



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MAINE

Office of the Bishop

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Dear People of God called to be the Episcopal Church in Maine,

In my ongoing commitment to communicate regularly, I share the following information with you to encourage and invite your engagement, guidance and prayers.

The House of Bishops and the Lambeth Conference

I recently attended the House of Bishops meeting in Minneapolis, where I found among my new colleagues a warm welcome and a loving spirit. Topics of discussion at the four-day meeting included next summer's Lambeth Conference, the worldwide gathering of bishops of the Anglican Communion, hosted every ten years or so by the Archbishop of Canterbury. You may have heard word of Archbishop Justin Welby's decision not to invite spouses of the four bishops who are in same-sex marriages. Based on a highly debated resolution passed by the conference in 1998, his decision has prompted a variety of responses, including one that is very personal to me and my spouse, the Reverend Thomas Mousin.

Please allow me to share my thoughts:

- I respect the Archbishop of Canterbury's authority to invite whomever he chooses. The Lambeth Conference has always been by invitation only, however I believe this decision is misguided.
- Please be assured I am not particularly upset or distracted by this matter: I am far more interested focusing my energy on you, the people of Maine. I am eager to listen to you, and to engage this topic, but not at the expense of the mission and ministry that is before us.
- At the same time, I took vows to uphold the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church, and I respect that participating in the Lambeth Conference is a responsibility of the office to which you elected me. There may well be greater value gained by my attending: I can share firsthand the story of how our congregations have been transformed because of our wide welcome of all people.
- I believe Maine's experience of proclaiming the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ is real and true. In our discernment over whether I attend, and whether Tom joins me (albeit outside the formal gates), it is important that we remain focused on the main (and Maine) thing, as I believe we are indeed uniquely blessed with vast spiritual resources to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

I invite your prayers, and welcome your guidance.

Washington D.C. and visits with Congressman Golden, Congresswoman Pingree, and Senators Collins and King

At the invitation of the Presiding Bishop's staff in Washington D.C., and following the House of Bishops meeting, I joined four other bishops (Lexington, Northern Indiana, Rio Grande, and West Virginia) on Capitol Hill to support our congressional leaders in their ongoing efforts to increase the number of refugees allowed under the refugee resettlement program. And although the program is nearly 100 years old and has traditionally received broad bi-partisan support, the number of refugees authorized to come to the United States over recent years has been steadily decreasing. The concern has been the president's intentions to reduce the Refugee Admissions Program to only 18,000 (from 30,000 last year, the lowest number in the history of the country). Given the fact

all of Maine's representatives and senators are strong advocates of the program, my discussions with them over this issue were easy conversations to have. (*Note: the president's intentions were formally confirmed following my Capitol Hill visit, and The Episcopal Church encourages us to fight this decision.*)

When asked "how can the faith community help in Maine?" each of our congressional leaders responded by expressing their concern over the lack of civility in our public discourse. I departed Washington considering how we in the Episcopal Church can play a meaningful role in what has become a moral crisis in our communities. I look forward hearing your thoughts and perspectives, and joining and supporting those of you who feel called to engage in this work.

The 200th Convention of the Diocese of Maine and the Formal Seating of the Tenth Bishop of Maine "On Christ the Solid Rock"

In a few short weeks on Saturday, October 26th, we will gather in Portland for the annual convention of clergy and delegates. This year the convention will meet in two places - at Hannaford Hall at the University of Southern Maine, and at the Cathedral Church of Saint Luke. The entire diocese is invited to the cathedral at 3:00 p.m. for a special liturgy and service in celebration of my installation, and being formally "seated" in the cathedra, the chair reserved for the bishop. Since the convention will be in business session, I will also deliver my convention address during this worship service.

It is my fervent hope that our time and worship at St. Luke's will not only be an occasion to praise God, but also a time to proclaim our unity as a diocesan community: this is about us, not solely about me. All are invited and welcome - this part of the convention agenda is for everyone. (*Please note: congregations are encouraged to bring or drop off parish banners; singers are invited to join the choir, and acolytes are welcome to participate as well!*)

- **Banners:** Please drop off your parish banner at the Cathedral between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. on Saturday the 26th. Someone will meet you at the Tower Doors adjacent to the circle in front of the church so there's no need to park. Questions? Please email Lisle Blind at cblind.sailing@gmail.com.
- **Singers:** Anyone who wishes to join the choir, should sign up here: <http://bit.ly/choir-stlukes>. Rehearsal will be on Saturday the 26th at 1:30 p.m. in the Nave. Please bring your vestments or robes. If you have questions, please be in touch with Albert Melton, Cathedral Musician, at amelton@stlukesportland.org or (207) 772-5434.
- **Acolytes:** Acolytes should sign up at: <http://bit.ly/acolytes-stlukes>. Reach out to David Savage at dlsavage17@maine.rr.com or (207) 232-0650 with any questions.
- **Greeters:** Want to help greet guests at the service? Please sign up here: <http://bit.ly/greet-stlukes>. Greeters should meet in the front circle of the Cathedral at 2:00 p.m. and bring their church nametag. Contact George Cooper geolcooper@gmail.com or (207) 233-5480 with any questions.

Understanding there are many who will be unable to join us in Portland the 26th, the entire convention - both the business meeting at the University and the liturgy at the cathedral - will be live-streamed at episcopalmaine.org, where updates on the convention and worship service will be posted over the coming weeks.

I look forward to our being together!

Faithfully in Christ,



The Right Reverend Thomas J. Brown
Bishop of Maine