

Report on the 3/26/10 Diocesan Convention

By: Barbara Mann, President of The Episcopal Forum of SC – 4/9/10

The most recent Diocese of South Carolina Convention on March 26, 2010 continued the process of separating the Diocese from The Episcopal Church. This process has been going on for some time now. It started under the Episcopate of Bishop Fitzsimmons Allison, continued under Bishop Edward Salmon, and appears to be coming to fruition under our current Bishop Mark Lawrence. One mark of this separation is that in recent history the Diocese has given less than 1% of its income to TEC to further its ministry. The norm is 20%. This is very tangible evidence of lack of support for the mission of God through The Episcopal Church.

Last fall a special convention of the Diocese passed a resolution which stated in part "That this Diocese authorize the bishop and standing committee to begin **withdrawing** from bodies of The Episcopal Church that have assented to actions contrary to Holy Scripture, the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ". The overriding theme of the March convention was that we are a "sovereign" diocese and the Bishop, and the standing committee in the absence of a bishop, is the sole authority within the Diocese.

Following the fall 2009 convention, there was a meeting between a former chancellor of this Diocese, Tom Tisdale, and the current chancellor, Wade Logan. During that meeting Mr. Tisdale asked Mr. Logan for information regarding a few parishes that seemed to be taking steps to separate from The Episcopal Church. Mr. Logan suggested that Mr. Tisdale write to him and enumerate his requests. There followed a flurry of letters between the two lawyers and later an attorney hired by the Diocese. Bishop Lawrence followed these up with a pastoral letter to the diocese denouncing this "incursion into the affairs of the Diocese of South Carolina" and announcing the delay of diocesan convention to allow the standing committee and him to prepare a response.

At the March 2010 Diocesan Convention the major items of business were the bishop's address, elections to various diocesan offices and five prefiled resolutions.

The bishop's address started out praising various projects in the diocese and the settlement out of court of the dispute between All Saints' Episcopal Church, Waccamaw and All Saints' Church of the Anglican Mission in America. He then quickly went into denouncing TEC, its actions, trajectory, and leadership. He asserted his absolute authority in the Diocese and stated that after several discussions with Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori they stood "looking at one another across a wide, deep, and seemingly unbridgeable theological and canonical chasm." This does not bode well for the future of the Diocese in TEC. In his conclusion to the address the Bishop talked about "the winds of war" blowing over the country prior to the revolutionary war and the struggle many had with the eventual separation from The Church of England. The parallels are distressing.

All five pre-filed Resolutions in their entirety are appended to this report. The first four resolutions were passed overwhelmingly with only five parishes voting against them. The fifth, a housekeeping resolution, was passed unanimously. Three of the resolutions will be highlighted here.

Resolution 2 is titled "Response to Ecclesiastical Intrusions by the Presiding Bishop" and reads as follows:

RESOLVED, That this 219th Convention of the Diocese of South Carolina affirms its legal and ecclesiastical authority as a sovereign diocese within the Episcopal Church, and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention declares the Presiding Bishop has no authority to retain attorneys in this Diocese that present themselves as the legal counsel for the Episcopal Church in South Carolina, and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of South Carolina demands that the Presiding Bishop withdraw and terminate the engagement of all such legal counsel in South Carolina as has been obtained contrary to the express will of this Diocese, which is The Episcopal Church within its borders.

There was an amendment proposed to change the word "demands" in the third resolve to "requests." It was soundly defeated. This resolution seems to say that the Presiding Bishop has no interest in the Episcopal property within the Diocese of South Carolina.

Resolution 3 gives to the Bishop and in his absence the Standing Committee, the sole and absolute power to interpret the diocesan Constitution and Canons.

Resolution 4 adds the following language to diocesan canons:

"It is within the power of the Ecclesiastical Authority of this Diocese to provide a generous pastoral response to parishes in conflict with the Diocese or Province, as the Ecclesiastical Authority judges necessary, to preserve the unity and integrity of the Diocese."

Among other things, this permits the Bishop, at his discretion, to let parishes that are unhappy with TEC to just leave the Diocese and The Episcopal Church with all their property. The implications for the future of the Diocese are quite scary.

The committee on the Bishop's Address gave a report at the end of the convention which was very supportive of the Bishop and his leadership. They presented four resolutions which were adopted overwhelmingly by the convention. The language and tone of these resolutions were quite bellicose. The word battle was invoked at least three times in these resolutions. It was distressing to end the convention on such a note.

In conclusion, the March 2010 Convention of the Diocese of South Carolina continued, made more open and perhaps sped up the process of the separation of the Diocese from The Episcopal Church.

About the author: Barbara Mann moved to Charleston, S.C. from Asheville, N.C. twelve years ago, and is a member of Grace Church, where she chairs its Discernment Committee. She is a Director of the Episcopal Forum of SC and has held parish, diocesan and provincial leadership positions in the Diocese of Western North Carolina. A deputy or alternate to five General Conventions, she was elected to the National Executive Council in 1997, and chaired its Audit Committee. She also served on the National Episcopal Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development and recently completed a term as Chair of the Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church. For the last 15 years she has served as the Treasurer of Province IV. Barbara is a graduate of St. Lawrence University, and is a Certified Public Accountant.

Diocese of SC Convention Resolutions from 10/24/09 and 3/26/10

219th Diocesan Convention Approves All Resolutions

All resolutions previously proposed for the 219th Diocesan Convention were passed. Resolution 2 was passed with one amendment further strengthening its resolve.

Resolution R-1 2010 Convention

Offered by: The Rev. Canon Kendall Harmon, The Very Rev. Peet Dickinson, The Rev. Jeff Miller, The Rev. Arthur Jenkins, The Rev. Canon Jim Lewis, The Rev. James Taylor, The Rev. Rick Luoni, The Rev. Karl Burns, The Rev. Greg Snyder, The Rev. Marshall Huey, The Rev. Louise Weld, The Rev. Jennie C. Olbrych, The Very Rev. Craige Borrett

Subject: Recognition of the Heritage and a proclamation of the Identity of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina

RESOLVED, That this 219th Convention acknowledges that for more than three centuries this Diocese has represented the Anglican expression of the faith once for all delivered to the saints; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that we declare to all that we understand ourselves to be a gospel diocese, called to proclaim an evangelical faith, embodied in a catholic order, and empowered and transformed through the Holy Spirit; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we promise under God not to swerve in our belief that above all Jesus came into the world to save the lost, that those who do not know Christ need to be brought into a personal and saving relationship with him, and that those who do know Christ need to be taught by the Holy Scriptures faithfully to follow him all the days of their lives to the Glory of God the Father

Resolution R-2 2010 Convention

Offered by: The Standing Committee

Subject: Response to Ecclesiastical Intrusions by the Presiding Bishop

RESOLVED, That this 219th Convention of the Diocese of South Carolina affirms its legal and ecclesiastical authority as a sovereign diocese within the Episcopal Church, and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention declares the Presiding Bishop has no authority to retain attorneys in this Diocese that present themselves as the legal counsel for the Episcopal Church in South Carolina, and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of South Carolina demands that the Presiding Bishop withdraw and terminate the engagement of all such legal counsel in South Carolina as has been obtained contrary to the express will of this Diocese, which is The Episcopal Church within its borders.

Resolution R-3 2010 Convention

Offered by: The Standing Committee

Subject: Addition of Canon XXXVII of the Ecclesiastical Authority

The Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese is the Bishop. If there is no Bishop, the Standing Committee is the Ecclesiastical Authority. The Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese, with the advice and counsel of the Chancellor, is the sole and final authority with respect to any dispute concerning the interpretation of the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese and its interpretations shall be final and binding in all respects.

Resolution R-4 2010 Convention

Offered by: The Standing Committee

Subject: Amendment Canon XXX

Prohibiting the Desecration of Consecrated Buildings and the Alienation of Church Property Without Consent of The Ecclesiastical Authority and the Standing Committee

Resolved, that the following Section be added to Canon XXX.

Section 6. "It is within the power of the Ecclesiastical Authority of this Diocese to provide a generous pastoral response to parishes in conflict with the Diocese or Province, as the Ecclesiastical Authority judges necessary, to preserve the unity and integrity of the Diocese."

Explanation:

1. The actions of the Presiding Bishop's office, now publicly acknowledged, have demonstrated a clear willingness and intent both to legally pursue congregations we consider parishes in good standing, and attempt to utilize diocesan resources to do so.

2. We've experienced now as a diocese, in the All Saints, Pawleys Island litigation, the destructive force of such litigation; how it has created animosities and divisions that are not easily healed. It has failed as a positive cohesive force for maintaining the unity of the church and has in fact had precisely the opposite effect. Christians are suing Christians (1 Cor. 6:1-8); the reputation of the church is marred, and vital resources are diverted from essential Kingdom work. None of this is honoring to our Savior.

3. It has been the implicit understanding of this Diocese that the Bishop inherently has the authority to deal with such situations. The current practice of the Bishop to deal pastorally with parishes struggling with their relationship with the Diocese or Province must be given explicit canonical force. The discretion exercised by the bishop is the only way to successfully navigate the current challenges before us.

Resolution R-5 2010 Convention

Offered by: The Standing Committee

Subject: Removal of Canon XX Of Baskervill Ministries

Resolved, that Canon XX of the Diocese of South Carolina Canons be removed.

Explanation: With the consent of the Bishop, the original Baskervill Ministries and other attendant ministries were reorganized under the leadership and guidance of Holy Cross Faith Memorial parish. The Diocese is no longer responsible for the selection of board members.

Resolutions Offered at the October 24, 2009 Special Convention

Note: All five of the resolutions were offered by the Standing Committee and the Deans

Resolution #1

First Guiding Principle for Engagement

The Lordship of Christ and the Sufficiency of Scripture

Whereas, The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church, is a constituent member of The Anglican Communion, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and Whereas, recent pronouncements by the Presiding Bishop and resolutions of the General Convention have raised questions about the content and nature of the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Episcopal Church, and Whereas, it has never been the intent of The Episcopal Church to depart from the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Church of England as we have received them, now, therefore, be it Resolved that the Diocese of South Carolina reaffirms its commitment to live its corporate life under the authority of Holy Scripture (Articles of Religion, Art. VI and XX) and the unique Lordship of Jesus Christ (Art. XVIII) and commits to exercising all such actions as the Bishop and Standing Committee may believe edifying to the Body of Christ in bearing that witness and bringing to light such actions as contravene those essentials to “upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order” (Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States: Preamble) as we have received them: and be it Further Resolved, that the following statement shall constitute our understanding of the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Episcopal Church and shall be read at all ordinations in The Diocese of South Carolina, and a copy of which shall be attached to the Oath of Conformity signed by the ordinand at such service of ordination: “In the Diocese of South Carolina, we understand the substance of the ‘doctrine, discipline and worship’ of The Episcopal Church to mean that which is expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Creeds, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and the theology of the historic prayer books.”

Resolution #2

Second Guiding Principle for Engagement

Godly Boundaries

Whereas the governing bodies of The Episcopal Church have failed to operate within the boundaries of its canons and continued participation in such behavior would make the Diocese of South Carolina complicit in this dysfunction, be it Resolved that this Diocese authorize the Bishop and Standing Committee to begin withdrawing from all bodies of the Episcopal Church that have assented to actions contrary to Holy Scripture, the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as this Church has received them, the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference which have expressed the mind of the Communion, the Book of Common Prayer and our Constitution and Canons, until such bodies show a willingness to repent of such actions; and be it Further resolved that the Diocese of South Carolina declares that the most recent example of this behavior, in the passage of Resolutions DO25 and CO56, to be null and void, having no effect in this Diocese, and in violation of our diocesan canon (XXXVI sec.1).

Resolution #3

Third Guiding Principle for Engagement

Domestic Engagement for Missional Relationships

Whereas the Diocese of South Carolina wishes to be in active and life giving partnership with those Dioceses and Parishes within the Episcopal Church with similar Gospel commitments,

believes that it is uniquely positioned to be a source of encouragement and resource for equipping the faithful who feel isolated in other parts of the Episcopal Church and now seeks a place not only to survive but to thrive which is faithful, relational and structural; therefore be it Resolved that this Diocese, committing itself to remain focused on our gospel mission effectively to reach both the lost and unchurched, will work in partnership with such Dioceses as are willing to form Missional Relationships providing gatherings for Bishops, clergy and laity for the express purpose of evangelism, encouragement, education and mission: therefore, be it further Resolved that the parishes of this Diocese are encouraged to enter into their own Missional Relationships with orthodox congregations isolated across North America and to pursue effective initiatives which are lay-led and supported.

Resolution #4
Fourth Guiding Principle for Engagement
Emerging 21st Century Anglicanism

Whereas the Diocese of South Carolina has a vision of "Making Biblical Anglicans for a Global Age" that calls us to active engagement with the larger Communion, and Whereas, as a founding Diocese of the Episcopal Church, we have the inherent sovereign authority to pursue that engagement, and Whereas the polity of The Episcopal Church affirms this authority, and Whereas we believe God has called the Diocese of South Carolina to help shape the future of Anglicanism in the 21st Century through mutually enriching missional relationships with dioceses and provinces of the Anglican Communion (Romans 1:11-12; 2 Cor. 9:1-15) and through modeling responsible autonomy and inter-provincial accountability (Phil. 2:1-5; Eph. 4:1-6) for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Kingdom and his church, and Whereas this Diocese, as established at its 2009 Diocesan Convention, is actively pursuing such partnerships throughout the world as will enable us to support Gospel initiatives that strengthen the Church and its witness to the redeeming power of Jesus' "life, death and Resurrection", and the Anglican Communion Development Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina will recommend to the Bishop and Diocesan Council where re-directed resources for mission and ministry shall be directed; therefore be it Resolved that the Diocese of South Carolina endorses the Ridley draft of the proposed Anglican Covenant, as it presently stands, in all four sections, as an expression of our full commitment to mutual submission and accountability in communion, grounded in a common faith. [View the Ridley Draft.]

Resolution #5
The Rubric of Love

Whereas the Diocese of South Carolina recognizes we have all been created in God's image and are precious in his sight, and Whereas we acknowledge we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and stand equally in need of his mercy and grace, we thankfully and humbly, Resolve that this Diocese will not condone prejudice or deny the dignity of any person, including but not limited to, those who believe themselves to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. Nevertheless, we will speak the truth in love as Holy Scripture commends for the amendment of life required of disciples of Christ. It is love of neighbor and the abiding concern for their spiritual well being that compels such honesty and will never allow us to remain silent.