

# Bishops issue letter urging churches to support education

TOPEKA (AP) — Three Protestant bishops issued a public letter Thursday urging members of their churches to support public schools, calling education “an integral part of God’s creation.”

Signing the letter were Dean Wolfe, of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas; Scott Jameson Jones, of the Kansas Area United Methodist Church; and Gerald Mansholt, of the synod covering Kansas and Missouri in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. They spoke to reporters before a church service for teachers, students and schools.

“We should take steps to ensure that we are doing all that we can to support and enhance public education and keep the needs of our children before our elected officials,” the bishops wrote in their letter.

The bishops sponsored a daylong conference on education in April to encourage church members to become active politically in supporting schools. They released their follow-up letter a month into the 2006-07 school year.

Before speaking with reporters, they toured Bishop Seabury Academy, affiliated with the Episcopal Church in Lawrence, and Perry Elementary, a public school in that small town northwest of Lawrence.

“I found myself giving thanks to God for teachers and students and learning environments,” Mansholt said. “There are major challenges before us in education, and we need to keep education before us as a high priority.”

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius welcomes the bishops’ involvement in the debate over education, spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran said.

“Church leaders influence those families who are members, and I think it’s important to have church leaders take an active part in their communities,” she said. “It’s about the whole community, and it’s great that they’re stepping forward.”

The bishops’ letter came two months after the Kansas Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit filed against the state in 1999 over education funding. The justices took that action after legislators approved a plan to phase in a \$531 million increase in state aid to public schools over three years.

“Somehow, we’ve got to care for all the kids and build a consensus that every kid is important,” Jones

“

**We need a statewide commitment to invest in the future of children in Kansas.”**

Scott Jones,  
United Methodist

said. “We need a statewide commitment to invest in the future of children in Kansas.”

The bishops said they also support private, religious schools. They said it’s unfortunate that in a few policy debates, public and private schools are pitted against each other. Also, they said, public schools serve the bulk of Kansas’ children.

“There has been a tradition, both locally and nationally, to hear from the loudest voices regarding issues of church and state, and there is this vast, mainstream centrist community that has been, I think, underrepresented when it comes to talking about religion in the public place,” Wolfe said.

In their letter, the bishops encouraged Kansans, both inside and outside of education, to discuss how public schools have enriched their lives.

“We care about public education because many of the participants are members of our congregations,” their letter said. “We believe general education is an integral part of God’s creation. It is through the coming together of the nurturing in the home and the church and the teaching in general education that we are able to demonstrate the uniting of faith and reason.

“As bishops, we don’t separate faith and reason,” the letter continued. “We praise God through using our minds.”

On the Net:  
Episcopal diocese: <http://www.episcopal-ks.org/>  
Kansas Methodists: <http://www.kansasheritage.org/um/umweb2.html>  
Lutheran synod: <http://www.css-elca.org/>

## Kids need exercise

NEW YORK (AP) — Lance Armstrong says his three children don’t waste their time playing video games: He makes sure they get out and get physical.

“It’s all about lifestyle,” the seven-time Tour de France champion said Thursday at the Clinton Global Initiative. “It’s what you do when you wake up to when you go to bed.”

Armstrong, who has retired from cycling, has a son and twin daughters,

all under the age of 10.

The 35-year-old cancer survivor warned of an “epidemic” of poor health if the future of the developing world came with plenty of couch conveniences.

Armstrong, who survived testicular cancer that spread to other parts of his body, including his brain, also emphasized the importance of anti-smoking efforts around the world.

## Plenty of popcorn

Doug Ketchum, assistant scout master for Colby Troop 141, unloaded popcorn Thursday at A & A Coors Thursday. The Boy Scouts will sell popcorn Saturday, Sept. 30 through Oct. 24.



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