



**West Virginia Anglicans**

**Preserving and Promoting a Faithful Expression  
of Anglican Christianity in the Mountain State**



## **MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Issued by: West Virginia Anglicans  
Noon 19 May 2005**

**More Information: Eddie Swain, West Virginia AAC Liaison, (304) 538-7656  
Matt Vester, West Virginia Coordinator, (304) 292-8137**

### **Orthodox WV Episcopalians Restructure in Response to Diocese's Acceptance of National Church Innovations**

FLATWOODS, WV – During the Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia held here May 12-14, a group of concerned Episcopalians met to re-structure their organization to better respond to what they see as increasingly disturbing developments in the national and state level Episcopal Church. Last year, West Virginia Anglicans, an organization that advocates keeping the Bible as the primary source of authority within the church, formed to help the Diocese of West Virginia remain unified with the worldwide Anglican Communion. The Anglican Communion is a network of 38 interdependent self-governing churches (or provinces) that trace their historical roots to the Church of England. With over 77 million members in more than 160 countries, Anglicanism is the world's third largest Christian denomination.

In August of 2003, at its triennial General Convention, the Episcopal Church, the 2-million-member branch of the Anglican Communion in the United States, made several decisions that are in conflict with the teachings of the wider Communion. Most significantly, it consented to the election of an openly practicing homosexual to become the Bishop of New Hampshire, and approved the use of rites for blessing same-sex unions. The church's bishops also rejected a resolution that would have affirmed traditional Anglican doctrines including the authority of Scripture as the basis of church teachings. At that Convention, the WV delegation consistently voted to support the traditionalist position.

These innovations created an international Anglican crisis that threatens to exclude the U.S. Episcopal Church from the rest of the worldwide Anglican Communion. "In fact," according to Eddie Swain, one of the group's founders from Moorefield, WV, "at a recent high level meeting

**\*\*\* MORE \*\*\***



**c/o Eddie Swain, West Virginia Liaison  
American Anglican Council  
85 Whistle Way, Moorefield, West Virginia 26836**



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**West Virginia Anglicans**  
***Orthodox WV Episcopalians Restructure***  
**May 18, 2005**  
*page 2 of 4*

of the Communion's leadership, the Episcopal Church was effectively suspended from the Communion. We were asked not to send representatives to meetings of the international Anglican Consultative Council for at least the next three years. This Council is one of Anglicanism's primary policy making bodies. Our group has been in contact with national and international networks, so we anticipated these types of events in advance, and we felt called to do everything we could to keep the Diocese of West Virginia in the Anglican Communion."

Swain also serves as the West Virginia liaison to the American Anglican Council, a national group that affirms Biblical authority and Anglican orthodoxy in the Episcopal Church. He recalled last year's Diocesan Convention. "West Virginia Anglicans proposed several resolutions at the May 2004 Diocesan Convention to help the Diocese of West Virginia remain aligned with the traditional teachings of the worldwide Communion. One of those resolutions was substantially approved. Still, the Diocese did not adopt a firm position one way or the other about endorsing or rejecting the new teachings of the national church, and that was a disappointment."

"We have been concerned about the decline in membership in the Diocese, which has lost 6% of its membership since 2002 – 4% last year alone, so the pace of decline is accelerating at an alarming rate," says Matt Vester of Morgantown, another founder and the group's current Statewide Coordinator. Vester continued, "Based on these and other trends in the Diocese as well as recent developments in the Communion, we knew that it was time for our group to re-structure itself for a different purpose. We were right, because this year's convention finally made an official legislative response to the crisis in the national church, choosing to reject the mechanisms offered by the rest of the Anglican Communion that would have repaired the break between it and the US church."

This year, West Virginia Anglicans submitted only one resolution for consideration at the Convention. Laurie Swain of Moorefield, the group's secretary, explained, "Our resolution called for the Diocese to commit itself to remaining in the Anglican Communion regardless of what the national Episcopal Church decides to do in terms of abandoning Scripture. In addition, the resolution asked West Virginia to comply with the Anglican Communion's *Windsor Report*, which calls on the U.S. Episcopal Church to repent and apologize for advancing non-Biblical teachings. As part of this compliance, the resolution asked West Virginia to re-affirm traditional Anglican teachings on human sexuality and the authority of Scripture."

Kip Power, the group's coordinator for the greater Kanawha County area helped to author the group's resolution. Power gave an impassioned plea for the resolution to be accepted as originally written saying, "It is folly (or worse) for us to think that we are loving one another in

**\*\*\* MORE \*\*\***

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**West Virginia Anglicans**

***Orthodox WV Episcopalians Restructure***

**May 18, 2005**

***page 3 of 4***

the way Jesus wants us to, if we think it's better to just say, 'never mind, this conduct is OK' -- *instead of* saying, 'Come, join us fellow sinners and let's show love that is *radical* enough to call one another to repentance, as we continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.' And let's get on with the mission of the Church to build God's Kingdom here on earth."

While debating this resolution, last week's convention "embraced a hostile amendment that reversed our resolution's intention," Vester explained. "In an overwhelming voice vote, estimated at about 150-20, the convention effectively killed the original resolution and refused to take the medicine that the rest of the Anglican Communion has prescribed for the Episcopal Church."

Rick Holt, another founding member and the group's Huntington area coordinator, acknowledges they did not get everything they wanted. However, he notes the positives as well, stating, "I am proud of the stand taken by West Virginia Anglicans. We negotiated a moderation of the hostile amendment that permitted us to get it on record that the Diocese of West Virginia is committed to its membership in the Anglican Communion. We also negotiated a change in the amendment so that the final resolution that was passed calls on the Bishop of West Virginia to work on *genuinely* responding to the terms and conditions of the *Windsor Report*."

The West Virginia group has received support from other like-minded Episcopalians around the country. "There is a large and ever growing network of concerned Episcopalians who want to remain in the Anglican Communion and abide by traditional church teachings" said Eddie Swain. "Our group was blessed when Sarah Hey, from Greenville, South Carolina, who has had much success in organizing groups like ours in her diocese and others around the country, came to West Virginia last week to help us with our strategic planning. She helped us re-focus our energies and set some goals based on the new reality we are facing in West Virginia."

David Bryant of Harper's Ferry, the group's Eastern Panhandle coordinator explained, "One of the main things we are doing is to make a concerted effort to reach out to every Episcopal Church in West Virginia to find people who are hurting. We now have seven coordinators, one in each area of the state. These coordinators will be working to build a grassroots network that can reach out to individual Episcopalians anywhere in West Virginia."

Jerry Burgess, the group's Morgantown/Clarksburg coordinator explained, "Our new focus is going to be less on getting resolutions passed, and more on finding traditional Episcopalians in West Virginia who feel abandoned by their church. We don't know what the future holds for the Episcopal Church, but we want to be prepared for whatever may come next. We need to find the people in West Virginia who want to remain true to their traditional beliefs. There are structures

**\*\*\* MORE \*\*\***

**PRESS RELEASE**

**West Virginia Anglicans**

***Orthodox WV Episcopalians Restructure***

**May 18, 2005**

already in place that allow for this and more are being set up every month. We need to let them know about their options.”

The group already has an on-line discussion forum in place, and there are plans to launch an Internet weblog this summer. Mike Woodstuff of Wellsburg, the group’s Northern Panhandle coordinator, said, “There are already lots of ways for people to get in touch with us and to help out in the movement. And we will be building more structures very soon. People can just come to our monthly meetings if they want. Just knowing that you are not alone is a great blessing!”

Melinda and Carl Thomas from Bluefield will be the coordinators for the Southern part of the State. Mrs. Thomas said, “I have just been thrilled to see the growth of this group. We have over 100 families in all parts of the State, and the meeting we had last week in Flatwoods was our largest attendance ever.” Bob Brantner, one of the Parkersburg area coordinators noted, “I am energized just knowing that I have the support of this group. I can’t wait to tell my friends that there is hope for traditional Anglicans in West Virginia!”

The group will meet again on Saturday June 4 at 1:00 pm in Clarksburg at a location that is yet to be determined. Interested individuals should contact Eddie or Laurie Swain at (304) 538-7656 or leave a message for Matt Vester at (304) 292-7364 for more information. E-mail inquiries can be sent to [laurieswain@yahoo.com](mailto:laurieswain@yahoo.com).

**# # #**