

This Forum was held at the Harbour Club in Charleston, SC and was attended by approximately 80 persons. This Forum was not recorded as originally planned because Bishop Lawrence did not understand that this was planned prior to preparing for the forum. The following is a composite paraphrase of the observations, comments and questions received from forum attendees. These have been forwarded to the EFSC Forum via eNewsletter and to Bishop Lawrence for consideration in preparation for another Forum to continue this discussion:

Summary Observations made by attendees from Bishop Lawrence's comments:

1. Bishop Lawrence seems to believe that The Episcopal Church (TEC) is out of step with the Anglican Communion Network (ACN) and most Christians around the world by among other things not rebuking all same sex relationships as sinful.
2. Those in the Diocese of SC who do not support the ACN are in a minority, which obviously includes members of the Episcopal Forum of SC.
3. Bishop Lawrence has suffered and continues to suffer a marginalized role within TEC because of his beliefs which are consistent with his membership in the ACN and other conservative Anglican groups within the AC.
4. Bishop Lawrence understands that Episcopalians within the Diocese of SC who reject ACN affiliation (as all members of EFSC do) feel marginalized within this diocese just as he and other ACN members feel marginalized within TEC. The frustration is mutual.
5. Bishop Lawrence understands that the ACN is upholding the truth regarding human sexual morality as it is received in "Scripture" and "Tradition". He rejects that "Reason" is an equally weighted third leg of Anglican theology. He considers TEC's progressive views in this area to be in error and outside of the authority of scripture.
6. Bishop Lawrence acknowledged that currently the diocesan leadership and a majority of the congregations in four ACN affiliated dioceses are in the process of leaving TEC to associate with other more "Orthodox" Anglican Communion members. (This may be leading to the existence of a parallel "Orthodox Anglican Province" which competes with TEC.)
7. Bishop Lawrence stated that at this time the Diocesan leadership of SC has not taken action to leave TEC, therefore the diocese continues within TEC. Episcopalians in this Diocese who are not in alignment with the ACN will continue as minority within the Diocese.
8. Bishop Lawrence's message to EFSC was mostly consistent with that received from Bishop Salmon over the past 5 years. Scriptural understanding of homosexuality is not the only issue, but it is the most vexing and divisive issue within TEC.
9. Bishop Lawrence observed that this will continue to be a difficult time for all Episcopalians in the Diocese of SC for the indefinite future due to these stressful relationships. Until something changes we will all regrettably have to live with it.

Comments from forum attendees:

1. Bishop Lawrence's comments at the forum do not seem jibe with his statements to the clergy on clergy day that he was not leaving?
2. Bishop Lawrence did not address how this situation is affecting the spiritual health of all involved.
3. Bishop Lawrence was cautious and not wholly prepared to speak *ex cathedra* on any controversial topic. His delivery appeared to me to be alternately vague, condescending, preachy, defensive and even sarcastic. He meandered and seemed to be continually off message. He answered unasked questions yet failed to adequately address questions from the floor; however, he did convince me that his frustration is real, although he never revealed specific causes for this condition. I would have liked to know what constitutes his interpretation of "marginalization". I had hoped that the Bishop would speak more about what he can do going forward rather than what we can't do. I still have no exact idea what the Bishop's position is on same sex relationships or on ordination and consecration of homosexual persons. Bishop Lawrence told us that he attended all but one of the five workshops on sex at the Lambeth Conference, yet never told us how he was affected or what -- if anything -- he learned at these sessions. I remember him saying that God has revealed himself in these matters, but he never stated specifically what that revelation was. His illustration of the three legs of Anglicism was torturous. Although he was visibly energized by this subject he never brought himself around to an official (*for him*) conclusion which I could identify.
4. Any future meeting with Bishop Lawrence should include a clear and succinct statement of key issues to be addressed before he speaks. When the Bishop does speak again to the Episcopal Forum he should clearly state his position on the topic about to be discussed. Otherwise, his talk becomes a game called, "*Guess What the Bishop Is Thinking?*"
5. I feel, as apparently Bishop Lawrence does, excluded from our own denomination. What possible harm can come from publically acknowledging that there is a strong minority point of view within the diocese and providing some legitimate venue/role within the diocese for its expression?
6. I am sorry in a way that Bishop Mark might have felt uncomfortable about some of the questions, but on the other hand he really didn't answer many of them directly. I can appreciate and understand his feelings, but I just don't understand or trust very much that there is not another agenda from far back that is unspoken for the most part.
7. Why does Sewanee have to submit EFM materials to be rewritten to conform to what the ACN teaches? It is scary that the majority of clergy and the diocesan officials, standing committee etc. think that they know what and how everyone should believe and conform to. I love both TEC and the Anglican Communion. Why after so many centuries can't we continue to agree to disagree on some issues and love one another as fellow Christians? Our Triune God is big enough to overcome divisions if we trust the Holy Spirit. We all need to make room for the Holy Spirit to work through and among us.
8. I don't know how long I can stay in this Diocese as a marginalized individual. I can't say what I would do if the Diocesan leadership of SC leaves TEC to join a new North American Anglican Province. A parish may apply for alternative Episcopal oversight but what does a marginalized individual do in a departing congregation? The southern hemisphere has not kept pace with the 21st century. I feel we should continue our progress and assist them to do likewise, not reverse our more enlightened approach to slavery, equality of women, and acknowledgement that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are also children of God entitled to full participation in the church.

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9. In future meetings I hope he will to speak with us more as the Bishop South Carolina, not as a lawyer, teacher, actor or petulant adversary.
10. When he was talking about the treatment he receives from the House of Bishops, he said something to the effect that he did not know how much longer he could stay, or stand it, or last. To me that implied that he is seriously thinking about leaving.
11. It sounded to me that Bishop Lawrence wishes to take the diocese out of the Episcopal Church. He is waiting for the new North American province to be formed, which he told us that he hopes is done well. The inference to me was that if this is "done well" this may be a place to remove the diocese to. My understanding is that the Diocese of SC would remain in TEC and those who choose to leave will leave.
12. I think that the best thing the EFSC can do at this point is to continue to exist. The more we can learn from the Episcopalians in dioceses such as Pittsburgh and San Joachin who have chosen to remain in these TEC Dioceses, the better. Perhaps things will change in some dramatic way, but it seems to me that the Episcopal Forum of SC could become the nucleus for what will be the "remaining Episcopalians" in the diocese of SC.
13. I'm not sure I have the stamina for another meeting with the Bishop. I think it's a good idea, but I left feeling very discouraged about the future for unity (including agreeing to peaceably disagree) within our diocese. Maybe he was having a bad day--I know I do sometimes--but he sure came across as defensive at times, condescending at times and downright arrogant at other times. He said a few things that were encouraging, but my take is he's just biding his time until he finally proposes that this diocese secede.
14. I've never heard someone say "I feel your pain about being in the minority" then justify lack of representation on boards, etc. because we're in the minority and can't carry the day in a vote. This isn't a political organization whereby the most powerful wins and gets his way. It's a church where we should all strive to first find common ground on the most important issues (which is so doable) and find understanding and acceptance of differing perspectives on grayer areas. He'd say this in lofty generalities, but when it got to the details he seemed to revert to "my way or the highway."
15. I heard the Bishop imply that if a parallel "Orthodox Anglican Province" is successfully established in North America it would very enticing option. I don't remember his precise words but I sensed he would likely take the Diocese into that new province.
16. Bishop Lawrence referred to the possibility of alternative oversight for a Church in the Diocese and we know that there was similar discussion about alternative oversight of dioceses within the Episcopal Church. What can be done about alternative oversight for parishioners within a given parish?
17. I feel from listening to the Bishop that it is either his way or no way. I would like to know why progressive thinking Episcopalian's cannot have a representative on the Standing Committee. I feel TEC is pioneering the way for a more loving and humane society which is what Jesus stands for, and that we who support the majority within TEC should not be treated as errant brothers in our own diocese.
18. The Bible condemns celibacy, intercourse during menstruation, marriage to non-Jews, naming the sexual organs, masturbation, homosexuality, birth control and wearing a garment made of two different kinds of fibers, eating shell fish and on and on. These are largely ignored by fundamentalists. On the other hand, slavery, prostitution, polygamy, serial marriage of widows to the brothers of the deceased, sex with slaves, concubines and captives were quite all right. Few modern fundamentalists would continue to see those as permitted behaviors for Christians today even though a literal reading of Holy Scripture would. This begs the question why is homosexuality the focus of so much of the Fundamentalists' ire.

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19. I do hope that the Bishop will return and continue the conversation. In our parish we do not pray for the Presiding Bishop even when the prayer book calls for it. I heard him say this was not at the direction of the diocese. I do hope he will encourage the clergy to follow the prayer book and when called for include her in the prayers of the people. I feel very marginalized in not praying for our Presiding Bishop at this time of concern in our church.
20. The early Church struggled with the question of whether one must be circumcised before becoming a Christian. We are struggling with the question of whether one must be heterosexual before becoming a Christian. Are we following scripture in the way we are handling this issue? Are we bound by law and tradition? Are we bound by the love of Christ and the grace of God? Do unto us as you would have TEC do unto you.
21. Bishop Lawrence has at the Clergy Conference expressed his intention that the Diocese of South Carolina remain intact and a part of the national Episcopal Church. Since that is directly in line with the mission of the Episcopal Forum we would welcome him to suggest ways that the Episcopal Forum could best help him to accomplish that goal.

Summary of Questions asked by forum attendees:

1. How can we dispel the animosity that has been created in our diocese?
2. Why are we being encouraged to remain in the past with our beliefs and not being encouraged to experience new ideas so that we might move forward with our faith?
3. How would you describe your present relationship with our Presiding Bishop?
4. Will you or do you permit the use of inclusive language liturgies such as "Enriching our Worship"?
5. We understand that you have in the past expressed your intention for this diocese to remain in and continue to work within the Episcopal Church, and since this is directly the mission of the Episcopal Forum of SC --- How can EFSC as an organization best help you accomplish that goal?
6. I am concerned about communication within the diocese. The Jubilate Deo in recent years has included primarily the very conservative voice of TEC. In reading the websites for the Upper Diocese of SC and TEC there is so much more to The Episcopal Church. Do you have plans to broaden the information we receive?
7. Anglicanism has dealt with new understandings of ritual laws, slavery, subjugation of women, and birth control. Do you believe that any changes in the understandings of homosexuality is off the table and it is to be a closed issue for TEC and the AC?
8. When you were in the diocese of San Joaquin their convention voted to leave TEC and join the Province of The Southern Cone. How did you vote? Did you support or oppose the action?
9. Describe what you mean by the "authority of scripture"?
10. You indicated last year that you would wait a year before making any major decisions. What is your vision now that we are in year2?
11. God in Christ has revealed Godself to you differently from the Godself revealed to me. Do you believe that your revelation is more valid than mine?
12. With all of the bleeding, pain and suffering in the world and church, why not focus on how can we come together and heal the world, rather than make homosexuality a deal breaker?
13. While I definitely believe that you should have a place to stand and your views should have a place to stand, need I worry that when you act on your views those actions will remove my place to stand with my views?
14. What is the status of our Diocese's membership in the ACN now that 4 major ACN dioceses are in open schism with TEC? Does the diocese still support the ACN?
15. Are you concerned about the drift of parishes within the diocese away from TEC Prayer Book and recognition in work or print of being part of TEC?
16. What are your plans for the next diocesan convention?
17. How many women priests have you permitted to serve in the diocese? What is your opinion on the ordination and consecration of women within TEC and our diocese? Under your leadership will the diocese enthusiastically support the ordination of women?
18. I have heard that there is a list of approved seminaries for clergy who are to be ordained or serve in our diocese. What seminaries are approved? What about the others?

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19. Considering the speakers at the "Mere Anglicanism" conference, is this conference a prelude to the leadership of The Diocese of SC leaving TEC to join the new North American province that is being formed?
20. What is your current position on our Diocese seeking alternate oversight from the Presiding Bishop?
21. What is your position on parishes in the diocese seeking alternate Episcopal oversight from you?
22. You have said that you witnessed the birth of a new prince at the Jerusalem GAFCON gathering. Please clarify your remark and explain how our diocese relates to this group?
22. Our Convention in March may deal with leaving TEC. Bishop Lawrence won't have to lead the diocese out of TEC; the diocese will lead him. What is the relationship between our Diocese and GAFCON?

The day after our forum the following two resolutions were unanimously passed by the Standing Committee of South Carolina at our November, 2008 meeting:

- *Be it resolved that the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina does hereby subscribe to as a standard of faith the Jerusalem Declaration as set forth at the GAFCON conference and affirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and further affirms the reforming voice of the GAFCON movement within the Anglican Communion.*
 - *Be it resolved that the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina does not recognize the non-canonical deposition of the Right Reverend Robert Duncan and continues to recognize him as a bishop in Christ's one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.*
23. Were you excited about the MDG's? How can we get excitement going in this diocese about working toward these goals?