RESOLUTION

APPROVAL OF A COMPANION RELATIONSHIP

RESOLVED, that the 188th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama invites the Diocese of the Virgin Islands to renew the Companion Relationship between the two dioceses, beginning January, 2019 and continuing until January, 2022, or until terminated by mutual consent, in accordance with the guidelines of the Episcopal Church; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Bishop of Alabama be encouraged to renew the Companion Diocese Commission to implement this relationship, including the recruitment of persons, congregations, and other ministry groups within the diocese to participate in this relationship and to extend invitations to the people of the Virgin Islands to visit our Diocese and to accept invitations from the Virgin Islands for visits there; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Program and Budget of the Diocese of Alabama include such funds as are deemed necessary for the implementation of this relationship.

APPROVED

EXPLANATION:

Companion Diocese Relationships strengthen the Anglican Communion and one another by building relationships in which each partner is both the giver and the receiver. We honor the relationships we have developed with our previous Companion Diocese partners, notably with the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti and with the Diocese of Brazil.

In 2014, Bishop Sloan invited the New Companion Diocese Discernment Team to reflect on a new relationship which would offer a mutuality of ministry and could engage more people in the diocese. The Discernment Team prayerfully considered the kind of companion relationship that would allow a vibrant relationship of mutuality, of “being” as well as “doing”. The team sought opportunities for full diocesan, parish, and individual involvement, with lay and clergy exchanges and youth program opportunities, for shared worship, shared experiences, shared growth of God’s kingdom.

The Holy Spirit led the team to recommend a companion relationship with both Alaska and the Virgin Islands. The three dioceses shared similar concerns and similar dreams. Remote villages in Alaska and the Virgin Islands experience isolation, not unlike some parishes in Alabama. All care about the future of the church and want to develop clergy, lay leadership, and youth to revitalize and
energize our dioceses. All three experience deep poverty and need that is off the “mission radar”.

This partnership among the Dioceses of Alabama, Alaska, and the Virgin Islands hoped to enrich all participants through mutual companionship as all shared the joy of God’s mission.

Over the past three years, the Companion Relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands has grown, as envisioned, engaging multiple levels of relationship with clergy development, youth engagement, and spiritual deepening, primarily with Cursillo. In addition, parish to parish relationships have begun.

The Diocese of Alaska was receptive but unable to commit fully to the Companion Relationship. The invitation remained open. The Diocese of Alaska would like for parishes to engage with some of its parishes with indigenous ministries, but cannot commit to a Diocesan Companion Relationship.

Therefore this resolution focuses only on the Companion Relationship between the Diocese of Alabama and the Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

After the two Category 5 Hurricanes which devastated all five islands in the Diocese of the Virgin Islands in the Fall of 2017, the focus has added a clergy initiative whereby Alabama clergy have volunteered to serve in parishes in the Virgin Islands to give Virgin Islands clergy a bit of respite.

The Diocese of the Virgin Islands began to welcome volunteer teams in the Fall of 2018 to help with the recovery and rebuilding.

The Diocese of Alabama is grateful for the donations to the hurricane fund and has partnered with Episcopal Relief & Development for financial support for the long term recovery of the Virgin Islands, notably with the mini-grant program which seeks to transform parishes and the communities they serve.

This partnership between the Dioceses of Alabama and the Virgin Islands hopes to continue to enrich all participants through mutual companionship while seeking to grow God’s kingdom.

Submitted by

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