

February 2007

Dear Sisters in Christ,

This letter comes from three past national presidents of The Order of the Daughters of the King sharing our concerns. The Order is going through a period of transition and self-examination. Just as the Episcopal Church is defining itself, we too are being called to rethink who we are, what is our purpose and where we are going.

The vows of prayer and service that we took when we chose to become members of The Order of the Daughters of the King opened our hearts and spirits to real grown-up spiritual tension. Each of us has had to deal with reaching a balance of prayer and service that works in our individual lives each and every day. Because of this tension we have studied and we have learned, we have grown, we have sought spiritual direction and we have prayed from our hearts and souls “Lord, what will you have me do?” We gave up being spiritual infants when we took those vows and became women joined together in the goal of spiritual maturity. Being mature, while rewarding, is not always easy and certainly not always fun.

In our Order, a tension has been growing regarding membership. Who can be a member of The Order of the Daughters of the King? Concepts like inclusion/exclusion make it seem very simple, but our maturity tells us that this is far too easy.

The last National Council placed legislation on the Triennial Convention floor last summer that compromised the status of our Order in the Episcopal Church. This legislation passed without benefit of full disclosure and explanation about the effect it would have upon our Order. Further, as a result of this desire to be inclusive, the closing Eucharist (always a joyful time of coming together to celebrate our completed work, new council members, new officers and new National Chaplain) was held in separate rooms to accommodate the Roman Catholic members. At General Convention, American Anglicans celebrated Eucharist separated from the convention communion services. Obviously inclusion did not equate with unity. Now as an ecumenical organization, we are no longer under the authority of the Episcopal Church, and we find ourselves under multiple authorities of many denominations represented in our Order.

We began as an Episcopal Order. For reasons only known to God, the Episcopal Church was chosen to host The Order of the Daughters of the King. Our numbers multiplied because women sought the discipline that our Rule of Life could provide. Our Order not only provided a spiritual tool for individual women, but it provided a source of spiritual help and inspiration for clergy, congregations, bishops and the National Church. Because of our non-political stance, we were called to invite Jesus into any decisions of the Church—political and non-political. There is no doubt that over the 121 years of our existence, the focused prayers of the Daughters of the King have been a source of support within the Episcopal Church.

We emphasize the wording “within the Episcopal Church” because as a result of the decisions made by the last National Council, the present National Council now considers us an ecumenical Order. This is causing concern, especially in the House of Bishops. We have been in touch with many of our sisters, our clergy and our bishops, and we know that there is confusion and misinformation. In a time of unrest in the Episcopal Church, the idea of an ecumenical Order has overtones that mislead.

We are proposing that we continue to function as an Episcopal Order (as many Daughters believe we do). We propose that we function under the oversight of the Episcopal House of Bishops, and that we function within the Episcopal Church. We do not believe that every member of the Order need be an Episcopalian

– Roman Catholic, Lutheran, American Anglican and International members are sisters. However, in order to function as an Order, each affiliate group would need to organize with its own appropriate pastoral oversight, focusing on prayer, service and ministry within its own scope.

There are many Daughters who wish the Order to remain within the Episcopal Church with affiliates in other denominations and countries, even if this forces a formal division.

We ask each chapter to take time to study in depth the implication that the decisions of the former National Council and the 2006 Triennial have made upon the Order in which you took your vows. You will be receiving, in the near future, a questionnaire prepared by the current National Council. We beg you to carefully discern each question before answering.

Should you need any clarification or need any further information, please contact any or all of us. These are stressful times in our world, our country and in our church. Our Order is needed now more than ever to support our bishops, clergy and congregations as we move forward in ministry.

Please remember our call and vows reflect our ministry of prayer, study and service as we seek to bring others to Christ, not particularly to the Order. Our membership in the Order provides the nurturing and safe place for our education and growth for our ministry.

May our King continue to bless and guide us on our journey together.

For His Sake,

Whitty Bohmer 3208 Kirklevington Dr. Lexington, KY 40517	(1988-1991) 859-245-4109	whittyb@windstream.net
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Elizabeth Hart Mitchelson 6124 Paseo la Vista Woodland Hills, CA 91367	(1991-1994) 818-883-3367	jrtoolco@aol.com
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Sue Schlanbusch 49199 Monte Rd. Chesterfield, MI 48047	(1997-2000) 586-598-2216	mamasue1023@comcast.net
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Copies to: Diocesan Bishops
Chapter Clergy