



THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH
OFFICE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
A Founding Member of the Province of the
ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Monday in Whitsun, 2020
June 1

Dear REC Brothers and Sisters:

Greetings during this Whitsuntide when the Tower of Babel was reversed for Gentiles to understand the Gospel in their languages by the power of the Holy Spirit!

How appropriate to be celebrating the birth of the Church by the re-opening of churches all across the land. Situations vary from state to state, in different parts of the state, and even from parish to parish. Some of our churches are in the epicenter of the pandemic. Others are in states or areas of states where the virus has had little to no effect.

Whatever your situation in the part of the country where you live, I encourage the full re-opening of worship. I have always called for our churches to remain open, not to cease the Divine Liturgy, but to maintain safety by modifying our presentation of worship with live streaming and alternative ways of serving Holy Communion. Now that the President of the United States has ordered the re-opening of churches, all Christians should be encouraged to return to in-person worship, following the reasonable and safe guidelines of their local areas. Those sixty-five and older, and those with medical complications should still exercise extreme caution. Above all, however, keep worshipping and spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I write also to update all of you on our next General Council now scheduled for June 9-11, 2021. Not only have we had to postpone it to this date, *we have now had to move the location from Charleston, South Carolina to Dallas, Texas*. Here is what has happened. If you remember, out of initial concern due to the pandemic effects on travel for this coming June 2020, we didn't believe that we could meet our room obligations with possible low attendance. Our church could have lost up to a \$100,000. To address the potential disaster, we worked with a local agent of the Embassy Suites in Charleston. She promised us the same date in 2021 as long as we kept the original contract. I recommended with the consensus of the Council of Bishops to the General Committee that we postpone our General Council to 2021 at the same location. They unanimously approved the decision which I announced in an earlier communication.

Subsequent to our decision, however, all the major hotels were closed in Charleston due to the pandemic. As a result, the accommodating local agent with whom we were working in

Charleston was furloughed. A regional agent of Embassy Suites took over bookings. She unfortunately informed us that the dates originally promised to us in 2021 were no longer available, while still contractually requiring us to guarantee the same number of reserved rooms. In response, we offered other dates in June. Our alternative suggestions in June were based on our history of discovering the optimal time for the best attendance for General Councils.

To our dissatisfaction, the regional agent could only offer dates in late May or in early July, Memorial Day and 4th of July and the days following these holidays. Yet we were still being asked to keep the initial contract guaranteeing the same number of rooms. We found ourselves back in the situation that had initially provoked us to postpone council for a year. With so many of our members involved in education, late May runs into the end of the school year and graduations. In Charleston for example, the last week of May and the week following is a peak commencement time. As for the 4th of July weekend and the immediate days afterward, people are already into their summer holidays. In the case of both of these dates, we suspected that many of our delegates would not be able to attend. The possibility of the loss of a great amount of money for the church was once again a real possibility. We've been forced not only to postpone the time of General Council, now we've had to reconsider the location to secure our preferred time for the best turnout.

Consequently, I have had to go back to our Council of Bishops and the General Committee with the recommendation that we move the location of General Council June 9-11, 2021, to Church of the Holy Communion Cathedral in Dallas, Texas. As part of the recommendation we also proposed returning to Charleston for the 2023 General Council to celebrate the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the Reformed Episcopal Church. With the kind understanding and consent of our Diocese of the Southeast Bishops and other clergy and lay representatives on the General Committee, the recommendations were unanimously approved by this said governing body of the church.

You'll be pleased to know that the Embassy Suites in Charleston did eventually allow us to cancel our contract with no penalty. Since they had originally promised (in writing) the dates for the week of June 7, 2021, and could not give them to us, we have been refunded all money that had been placed as a deposit. They have also honored all room cancellations.

Although a difficult decision, there is much good news nevertheless in this action of the General Committee to move our 2021 General Council to Church of the Holy Communion Cathedral in Dallas. We can have our General Council on the preferred date of June 9-11 as we typically do. We can now control our own destiny by being able to have all of our worship and the vast majority of our meetings on the campus of CHCC. If you remember, we were able to worship together in the cathedral for our General Council 2017. Now we can do even more. The church, parish hall and other buildings, can accommodate most of our dining and other meetings. We have also secured nice accommodations at the nearby Hyatt Place Hotel at a much lower price. The hotel costs and registration will be considerably less. Furthermore, we are reasonably assured of a full turnout. The Very Rev. Canon Jason Grote is in charge of our program committee and will be sending out information toward the end of the year. For now, please

mark the date of June 9-11, 2021 for our next General Council at Church of the Holy Communion Cathedral in Dallas, Texas.

Even more good news, we'll be able to return to Charleston, South Carolina in 2023 for what promises to be one of the most important General Councils in the history of the REC. Rightfully so, given the long-standing presence of the historic work of the REC in that area dating back to the years after the Civil War in the late 19th century. As I have said, 2023 will be the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of our beloved church. We will be planning extra special celebrations in the Diocese of the Southeast in Charleston, South Carolina. I thank my dear brothers and sisters in Christ in the Diocese of the Southeast for their patience, understanding, flexibility, and for their willingness to host us for such a monumental General Council.

In writing this communication, I also want to remember the passing of two of our wonderful retired bishops during the last few weeks of the pandemic, the Rt. Revs Robert Booth and Richard Boyce. Bishop Robert Booth passed from this earthly life into the presence of His Lord and Savior at 3:45 pm on Holy Saturday, 2020. Bishop Booth graduated from Reformed Episcopal Seminary with his Divinity degree in 1956. His wife Jean had passed away on Easter Sunday, 2013. Together they served as missionaries in Sudan and Uganda. They ministered as teachers for the Africa Inland Mission in Uganda, returning from the mission field in 1977. Bishop Booth later served Trinity Reformed Episcopal Church in the Kensington section of Philadelphia and was subsequently consecrated Bishop for world missions for the Reformed Episcopal Church. Bishop Booth was well known and loved for his deep intellect, ready wit, and gentle spirit. He is survived by two daughters, Elizabeth Tweedy & husband, Rev. Paul, Carolyn Hammack & husband, Rev. Ronald and a son, Peter Booth & wife, Linda.

The Rt. Rev. Richard John Boyce, of Seattle, WA, died Monday, April 20, 2020 of natural causes. He is survived by his children, Jeffrey (Mary), Paul, Kathryn, Patrick (Mary), Monica (Eli), Mathew, Michael (Kim), and Jennifer, 13 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, 8 nieces and nephews, a father figure to many in a large beloved extended family. He was predeceased by his sister Eileen (Ed Stich), brother William (Sharon), wife Cathie, and his former wife Patty.

Richard John Boyce was an American Anglican bishop. He served in the Anglican Church in North America and the Reformed Episcopal Church. He was consecrated as a bishop of the Orthodox Anglican Church, a Continuing Anglican denomination by James Parker Dees in 1986. He served as ordinary of the Diocese of the West in the Anglican Province of America until 2008, when he led most of the diocese into the Reformed Episcopal Church. He joined the Anglican Church in North America, when the Reformed Episcopal Church was one of their founding members in 2009. Bishop Boyce also served as vicar general of the Diocese of Cascadia during its formation, from 2009 to 2011. He retired from diocesan ministry in both jurisdictions in 2011.

We thank God for these great men who served the REC so faithfully at historic moments for our church. We will miss them greatly. May they rest in peace in the presence of the Light Perpetual, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In closing, I mention at this time when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church, insight from my own recent devotionals in the Book of Ezra. This important part of the Holy Scriptures tells of the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. It was a challenging time with some comparisons to ours. The people of the Lord had been dispersed, much as we have been through the pandemic. Yet in the first chapter Ezra speaks of how, "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the King of Persia" (1:1), to support the return and rebuilding of the Temple. He also explains another movement of the Spirit of God among those faithful with the fortitude to return as, "everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord" (1:5). God had stirred up His people by His Spirit. In His Sovereignty, He not only called for a return, He gave the strength and power to do it at just the right moment. It was time to come back. So it is with us as we see political officials and the leaders of the Church calling for the re-establishment of the worship of God. May God be with us in these times to do just this. He is faithful always to give His Spirit to come alongside His people. As one of my favorite hymns so beautifully expresses, "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father; There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not; Thy compassions they fail not; As Thou hast been; Thou forever will be." This is our firm conviction. God never changes even through the vicissitudes of this life. Thanks be to His Blessed Name. He is our Rock in the midst of the storm. May God, in His never-changing faithfulness, bless and keep you at this time!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Ray R. Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Most Rev. Dr. Ray R. Sutton
Presiding Bishop