that with that letter, one person's life changed. He explained to some, and reminded others, that God goes after the "**one**" when we're not paying attention. He exclaimed, "What an amazing gift!". He prompted all assembled to consider the amazing stories they have. He shared that he has moved in, for, and through, all of us.

**A Letter to Bishop Doyle from Bishop Doyle**

Fifteen years ago, upon becoming bishop diocesan, he wrote a letter to himself. He vowed to not open the letter until his 15th anniversary ordination. When he opened the letter after the time had expired, he read what the younger bishop - his younger self, had written to his older self - in part:

- Remember that you are part of a leadership generation that even now is passing away.
- Be responsible for handing off leadership of the church.
- I hope you're having as much fun as you are now.
- I hope you love the work as much as you do now.
- I hope you love the people as much as you do now.

Filled with emotion, Bishop Doyle said that his younger self could not imagine how much fun he is having! He couldn't imagine how much he would love being with us. He couldn't imagine how much he could love us.

He passionately concluded by sharing that it is a pleasure to serve, and that he is looking forward to our next decade together, but we have work to do. Finally, he said that he is filled with so much fun and love and wouldn't dream of doing this work with anyone else.

After his address, the bishop shared the 175 Voices of Hope video that includes, and will continue as more are submitted, short video clips from parishioners across the diocese about the hope of the church.

There was a 10-minute break at 9:50.

Once break was over,

- Jason Engalls provided report of Committee Nominations
- There were no nominations from the floor.
- Korey Wright provided balloting procedures.

**Maria Boyce** provided the Report of the Committee for Constitution and Canons.

**Jimmy Grace** provided the Report of the Committee for Resolutions as called by the Committee for the Dispatch of Business.

**Noonday Prayer and Necrology** was offered by Beth Holden followed by a 1-hour recess.

### **Bishop Reconvened the Business Meeting**

#### **Announcements**

Bishop Doyle offered announcements including a new Hope program initiative (Nearness) that is coming to the diocese and will be hosted via Zoom in both Spanish and English. Information is forthcoming.

## **Celebration of New Communities**

The Rev. Cn. Joann Saylors presented and conducted the Celebration of New Communities: Ringing of the Great Commission Bell by new congregations, St. Cornelius, Belton, and Jubilee, Austin

## **Special Presentations**

- **Ann Barnes, MD, Chief Executive Officer of the Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF)** presented to Council. Discussed EHF's campaign **IGNITING CHANGE** which is a commitment to **Promoting Equity by Improving Health – Not just Health Care in Texas**. Focused on their strategies and goals: Strengthening Systems of Health (Waco); Activating Communities (Bastrop County) Building the Foundation for a Healthy Life (statewide). They also perform research to help inform policymaking. Reiterated their influence in ensuring maternal care to mothers in the post-natal setting. They also engage in community work and congregational engagement. Action areas include Health and Health Care Services, Healthy Communities, and Health Policies. EHF's policy work could affect more than 500,000 pregnant Texans and the HHSC action plan could affect more than 3M Texans on Medicaid. (Expanded on EHF's Priorities for Change: Food Insecurity, Maternal Health, and Diabetes Prevention).
- **Allen Kight, Chief Executive Officer of Camp Allen** presented video to bring awareness to its programming for youth. Camp Allen's Rally Day is Sunday, February 18, 2024. There was an appeal to encourage parishioners to show their spirit and to wear a Camp Allen shirt, button, or hat to church.

**Linda Riley Mitchell, CPA - Episcopal Diocese of Texas Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Treasurer** provided the Report of the Treasurer of the Diocese, including the 2023 Foundation Support to Churches and Institutions. The following foundations have supported diocesan programs and initiatives: Bishop Quin, Great Commission, Episcopal Foundation of Texas, Church Corporation Support.

In 2023, churches were given \$38.9M. While given thorough financial reports, CFO Mitchell reminded churches to conduct their audits.

Diocese is financially-sound and remains debt free.

Vote to determine where the Eucharistic offering would be donated:

It was moved and approved that we give the nearly \$8K, collected during the offering from the Council Eucharistic Worship Service to the Diocese of Jerusalem.

## **2023 Diocesan Budget was presented by Bette Lehmberg**

Presented the diocesan budget, providing an overview of the work of the Finance Committees and thanked its members, given accolades to several employees of the Business Services team.

Thanked all committees as well, in addition to thanking staff and colleagues for their assistance throughout the year.

Lehmberg moved that the 2024 budget be passed and it was voted on and passed.

**New clergy:** New Clergy video to the diocese was shown during Business Meeting.

**Korey Wright** provided the Report of the Committee for Supervisors and Tellers

**Report of the Committee for Council Management** and Invitation to 176<sup>th</sup> Council by the Rev. Cn. Christine Faulstich.

**Bishop Doyle adjourned the Business Meeting at 3:00 p.m. and led the Doxology and offered the Benediction.**

## **Election Results**

### **Executive Board, Clergy**

- The Rev. Noah Stansbury
- The Rev. Joy Walker-Miller

### **Executive Board, Lay:** Elizabeth Fraley

- Dennis E. Itzep
- Andrew Johnsen

### **Standing Committee, Clergy**

- The Rev. Bill Carroll

### **Standing Committee, Lay**

- Barbara Evans-Chowning

### **Trustee of the Church Corporation**

- Samuel Dodson

### **University of the South Trustee:**

- Kristine Devine