

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Yes. It is true that Jeffrey Steenson was received into the Roman Catholic Church and is no longer a bishop in The Episcopal Church. His plans are to study and prepare himself to be a teacher of patristics as he stated in his recent letter. He hopes to be a priest in the Roman Catholic Church in about a year after completing their requirements.

We on the Standing Committee are very aware of the awesome responsibilities thrust upon us by Jeffrey's resignation and renunciation of his orders as a bishop. We officially became the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese of the Rio Grande as of December 1, 2007. Jeffrey, Debbie, and their family go with my prayers into their new life, as I am sure they will be in yours. However, for those congregations who have faithfully prayed for "Jeffrey, Our Bishop, and Michael his Canon", please change that to pray for the "Standing Committee of the Diocese". We VERY much need and appreciate your prayers in this nearly unprecedented time of transition in our Diocese. We ask you, the clergy and lay people of the Diocese, to work with us to help our Diocese focus on faithfully serving Our Lord and to look forward to the opportunities for ministry to which He is calling us.

Our Episcopal Church is a structured church with processes in place to handle such transitions. As President of the Standing Committee, I will be in the Diocesan House each Tuesday. Please feel free to visit me there or to call or email me at any time. Debbie Steenson asked my wife, Sue Ellen, to please be available to all clergy wives, since we all face these challenging times together. So please know that you may call her (505-662-5107) or email her (SEKelly3@aol.com) at any time.

As you might expect, there are some changes in the responsibilities of the members of the Diocesan Staff as well. These are shared in more detail elsewhere in this issue, along with pictures of the staff members, taken by Charles Arms, Diocesan Treasurer. I do want to share with you that Canon Perko will move his office to the Cathedral and become the Dean of the School for Ministry, as well as the Canon Counselor to the Ecclesiastical Authority. The Very Reverend Harold Trott will become the Canon for Deployment, Vocational Direction, and Pastoral Care. His office will be in the Diocesan House, when he is not at Our Saviour.

These are unsettled times in the life of many of our communities, as well as in the life of the Church. Our Savior, Christ Jesus, was born in the midst of unsettled times as an answer from God that he hears our prayers and does respond to them. Each early morning as I go out for a run, I see first the faint glow and then the brilliant colors of the rising sun. It always offers a sign from God that this is a new day. As each sunrise is different in its beauty and brilliance, so is each day different in what it will offer. I cannot yet see what the day will bring, but I know that I will face it's opportunities uplifted by the loving God who first breathed life into me.

May we be filled with the Love of God as we herald the birth of the Christ Child anew this year. A Blessed Christmas and a Joyous New Year to you all,

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