



**The Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes**  
3810 Ridgewood Road, Copley, OH 44321

7.23.20

Dear ADGL Clergy and Parish Leaders,

For the past few months our diocese has been in the process of prayerfully searching for our next diocesan bishop. Part of that process has involved the Standing Committee creating a set of criteria for selecting a new diocesan bishop. One criterion we included was that our next diocesan bishop should be a man who personally ordains both men and women.

Recently, a group of faithful clergy and lay leaders expressed serious and honest enquiries regarding the decision we made as a Standing Committee to include personally ordaining women to the presbyterate as part of the job requirement of our Bishop Ordinary. They asked if we would reconsider our decision and also include nominees who, though unable to personally ordain women to the presbyterate, would be committed to ensure that both men and women are ordained to the presbyterate in the ADGL. They graciously communicated their disagreement both in writing and met with members of the Standing Committee over ZOOM. Christian leaders do not always agree on matters in the church. Being willing to talk and listen to each other is a godly action. We are grateful and respect our brothers and sisters for reaching out to us that we might do that.

We have spent time in heartfelt reflection and deliberation over this important matter, and we have come to the conclusion that the best way forward for our diocese as we select a Bishop Ordinary is to let this decision stand. The Standing Committee's deliberation and reflection involved consultation and discussion with Bishop Bill Murdoch, who represents the ACNA in the search process for bishops.

Most leadership decisions are judgments. We recognize that not everyone will agree with this decision. We also know that if we made a different decision in this matter, others would not agree with that decision. As you know, one of our jobs as a Standing Committee is to weigh matters and then make decisions knowing that at times some in our diocese will not agree with the final decision. We do not desire nor seek disunity or disagreement about these things, but they are, at times seemingly, inevitable. We have prayed, we have talked, we have listened, we have wrestled, and our judgment is that this is still the best way forward.

Here are the reasons why we believe this.

- We recognize that all of us are committed to the ADGL continuing to be a diocese that ordains women and promotes them as rectors and to positions of authority. To our best way of thinking, to rightly facilitate that we need a diocesan bishop who will personally ordain women to the presbyterate and approve them as rectors. Having a diocesan bishop who holds this position has been the historic norm and practice from the beginning of our diocese and has built a culture that welcomes both men and women into ordained ministry. We believe maintaining that norm and practice is the best way forward.

- Title III, Canon 1, Section 4 of our provincial canons defines the ministry of bishop in this way,

*Concerning Norms for Ordination Generally Except as hereinafter provided, the norms for ordination shall be determined by the Bishop having jurisdiction.*

In addition, Title I, Canon 6, Section 4 states,

*Concerning Congregational Clergy and Lay Employees  
No Rector may be called to or dismissed from a congregation without the consent of the Bishop. No other clergy may be called or dismissed from a congregation without consultation with the Bishop.*

Given that it is the diocesan bishop who ordains, determines the norms for ordination, and gives final consent to placement of clergy, we believe it is best for the ADGL to have a diocesan bishop who personally ordains women to the priesthood to ensure that our diocese maintains this historic norm and practice through the diocesan bishop's ministry.

- The question of how to define dual integrity has arisen in our conversations. Frankly, we recognize there are different ways this is interpreted. As part of our deliberation, we invited Bishop Bill Murdoch to meet with us. Bishop Murdoch serves the province by assisting dioceses as they select new bishops. We asked him how the province defines dual integrity as it applies to a diocese. His answer was that the Archbishop and the Deans of the Province understand a dual integrity diocese to be a diocese that has a diocesan bishop who personally ordains both men and women to the presbyterate and ordains and welcomes clergy who both affirm and do not affirm women's ordination. Given this definition, it seems best for us to continue to have a diocesan bishop who personally ordains both men and women to the priesthood.
- We explored what other dioceses who are dual integrity have done regarding the question of whether to make personally ordaining women to the priesthood a requirement for the bishop we select. Both the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Anglican Diocese in New England are dual integrity dioceses, and both have recently selected new bishops. In each case, the diocese made it a requirement that candidates for diocesan bishop be men who will personally ordain women to the presbyterate and approve them as rectors. Additionally, single integrity dioceses do not consider accepting nominees who subscribe to the integrity of ordaining women; this is their normal practice. We see this as a strong precedent in support of our decision to require that candidates for diocesan bishop personally ordain women to the presbyterate and approve them as rectors.
- Another matter we considered seriously was how the women presbyters and rectors of the ADGL would relate to a diocesan bishop who does not personally ordain women. Our sense, from conversation with some of our women clergy, is that it would be difficult for them to serve under a diocesan bishop who does not fully affirm their orders and ministry. We want to make sure every clergy person in our diocese is fully affirmed and supported in his or her orders and ministry: both men and women. Our concern is that a diocesan bishop who does not personally ordain women to the priesthood but who would ensure it is done by another bishop would create a situation where not every clergy member of our diocese is valued and supported.

- We are also taking into consideration the position of the Provincial Deans and the College of Bishops, who have stated that they will not promote a nominee in any diocesan search process who does not continue in the tradition and norm of that diocese as it concerns the ordination of women. According to their best wisdom, the time to decide this issue is not during the selection of a diocesan bishop as this issue will polarize people and interfere with discerning who God is calling as the new diocesan bishop. This is their stated practice, and we jeopardize the process here in our diocese if we do otherwise. Instead, we are open to having a suffragan bishop who does not ordain women to ensure our respect of those who do not subscribe to women's ordination.

We are in a very difficult season as a diocese. We are living with a global pandemic that is hindering our ability to meet and fully function in the manner in which we want to function. It also creates stress and anxiety for all of us. We are dwelling in the aftermath of serious moral failure from our last diocesan bishop. We know there is unfinished business regarding our recovery and healing from this. Lastly, we are seeking to select a new diocesan bishop, which is a difficult process in the best of times.

As stated above, we know that not everyone in our diocese will approve or be happy with this decision. That does not mean we are glib about disagreement regarding this question. However, as we have prayed, thought, sought council, and deliberated over this question, our view is that this is, all things considered, the best way forward as we search for God's man to serve as the new diocesan bishop of the ADGL. We also want everyone to know that while we might disagree on this matter, we do not disrespect any of our fellow clergy and parish leaders or their views. We know that we all hold our views in good faith, with a good heart, and with integrity. We also honor and respect all clergy and lay leaders in our diocese. We ask for your respect and good faith in trusting that, as the Standing Committee representing the entire diocese, we have carefully considered and prayerfully struggled in making this decision.

Thank you to everyone who brought their concerns before us through the group discussion via Zoom, which was civil and Christian in allowing open and respectful discourse, individual phone calls, and associated mail correspondence. Thank you for giving us a chance to listen to you. Thank you for hearing our beliefs regarding this manner. We ask everyone for your continued prayers as this process goes forward.

Your fellow servants in service to Christ,  
The Standing Committee of the Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes:

The Very Rev. Mark Engel, Chair  
The Very Rev. Peter Mathews  
The Rev. Canon Dr. Kathleen Rankin  
Mr. Thomas Fields  
Dr. I. Richmond Nettey  
Mr. Robert Raun

The Right Reverend Grant LeMarquand