

Sunday, November 25, 2012

The Reign of Christ

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

The Advent season we are entering has much to do with anticipation.

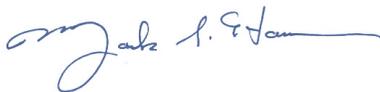
During Advent we anticipate Jesus Christ's promised return, when he will bring to fullness on earth the heavenly realm he inaugurated at his first coming among us—the kingdom “not of this world” about which Jesus speaks in today's gospel. In the meantime, we are not to stand idly by. Rather we are called to be co-workers with God, making more visible, day by day, God's realm of justice and peace.

Our churches' full communion agreements are a bit like this “already, but not yet” time of God's realm in which we dwell. Just over a decade ago, Anglicans/Episcopalians and Lutherans inaugurated a new relationship in which we fully recognized each other “as churches in which the gospel is truly preached and the holy sacraments duly administered” (*Called to Common Mission*). Even so, we recognize that this achievement “marks but one step toward the eventual visible unity of the whole Church catholic” (*Waterloo Declaration*).

As with the kingdom of God, we cannot sit idly by waiting for this unity to somehow manifest itself. Rather we are called as the baptized to take our part in making more visible, day by day, the unity to which Christ calls our churches.

The four of us will gather in Chicago next month to continue our conversations about how Anglicans/Episcopalians and Lutherans in the United States and Canada can grow together more closely in unity and mission. In the meantime, we commend to your use an inspired collection of devotions for the season of Epiphany, each prepared by a different member of the Lutheran- Episcopal Coordinating Committee (USA) and the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission (Canada). The devotions can be downloaded from each of our churches' websites, and represent a modest but visible sign of what our churches can do together rather than separately. Through them our prayers will be united across international and denominational boundaries.

May you be richly blessed this Advent season, filled with joyful anticipation, and inspired for the spreading of God's realm.



Bishop Mark Hanson
Presiding Bishop
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The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz
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The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
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