

Annual Convention Report

The 132nd Annual Convention of The Diocese of West Missouri



The ecumenical movement is the Church's response to Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:21: "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." As his disciples in A.D. 2018 we should join **our** prayers for unity with this prayer of our Lord, with the understanding that the end purpose of ecumenism is evangelization: "that the world may believe that you have sent me." The unity of the Church was seriously broken with the Great Schism between Orthodox East and Catholic West in 1054 and again with the Protestant Reformation beginning in 1517. These divisions continue to this day as though Jesus had never prayed that prayer. We have experienced some of this in the Anglican Communion. During the twentieth century some progress was made in beginning to restore the unity of the Church between several branches of the Church.

In the last decade The Episcopal Church entered into full communion relationships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Moravian Church of the Northern and Southern Provinces. On Friday, March 25th, and Saturday the 26th, there will be a celebration of the 20th anniversary of *Called to Common Mission*, the agreement between TEC and the ELCA at Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral.

We are now poised to introduce to our churches another full communion relationship. Since 2002, **The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church** have been engaged in bilateral dialogue, with full communion as the goal. A statement from the Dialogue Committee follows:

Full communion is understood as a relationship between two distinct ecclesiastical bodies in which each maintains its own autonomy while recognizing the catholicity and apostolicity of the other, and believing the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith. In such a relationship, communicant members of each would be able freely to communicate at the altar of the other, and ordained ministers may officiate sacramentally in either church. Specifically, this includes transferability of members, mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, mutual enrichment by one another's traditions of hymnody and patterns of liturgy, freedom to participate in each other's ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops, and structures for consultation to express, strengthen, and enable our common life, witness, and service, to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

The United Methodist Church has been unable to hold its 2020 General Conference due to COVID. When they are able to meet, the main business is likely to be the formal division of the UMC into an international branch (including some American congregations) and the bulk of the American congregations as another branch. It is likely that the mostly American branch will retain the UMC name. From my conversations with Methodist leaders, I believe that among American Methodists there is still a great desire to move forward with the full communion relationship. **(Priority No.3)**

Missouri Faith Voices gathers and equips a diverse and non-partisan, state-wide network of some 500 congregations and faith-based community organizations to positively impact issues affecting Missouri's communities. This year, we rallied support for a proposed regulation of payday lending institutions in Springfield. While this effort has not yet been successful, our work in protecting people from predatory lending practices continues. At this time I continue as the convener of the local chapter, **Faith Voices of Southwest Missouri. (Priorities No.3 and 4)**

I am a member of **Interfaith Alliance of the Ozarks**, which continues to be involved in social justice issues. In addition to Christian denominations, other faiths that are members include Jewish, Muslim and Bahá'í congregations. **(Priorities No.3 and 4)**

In April I participated as a diocesan leader in the **Annual Meeting of the Episcopal Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers (EDEIO)** via ZOOM. This meeting was held concurrently with the **National Workshop on Christian Unity (also via Zoom)** along with annual meetings of the ecumenical networks of the Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, United Methodist and Evangelical churches. The next EDEIO and NWCU meetings are scheduled for May at the former Crystal Cathedral, now Christ Cathedral (Roman Catholic) in Garden Grove, CA. **(Priority No.3)**

Respectfully submitted
David P. Kendrick,
Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer