

# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

The Rt. Rev. C. Wallis Ohl, Jr., *Provisional Bishop of Fort Worth*

July 5, 2012

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefforts Schori  
The Episcopal Church  
815 Second Avenue  
New York, NY, 10017

Re: Request to set the record straight

Dear Bishop Jefforts Schori:

We, the bishops of the Dioceses of Quincy and Fort Worth, with the support of the Standing Committee and Council of each diocese, respectfully urge the Church's House of Bishops, at its meeting at the 77<sup>th</sup> General Convention in Indianapolis, to set the record straight regarding recent statements by certain bishops in our Church. The subject bishops are:

1. The Rt. Rev. Maurice M. Benitez (resigned, Diocese of Texas);
2. The Rt. Rev. John W. Howe (resigned, Diocese of Central Florida);
3. The Rt. Rev. Paul E. Lambert (suffragan, Diocese of Dallas);
4. The Rt. Rev. William H. Love (diocesan, Diocese of Albany);
5. The Rt. Rev. D. Bruce MacPherson (diocesan, Diocese of W. Louisiana);
6. The Rt. Rev. Daniel H. Martins (diocesan, Diocese of Springfield);
7. The Rt. Rev. James M. Stanton (diocesan, Diocese of Dallas);
8. The Rt. Rev. Peter Beckwith (resigned, Diocese of Springfield); and
9. The Rt. Rev. Edward L. Salmon (resigned, Diocese of South Carolina).

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The House of Bishops is well aware of the litigation across this Church resulting from breakaway factions who left The Episcopal Church but claim to have taken parishes and entire dioceses, and all the historic church property, names, records, and funds, with them, and claim to "be" the continuing parish or diocese. In the Dioceses of Quincy, Fort Worth, San Joaquin, and Pittsburgh, these breakaway efforts were led by former members of the House of Bishops.

Recent events illustrate that there are still bishops in our Church who harm the Church by officially misrepresenting the polity of the Church; invading the episcopal jurisdiction of other bishops; taking official, formal, affirmative actions directly against their own Church and sister dioceses; and even recognizing the continuing authority of breakaway former bishops over the bishops who are recognized by this Church. In doing so they give aid and comfort to breakaway factions who would take title and control of substantially all of the real and personal property of this Church and cripple its mission and ministry.

Specifically, on April 23, 2012 Bishops Benitez, Howe, Lambert, Love, MacPherson, Martins, and Stanton, *purporting to act in their official capacities* as bishops of The Episcopal Church and its House of Bishops, caused to be filed an *amicus curiae* ("friend of the court") brief

in litigation in support of a breakaway faction led by former bishop Jack Iker and against this Church and its Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth.

Similarly, on October 6, 2011, 2011, Bishops Salmon, MacPherson, and Beckwith, *purporting to act in their official capacities* as bishops of The Episcopal Church and its House of Bishops, caused to be filed affidavits in litigation in support of a breakaway faction led by Alberto Morales and against this Church and its Episcopal Diocese of Quincy.

The details of their misrepresentations are reflected in the documents themselves. However, generally the bishops falsely claimed as follows:

**1. They Represented that Dioceses Can Unilaterally Leave:** These bishops give aid and comfort to breakaway factions trying to alienate this Church's historic property and identity and urge a false view of polity that would purport to authorize *each bishop across this Church to lead his or her diocese and church property in the diocese out of The Episcopal Church.*

**2. They Denied the Dennis Canon and Failed to Safeguard Church Property:** These bishops advocate that the *breakaway parties should prevail* in the litigation against The Episcopal Church and the loyal Episcopalians in those dioceses and assert positions that would strip millions of dollars of historic property and funds, lovingly accumulated by generations of Episcopalians, from the mission and ministry of this Church, and instead urge that they be used by breakaway factions for the mission and ministry of a new church. They thus would *nullify this Church's trust interest* in all the real and personal property of congregations in those dioceses and, indeed, across The Episcopal Church and *fail to safeguard property* of the Church and its dioceses.

**3. They Recognized the Wrong Bishops:** The *amicus* bishops in the Fort Worth case expressly claim that Iker, not Bishop Wallis Ohl, repeatedly recognized by the Church, is still the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth; in the Quincy filing the affidavit bishops imply that Morales, not Bishop John C. Buchanan, repeatedly recognized by the Church, is the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Quincy. By this claim these bishops not only reject this Church's authority to recognize its own bishops but they arrogate for themselves, in direct defiance of this Church, the *authority to determine the episcopal authority of every other bishop in the Church*, substituting at will their personal standards for those of this Church and trying to inject chaos into core ecclesiastical functions of The Episcopal Church itself.

**4. They Violated Episcopal Jurisdiction:** By their public filings in local litigation, without invitation or consent of the ecclesiastical authority in those sister dioceses, these bishops directly *violated the ecclesiastical authority and episcopal jurisdiction* of Bishop C. Wallis Ohl and Bishop John C. Buchanan, respectively, who have been consistently recognized by The Episcopal Church as being the current bishops of Fort Worth and Quincy. By inserting themselves in local litigation against the ecclesiastical authority in those dioceses, the subject bishops have violated the longstanding prohibition against "acting in another diocese without the consent of the diocesan authority"<sup>1</sup> and have engaged in *boundary crossing* to interfere profoundly in the mission and the very existence of a sister diocese and the jurisdiction of other bishops of this Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishops' Statement, page 3.

## CONCLUSION

This is not a matter of a few unhappy bishops stating their personal views on church polity. They each affirmatively and officially acted by injecting themselves, intentionally and without invitation from the bishops exercising jurisdiction, into local litigation, opposing this Church and sister dioceses on core ecclesiastical issues regarding the very identity of other dioceses.

We respectfully urge that the House of Bishops set the record straight on the polity of this Church regarding its hierarchical character.

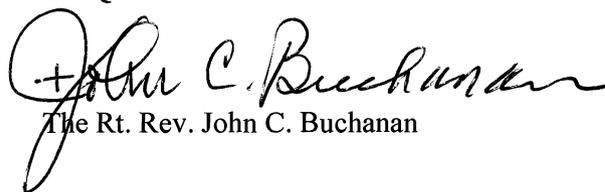
Respectfully submitted,

**EPISCOPAL DIOCESE  
OF FORT WORTH**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Wallis Ohl". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "O" at the end.

The Rt. Rev. C. Wallis Ohl

**EPISCOPAL DIOCESE  
OF QUINCY**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Buchanan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "J" at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. John C. Buchanan