

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of The Episcopal Church



February 17, 2011

Rector, Wardens and Vestry

Dear Friends in Christ:

I write to you as the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church to ask for your prayerful consideration of the enclosed Pastoral Direction and the invitation for conversation that it contains. I am offering this so that your parish and the Episcopal Diocese can amicably resolve all lingering issues between us as to who is entitled to use the real and personal property of the parish.

As you may know, we have recently announced such an amicable settlement with St. Philip's, Moon Township and the Somerset Anglican Fellowship. In reaching these two very diverse agreements, we believe we negotiated in good faith to balance the desires of the congregation with the requirements of this Diocese and the Episcopal Church. We have said all along that we want, as Scripture teaches, to seek to reconcile our differences directly with each other. Our agreements with St. Philip's and Somerset also provide the fortunate result of keeping the congregations and the Diocese from engaging in or supporting lawsuits against the other.

I invite you to a similar conversation with us, which you may begin without prejudice to your legal positions, as would be the case for us. The Pastoral Direction provides the guidelines to be followed. Because each parish has unique circumstances, all discussions will be held on an individual parish basis.

As you consider this, I want you to be aware of a canonical determination that I have made as Bishop with the advice of the Standing Committee of this Diocese. Diocesan Canons state that any parish failing to meet its assessment obligation to our Diocese for two years will become a Transitional Parish (Canon XV, Section 6), which carries the consequence that the title of all property held by or for the use of that parish shall be vested in the Board of Trustees for the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh (Canon XV, Section 13).

Under the most favorable interpretation of our Diocesan Canons, any parish that has failed to pay its assessments to the Episcopal Diocese for the past two years has until March 13, 2011, to once again become an active, participating parish in the Diocese, including resuming assessment payments, or its status will become that of Transitional Parish.

My first hope, of course, is that we be reconciled in a way that your parish can share in the life of the Episcopal Diocese again. If that is not possible at this time, I reiterate my invitation that you contact me to begin a conversation seeking an amicable resolution of these property issues. By this all will know that we are His disciples.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth L. Price, Jr." with a small cross symbol to the left.

The Rt. Rev. Kenneth L. Price, Jr.
Bishop of Pittsburgh