

June 18, 2009

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

Dear Bishop Jefferts Schori:

Thank you for your thoughtful response to a letter from Ruth Annette Mills, of the Diocese of Nevada—a distinguished lady who has been a Daughter fifty years. She deserves respect and attention from all her sisters.

Although I have not seen Ruth's letter, your response indicates that she believes the Order of the Daughters of the King is proposing amendments that will cut its ties with the Episcopal Church. I am grieved that she has been misled by this idea. It is simply false, fueled by rumors and fears. Let me explain.

The Daughters have twice rejected a proposal to become ecumenical by allowing chapters in any denomination that practices Christian baptism. The first time, in 1997, the proposal was put forward by a committee that included two future presidents, Sue Schlanbusch and the late Joan Millard. After extensive debate, the proposal was decisively rejected. It was again put forward six years later, and tabled, with a request for a survey on the subject. The survey results were collected by the present chair of the bylaws committee, Lena Nealley. We know from reading the results that Daughters rejected the ecumenical option, and the committee has avoided that path. Instead the amendments seek to clarify the status of women who are already members under our present bylaws, and would still be members if none of the proposed amendments were adopted.

My shorthand description of the Order is that we are "Episcopal Plus"—that is, "distinctively Episcopal," as the early handbooks phrase it, while continually planting chapters in sister Churches. The membership statistics reported at our last Council meeting listed the overwhelming number of members as Episcopalians: 25,145 of an estimated total 28,462. The next largest number is for overseas members, approximately 2500 Daughters in 15 countries. Their membership is not novel—the Order began founding chapters in Anglican churches overseas in the 19th century. When such chapters multiply in any particular country, they develop their own governing structure and leadership, and US Daughters continue to encourage them as much as we are able.

The recent fears and controversy revolve around the relatively small numbers of Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran chapters in the US: the October report listed 720, 97, and 18 members respectively, totaling less than 3% of the entire membership. As you may know, our present bylaws give chapters in Churches in the historic episcopate (other than those in the Episcopal church) the option of forming a national governing structure parallel to the Episcopal structure, just as overseas chapters organize when they have reached critical mass within their country.

Although our bylaws have allowed Roman Catholic members since the mid-eighties, the expected growth in their numbers has not occurred, and they clearly are not able to organize as a national entity. A couple years ago the elected DOK leadership asked Anglican Daughters in the US to explore forming a national governing structure of their own, since it looked as if they might soon reach a number that would make that possible. They did explore that possibility and have rejected it in favor of forming a completely new Order with a different name for Anglican Daughters. A majority of our Anglican members will probably leave the Order in the coming year to join a new Order for Anglican women, unaffiliated with the Daughters of the King.

In short, far from receiving a flood of new members who might change the character of the Order, as some appear to think, we expect to say a sad goodbye to long-time members whose congregations have left the Episcopal Church. At the same time most of us want to assure the Roman Catholic Daughters and any Anglican or Lutheran Daughters that remain that although they are a minority we recognize them as valued members of the Order.

The Daughters of the King are praying for the upcoming General Convention, for you personally, and for all the delegates and bishops who will participate. Daughters in the Diocese of Iowa have prepared a seven-day cycle of prayers for us to use during the three weeks of Triennial and Convention. In the latest *Royal Cross* both our president, Joan Dalrymple, and the Triennial Chair, Phyllis Easley, urge members to participate in the Prayer Vigil. These are not the actions of a sinister cabal intent on cutting the Order's ties with the Episcopal Church. We may be perplexed at times, but the Daughters still seek first of all to serve our King and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and work out our vows to pray and serve within our local congregations. For most of us in the United States, that means a local Episcopal congregation and diocese. Please believe that severing our multiple connections with the Episcopal Church is not an option the Daughters will consider in Anaheim.

Again, thank you for your attention and your prayers.

For His Sake,

Grace Sears, Secretary  
The Order of the Daughters of the King

Cc: Joan Dalrymple  
The Rt. Rev. John W. Howe  
The Rt. Rev. Stacy Sauls