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**SUMMARY OF DECEMBER 20, 2003 FORUM
MODERATED BY THE
EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

**FORUM HELD AT THE NORTH CHARLESTON
CONVENTION CENTER – EMBASSY SUITES**

FORUM PROGRAM

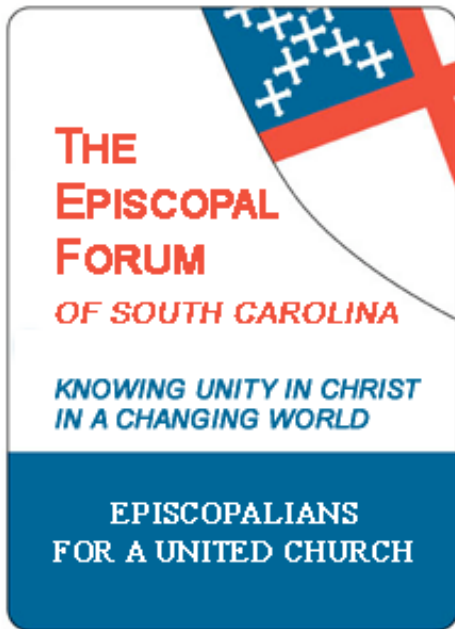
- Welcome & Opening prayer
- History & Introduction to EFSC
 - Who are we?
 - What do we stand for?
- EFSC Goal – Unity
- What is the new “Network of Anglican Dioceses & Parishes”?
- Town Hall Forum – questions – comments
- Future plans of EFSC
- Wrap-up and Closing Prayer

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

- EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SOUTH CAROLINA
- CONSERVATIVE/CONFESSIONAL/ORTHODOX CONCERNS
- VIA MEDIA ANGLICAN EPISCOPAL RESPONSE

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**Welcome to “The Episcopal Forum
of South Carolina”**



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**This site is growing ...
Watch here for additions**

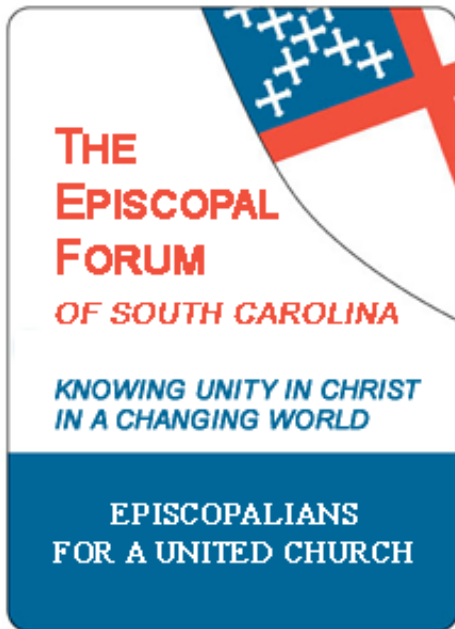
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FEBRUARY, 2004 (*exact date to be announced*)
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WHO ARE WE?

We are Episcopalians in the Diocese of South Carolina united in our desire to remain a part of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America and the Anglican Communion, participating in support and communion with our leaders and full membership.

- Episcopalians who uphold the faith as revealed in ***scripture, tradition and reason.***
- Episcopalians who oppose efforts to break our diocese away from the National Episcopal Church (ECUSA) or to divide ECUSA.
- Christians bound in love for one another, committed to worshipping together and building up God's kingdom.
- People of widespread opinions about human sexuality and how the church should respond to these issues today.
- Episcopalians who believe that the Holy Spirit is working in the deliberations of our National Church (ECUSA) and its conferences.
- Episcopalians concerned that issues of sexuality are being allowed to polarize the church, diverting attention from our mission to seek union with God following Jesus Christ in love and service.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Episcopal Forum of South Carolina is a group of Episcopalians from all regions of the diocese. Although we are of differing opinions about the sexuality issues now creating a rift within the church, we are dedicated to remaining in full support and union with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

We are mainstream Episcopalians; while embracing a wide range of theological understandings we share a **common tradition and one communion in unity with Jesus Christ** despite our differences. We oppose any attempts to separate us, our churches, or our diocese from the National Episcopal Church (ECUSA) or to divide ECUSA.

We want accurate information about the National Episcopal Church and its mission and ministry. We want to learn about how different opinions and practices are dealt with in other dioceses. We want to be informed about diversity and tolerance in the Anglican Communion.

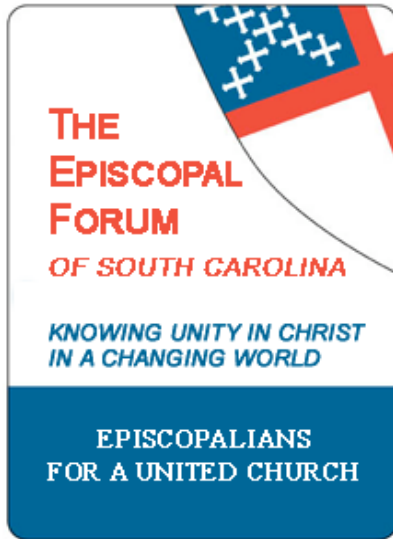
Episcopalians have weathered many controversies, staying unified in their faith as revealed in **scripture, tradition and reason**. The current situation is polarizing the diocese and diverting attention from our mission to seek union with God through following Jesus Christ in love service.

The Episcopal Forum was initiated after the special SC Diocesan Convention which was held in October 2003. At this convention resolutions were passed which could lead to separating our diocese from the National Episcopal Church (ECUSA). *The Episcopal Forum* is a vehicle to seek reconciliation within the National Church for the many Episcopalians who don't want to seek or be part of a schism. Members of *The Episcopal Forum* hold a wide range of views; however, the unity of the Episcopal Church USA within the Anglican Communion is our common goal.

If you want more information or to join *The Episcopal Forum of South Carolina* go to "Contact Us"

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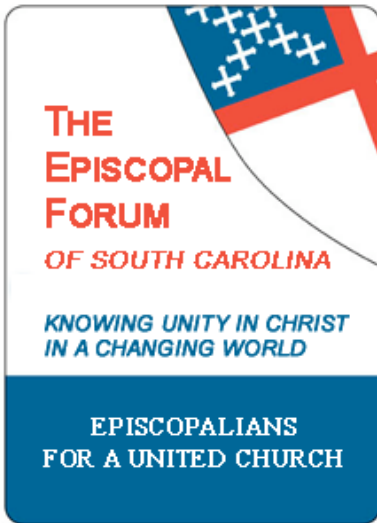
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**NEWSLETTER OF
THE EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

THIS NEWSLETTER WILL BE PUBLISHED PERIODICALLY INCLUDING ARTICLES OF INTEREST FROM A BROAD SPECTRUM OF EPISCOPAL AND ANGLICAN AUTHORS

NEXT NEWSLETTER TO BE ISSUED FEBRUARY, 2004

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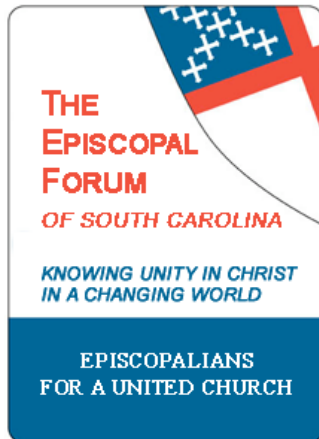
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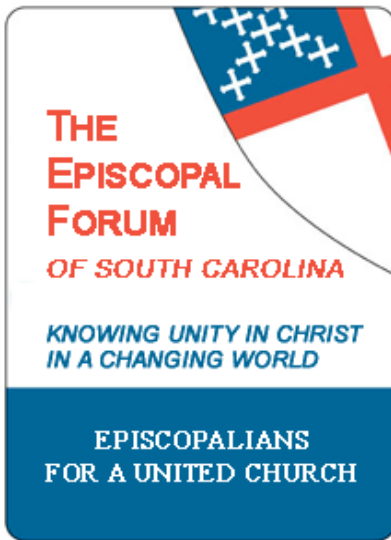
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THE PROGRAM WILL INCLUDE SPEAKERS DISCUSSING ANGLICAN AND EPISCOPAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT EVENTS WITHIN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION AND THE NATIONAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH (ECUSA)

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LINKS TO CONFESSING/ORTHODOX EPISCOPAL ORGANIZATIONS

- ◇ [Anglican Communion Institute](#)
- ◇ [American Anglican Council](#)
- ◇ [Forward in Faith](#)
- ◇ [Anglican Mainstream](#)
- [Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes](#)

Episcopal Church (ECUSA) General Information	Groups Witnessing for Unity and Diversity
Episcopal Church, USA	Anglicans Together (Sydney, Australia)
Anglican Communion	Albany Via Media (Diocese of Albany)
Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh	Concerned Episcopalians of the St. Lawrence Deanery (Diocese of Albany)
Anglicans On-Line	Remain Episcopal (Diocese of San Joaquin)
Episcopal News Service	Episcopal Voices of Central Florida
Every Voice Network	Fort Worth Via Media
Episcopal Clergy Finder	Pittsburg Progressive Episcopalians
ECUSA 2000 Constitution and Canons	
Louie Crew's Data on the Church	

PROGRESSIVE EPISCOPALIANS OF PITTSBURGH

STATEMENT OF IDENTITY AND MISSION

WHO WE ARE

Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh ("PEP") is an organization of clergy and laypersons living and worshiping in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, a component of the self-governing Episcopal Church, USA, and a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Although we are diverse in our social, political, and theological understandings and passions, we share an unfaltering commitment to the foundation of our Catholic faith: In love, God sent His Son to be our Savior, and all who believe in Christ's redemptive power, through God's grace, will have eternal life. We believe that the Holy Spirit continuously leads us to engage the changing world with the unchanging love of Jesus Christ. We seek a fuller understanding of God and His plan for us through study of scripture, honor of tradition, careful application of reason, and acknowledgment of experience. We recognize that, in order to respond to the challenge of the Gospel, our faith must be vitally alive. PEP is wholeheartedly inclusive; and all persons who share our commitment and mission are invited to participate.

WHAT WE DO

PEP seeks to preserve and build our church through local, national, and international action. We provide a forum within the Diocese of Pittsburgh for the free expression of ideas on contemporary issues, where all persons are afforded respect and Godly grace and kindness.

[Episcopal Church Directory \(Red Book\)](#)

We act to promote better understanding of and fuller participation in the church at large by the members of our diocese through collecting and disseminating information and advice. Moreover, we seek to communicate to the wider church that our diocese is not of one mind regarding theological or social thought, but is a living entity comprising Christians who take seriously their duty to struggle prayerfully and continuously with the application of their faith and God's love to issues of the moment.

We all share an identity as Christians and as Episcopalians through our baptismal vows. We are united in our conviction that the promises made in our baptismal vows must be acted upon by striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

We are committed to comforting, strengthening, and emboldening those who, for any reason, feel themselves marginalized, oppressed, or excluded from the life of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. Each of us, as a member of PEP, commits to praying for guidance in our communications with one another, within our church, and with the world at large, always treating with respect and Godly charity all people with whom we interact.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
September 1, 2003

FORT WORTH VIA MEDIA

Who Are We?

Fort Worth Via Media is an organization of ordained and lay Episcopalians in the Diocese of Fort Worth who are going to remain within the Episcopal Church of the United States of America.

Fort Worth Via Media understands and accepts that some among us are deeply troubled and grieved by the actions of the 2003 General Convention in consenting to the consecration of an honestly gay man as Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire and acknowledging that blessing of same gender unions is happening in some parts of the church.

We understand and accept that some among us celebrate these actions.

We believe that such diversity in opinion and belief expresses the range of faithful responses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that all Fort Worth Episcopalians bring unique gifts to the ministry of the church and that all have a place at Christ's table. We strive to hold each other in love and respect, remaining together as sisters and brothers in Christ within the Episcopal Church USA. We know this is possible because we have been doing it since this diocese was founded in 1983. We have remained together despite deep differences over the "new" Prayer Book and the ordination of women.

We are loyal to the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the Episcopal Church USA. We are nurtured by Scripture, Tradition, and Reason—the three-legged stool of traditional Anglicanism. We are Episcopalians striving for a middle way—a via media—of diversity and tolerance in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

We invite all Fort Worth Episcopalians who share these views to join us.



Albany Via Media



Episcopalians striving for a middle way of diversity and

Tolerance in the Diocese of Albany

"A Place to Kneel"

Who are we? Albany Via Media is an organization of clergy and lay Episcopalians in the Diocese of Albany. We are loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ in the Episcopal Church USA and our Primate, the Presiding Bishop. We recognize the General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA as the highest authority in the church. We founded our organization when Bishop Herzog, a board member of the American Anglican Council, and Bishop Bena, a member and leader in the AAC, disagreed with decisions of the General Convention and spoke of realignment and impaired communion with the Episcopal Church USA. Since any realignment or impaired communion with other dioceses of the Episcopal Church affects our lives and our ministries, binds our consciences and violates the ordination vows of our clergy, Albany Via Media, a not-for-profit corporation in the State of New York, was created to keep the Diocese of Albany in communion with the Episcopal Church USA.

What do we offer? Albany Via Media offers a place for Episcopalians to be faithful to Christ as prayerful members of the Episcopal Church USA. We give thanks for the Episcopal Church as the American embodiment of Anglicanism – a comprehensive and diverse family. We understand that all of us bring unique gifts to the ministry of the church and all have a place at Christ's table. No one can claim greater honor or truth over another. Albany Via Media offers a place for faithful and prayerful Episcopalians within the Diocese to live out our Lord's Great Commandment in love, diversity and compassion.

What do we seek? Albany Via Media seeks to revive our Anglican diversity in the Diocese of Albany. Knowing that prayer shapes believing, we understand that we are strongest when we kneel (or stand) together in prayer. Albany Via Media seeks to model and teach a charitable faith. We welcome differences, ambiguities, and paradox, knowing that prayerful consideration of various points of view, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can yield new insights, deeper understanding, and a lively Christian faith.

What do we believe? We believe that "The Holy Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation." (Article 6, *Articles of Religion*) We believe that the so-called "literal" interpretation of Holy Scripture is theologically and intellectually dishonest. We find Biblical fundamentalism to be dangerously idolatrous. Nurtured by scripture, tradition and reason, we open ourselves to God's truth as a diverse community, through prayer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As Episcopalians, we are sustained and empowered by Holy Scripture, the sacraments, the creeds, common prayer and servant ministry. We understand the New Testament model of the Body of Christ to be a very local, universal, diverse and inclusive church, with a variety of gifts for ministry.

In Summary, Albany Via Media is a grass roots organization of clergy and lay people who love the rich diversity of the Episcopal Church. We are deeply committed to the life of common prayer and the prayer book faith we have received. We are Episcopalians striving for a middle way of diversity and tolerance in the Diocese of Albany.

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WHY VIA MEDIA?

Albany Via Media has had some requests to explain what "Via Media" means. Our November 5 Statement following the consecration of the Right Reverend Gene Robinson as a Bishop in the Episcopal Church was intended to model the Via Media approach. This brief companion statement of theology is intended to provide some elucidation to the Anglican approach called the "Via Media", Latin for the "Middle Way."

The *Via Media*, "In historic terms . . . was John Donne's phrase . . . whose heritage dates back to Aristotle's "golden mean." The Anglican term *Via Media* is the "label often adopted in characterizing Anglican approaches to matters of morality and ethics" (Theodore McConnell, p. 141, The Anglican Moral Choice).

To quote Henry McAdoo in McConnell's essay, *The Via Media as Theological Method*,

Perhaps the most important thing about Hooker is that he wrote no *Summa* and composed no *Institutes*, for what he did was to outline method. What is distinctly Anglican is then not a theology but a theological method (The Anglican Moral Choice, Paul Elmen, Ed., p. 142).

Richard Hooker understood that an Anglican Church maintains as broad, inclusive, and non-judgmental a church polity and religious affirmation as possible by resisting temptation to judge and exclude those whose opinions and practices differ from ours in important but non-essential matters. The *Via Media* as theological method, therefore, incarnates a Godly way of treating those with whom each of us disagree. A *Via Media* method recognizes that the truth of one generation might be understood differently in the next. In humility, Anglicans give their theological opponents the respect that comes from reading history, knowing that one ideology's devil is another movement's martyr. In so doing we create room for each other, learning from each other, in communion around God's table. We hope to keep this vision of the *Via Media* method alive in the Diocese of Albany and in the Episcopal Church.

A *Via Media* approach to the interpretation of Holy Scripture will hold that faithful Christians everywhere will interpret identical passages differently, with respect to place, history, culture, experience, education and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Differences within interpretation of Holy Scripture and the right to dialogue about those differences was won with the blood of Anglican martyrs like Cranmer, Ridley and Lattimer in the early years of the English Reformation. They read Aristotle, applying the concept of the *Golden Mean* that, while certainty is attainable in mathematics, it is less likely in philosophy or theology. That is why Richard Hooker held that tradition, reason and experience were so critical in Biblical interpretation: the level of hermeneutical (interpretive) certainty is reduced by our humanity. Even enhanced by the Imago Dei in each of us, we still, when trying to discern the nature of God and his will for us, "See through a glass darkly" as our first theologian, St. Paul, reminded us. We believe that God's desire is for his church to remain in communion and dialogue, in times of conflict and disagreement over his will for us in his kingdom on earth.

O God of truth and peace, who raised up your servant Richard Hooker in a day of bitter controversy to defend with sound reasoning and great charity the catholic and reformed religion: Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace, but as a comprehension for the sake of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Richard Hooker, English theologian, is celebrated on November 3 this year.

**REMAINING IN ECUSA
IN THE DIOCESE OF SAN JOAQUIN**

Context of the Issues

History of the Diocese of San Joaquin

The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin continues to maintain the presence of the Episcopal Church (ECUSA) in central California that extends back to the time of the California Gold Rush. The Diocese of San Joaquin was originally part of the Diocese of California and later became a missionary district supported by the General Convention of ECUSA. The Diocese continues to be under the authority of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of North America, within the legal bounds of the constitution and canons, and under the leadership of The Right Reverend John-David Schofield, Bishop.

The threat of schism

We pray that our diocese will remain in its historic relationship to the Episcopal Church, USA and within the Anglican Communion under Bishop Schofield. However, it is common knowledge that this unity is being threatened, as Episcopalians respond to the actions of the 2003 General Convention and the subsequent consecration of The Right Reverend Gene Robinson. In conjunction with the American Anglican Council (AAC), Bishop Schofield and other diocesan leaders are supporting the political steps being taken to effect a dramatic realignment or separation between themselves and the Episcopal Church, USA. As recently as our Diocesan Convention at the end of October, 2003, the keynote speaker, The Rev. Martyn Minns, declared that the separation had already taken place and that the only question being considered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and primates is how to conclude the realignment. The Bishop's message in the November 2003 Star repeats this commitment to separate, and voices his enthusiastic support of the AAC.

Offering an alternate perspective

We applaud our bishop's stated commitment to permit many voices and perspectives to be heard within this diocese. We agree with Bishop Schofield's position that it is proper for people to express their opinions. We accept our bishop's invitation to express our heartfelt and prayerful convictions and thank him for encouraging such a healthy environment in the Diocese of San Joaquin.

Our Commitment to remain in ECUSA

There are many communicants in this diocese who believe it is appropriate to remain in the Episcopal Church, USA, with its strong mission, moral stances on various issues, association in the Anglican Communion and ecumenical work. These faithful members of our diocese differ in opinion regarding such moral issues as human sexuality. Some who are committed to remaining in ECUSA are opposed to the consecration of Bishop Robinson, while others applaud it. At the same time, we are united in our conviction that such diversity expresses the range of faithful responses to the

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gospel of Jesus Christ. We strive to respect those who disagree with us, and we recognize that the disagreements issue from diverse legitimate readings of the Bible by faithful Christians.

Who are we?

The people committed to remaining loyal to ECUSA represent a broad spectrum of the Diocese, including entire congregations, groups within congregations and individuals. The priests who are committed to remaining in communion with ECUSA include The Reverend Keith Axberg of Holy Family (Fresno), The Reverend Joel Miller of St. Francis (Turlock), The Reverend Mark Hall of St. Anne's (Stockton), and The Reverend Rick Matters of St. John the Baptist (Lodi). Other clergy have voiced their support, but are not yet prepared to publicly state their position, some out of fear of repercussions. Still others have not yet made their position known.

In addition, there is a large number of lay people who are committed to remaining in ECUSA, but are members of congregations whose clergy appear to be aligned with the AAC. These faithful lay people form the backbone of our ministry within the Diocese of San Joaquin.

What next?

We invite people loyal to ECUSA to be of good courage, recognizing that the opposition might be vocal, but it is much smaller than is often portrayed. We invite you to unite with us and raise your voice in support of our beloved Episcopal Church.

The advice simply to wait until next October when issues will be decided by Anglican leaders suggests that nothing is currently happening. In fact, ACC members are actively and assertively continuing to position the church for schism. For instance, there is a well organized initiative to divert all funds from ECUSA. Also, Bishop Duncan appears to be attempting to remove property from the Church (because of which he is being sued by members of his own diocese). Further, attempts are being made to break down current diocesan authority so that parishes can more easily realign. In fact, the AAC has written a proposal for alternate Episcopal oversight in which a congregation can unilaterally invite another bishop to provide oversight—such as would happen if we were congregational in polity.

For our part, we will continue to speak out and provide an alternate voice. More importantly, however, we are providing a community in this diocese for people across the conservative/liberal spectrum to associate and work for remaining united with the Episcopal Church, USA. You and other people may voice your intent to remain loyal to ECUSA either publicly or anonymously, by providing contact information. Such people can receive communications, such as an invitation to upcoming regional gatherings. You may offer opinions or ask questions through this web site or through local contacts. You may even volunteer to help in this vital ministry, including making financial donations to defray expenses.

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Looking toward the future

We are working to remain within ECUSA under the leadership of our Bishop, The Right Reverend John-David Schofield. Our desire for unity within diversity forms the heartbeat of our fervent prayers. Should the diocese not avert a schism, then we will shift our focus to maintaining the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin, ECUSA after those who believe they need to separate have left.

Our vision

The vision we move toward in response to the threat of schism is of a joyful diocese with a missionary focus, in which we support each other. We strive to be evangelistic, inviting new members to join us in the Church's venture of faith. We will practice Christian community by living in the creative tension of not always thinking alike, sometimes interpreting the Bible differently, but always loving each other in the power of the Holy

Welcome Letter

The Rev. Rick Matters
St. John the Baptist, Lodi, California

This site has been developed by a group of clergy and lay members whose strong faith in the love of Jesus Christ has called us to take a stand. We affirm that we live in fellowship with one another and Christ even when we disagree with each other over questions of morality, such as homosexuality. We must permit the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to bind us together, despite our difference of opinion, even on vital matters, such as how to interpret and follow the Word of God found in the Bible.

Each of us is called to struggle prayerfully with issues, especially in community at worship, seeking to discern and follow the will of the Lord. Those within the church, even its bishops, arrive at divergent opinions. We are called upon to acknowledge this divergence and to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

With this site, we are taking up the initiative to maintain the Dioceses of San Joaquin, ECUSA.

The Episcopal Church, USA has always been a broad church in terms of liturgical styles and ideological positions, with the Holy Scriptures as the living Word of God, interpreted by reason and tradition. We are a Church that trusts in the grace of Christ Jesus. True to our tradition, we have agreed to disagree, this time on whether to consider moral a life-long, monogamous relationship between a gay couple.

Episcopalians differ in their opinion of whether this standing is consistent with the revelation of Holy Scripture. Remaining ECUSA in San Joaquin is for you, regardless of your opinion on this or other topics. As orthodox people of God, we permit the Holy Spirit to unite us in our faithful worship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

On Being an Episcopalian

***The Rev. Rick Matters
St. John the Baptist, Lodi, California***

The Episcopal Church, USA embraces a wide spectrum of practices and ideologies, but remains united through the love of God as manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our rich tradition is based on Holy Scripture as the Word of God, informed by reason and tradition. We do not adhere to the Reformation doctrine of sola scriptura (Scripture alone), but understand God's relationship of salvation and redemption to be discovered in new ways through history and culture. The absolute of God's being and will are understood and incorporated progressively, with the changing contexts of world history. This progressive revelation is witnessed in the Bible and continues in our own time.

Questions and Answers

Q. What do you mean by "Remaining ECUSA?"

A. We are Episcopalians loyal to the Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA. While this site is directed to Episcopalian clergy and lay members living in the Diocese of San Joaquin and committed to remaining in ECUSA, we invite those from other geographies to support our ministry.

Q. What is schism?

A. "If two or more churches cease to be in full communion with one another, they are said to be 'in schism'. The most usual cause of schism is alleged error in doctrine." (C.B. Moss, The Christian Faith, 280).

Q. Some say the Episcopal Church has departed the faith and order of the Anglican Communion, and others say the diocese is maneuvering to leave. Who leaves whom in a schism?

A. There are two kinds of schism: schism *in* the Church, and schism *from* the Church. "Schism *in* the Church is a breach of communion between local churches ... though neither side has changed the fundamental faith and order of the Church" (Moss, 281). Schism *in* the Church, then, isn't a leaving, but a rip in the fabric of our common life in Christ. It is an estrangement, not a divorce.

"Schism *from* the Church", on the other hand, "is the revolt of persons, large or small, who separate themselves from the Church by rejecting her faith and order ..." (Moss, 282). Calvin, for instance, rejected the Catholic Church, calling it the synagogue of the Anti-Christ. He saw it as being beyond redemption, beyond healing, and beyond God's capacity to reform. So he created a new church organization over and against the old church. The Protestant Reformation was most literally a schism *from* the Church.

The debate raging within the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church is partially clouded by the use of the term "schism" without the defining prepositions: *in* or *from*. The Episcopal Church is clearly experiencing schism *in* the Church over such issues as Prayer Book revision, the ordination of women, gay, and lesbian persons, human sexuality, etc. Those persons, parishes, or dioceses not able to abide such changes are, themselves, departing from the faith and order of the

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Church by choosing not to accede to the authority of the Constitution & Canons of the Episcopal Church (USA) and the actions of General Convention, and not the other way around.

Q. *Since there are already so many churches and denominations to choose from, why is talk of schism so important for us?*

A. It is a shameful thing to preach peace, to proclaim good news to the poor, to announce the year of the Lord's favor (and all of that), and then to be unable to work through our disagreements without wounding again and again the very Body of Christ with our words and actions. Part of our understanding of "Church" is that it is the visible Body of Christ (of which we speak in the Creeds: We believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church...).

Paul tells us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ... (and to) do all things without grumbling or disputing" (Philippians 2:12ff). Schism is to fail (and refuse?) to "will and to work for God's good pleasure" (Ibid.). Schism *in* the Church wounds the Body, and is often an act of anger. Schism *from* the Church dismembers the Body, and is more often an act of hatred.

Q. What should we do? What can we do?

A. First, pray. No one is without sin or error in the present situation. People, out of their sincere love for God will often sin grievously. They will fly planes into buildings, demonize their opponents, and close their ears and hearts to all reason. So pray for God's intervention, illumination, direction, and healing.

Secondly, tell your bishop(s), clergy, families, friends, and neighbors that you are not interested in blame, but in solutions. Rebuke those who make grand generalizations, or who slander your brothers and sisters in Christ. Be gentle, but let them know that slander is not appropriate, and a difference of opinion does not a heretic make!

Thirdly, stay in communion with your church. You cannot change it from the outside. Remain Episcopal parishes will welcome you if your parish leadership will not listen to your concerns or hear you out. But keep in mind that all of your other brothers and sisters in Christ may need your help if they are to preserve the church from dismemberment. As blessed Paul has said,

"Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant ... He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5ff).

*Your servant in Christ,
The Rev. Keith F. Axberg, Rector
Church of the Holy Family, Fresno*

12/18/2003

"Via Media" groups resist calls for realignment, redirection

by Jan Nunley

031218-1

[Episcopal News Service] In the past few months, as statements and meetings have proliferated for those objecting to the 2003 General Convention's two most controversial decisions and talk of "realignment" fills online weblogs (or "blogs"), lists and chat groups, another group of Episcopalians has quietly emerged, largely under the radar of the national news media.

Some members of the groups are happy about the consecration of an openly gay priest as bishop coadjutor in New Hampshire and the acknowledgement of same-gender blessings by General Convention. Others are not, and still others say they aren't sure how they feel. But they say they are united in one belief: no matter what, they want to stay in the Episcopal Church and keep sending a portion of their offering to its national missions and programs.

The grassroots movement doesn't have a name yet, but several of the groups have adopted a Latin phrase commonly used to describe the Anglican "middle way" between extremes-via media. "The Via Media as theological method ... incarnates a Godly way of treating those with whom each of us disagree. A Via Media method recognizes that the truth of one generation might be understood differently in the next. In humility, Anglicans give their theological opponents the respect that comes from reading history, knowing that one ideology's devil is another movement's martyr. In so doing we create room for each other, learning from each other, in communion around God's table," says one group's website.

The major Via Media groups are located in the dioceses of Albany and Pittsburgh, where special conventions were held following General Convention to consider resolutions disassociating those dioceses from the New Hampshire consecration and making contributions to the national mission programs of the Episcopal Church optional for parishes.

But other Via Media-type organizations are springing up in the dioceses of Central Florida, Fort Worth, Springfield, and San Joaquin, all of whose bishops are or have been associated with conservative groups such as Forward in Faith (FiF) and the American Anglican Council. They join existing groups and independent church publications of long standing such as Network News: Voices of the Rio Grande, published by the Episcopal Information Network in Rio Grande; Covenant: A Commentary on the Church in Tennessee; and Nevertheless in the Diocese of Texas.

Here's a brief look at the main Via Media groups in existence today.

Albany Via Media/Concerned Episcopalians of the St. Lawrence Deanery

When Albany's Bishop Daniel Herzog came back from General Convention in Minneapolis, he called for a special diocesan convention to consider resolutions to "disavow" General Convention's consent to the election of Gene Robinson and the acknowledgement of the practice of blessing committed same-gender relationships.

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"The day after we received notice of this, John Sorensen [rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Plattsburgh] called me and we shared our frustration," said the Rev. James Brooks-McDonald, rector of St. Stephen's in Schenectady, who had been one of Albany's deputies at the 2000 General Convention in Denver. "He asked me what we were going to do about it, and I suggested we organize a dissenting voice. It was in that phone call that John suggested we call it 'Albany Via Media.'"

Brooks-McDonald emailed other clergy and organized a meeting at St. James in Lake George prior to the special convention. More than a dozen attended. "John and I made it very clear that the issue was not Gene Robinson, but was whether the Diocese of Albany was going to stay in the Episcopal Church or not," Brooks-McDonald explained. A response to the special convention resolutions was sent to every parish in the diocese, with an invitation to sign on.

"The response was greater than many of us had ever thought," Brooks-McDonald recalled. "By the time of the special convention we had over 350 names on the document."

Riffing off the American Anglican Council's statement "A Place to Stand," the Albany group called theirs "A Place to Kneel." "We are loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ in the Episcopal Church USA and our Primate, the Presiding Bishop. We recognize the General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA as the highest authority in the church," the document said. "Since any realignment or impaired communion with other dioceses of the Episcopal Church affects our lives and our ministries, binds our consciences and violates the ordination vows of our clergy, Albany Via Media, a not-for-profit corporation in the State of New York, was created to keep the Diocese of Albany in communion with the Episcopal Church USA."

Though their attempts to amend some of the special convention's resolutions were defeated, Brooks-McDonald said he thinks their efforts "helped soften" the wording of the resolutions that eventually passed, and may have made an impression on some deputies: "We noticed that in the laity it was relatively close."

What motivated Hallett Luscombe, a Trinity parishioner, was "a sincere concern regarding the disturbing happenings" within the Episcopal Church in Albany. "Personally, in my own naiveté, I thought the core of the problem centered only about the gay bishop. There had been threats of schism if he were consecrated," Luscombe said. "Now that we have been involved in the whole picture, we know it isn't just the consecration."

Her rector, Sorensen, said he's involved because "every value and virtue essential to Anglicanism—the spiritual heart of our Anglo-Catholic diocese is being trampled. It tears me up."

"This conservative effort to corral the support of foreign primates to censure the Episcopal Church is a betrayal of our most treasured Anglican principles. It's religious terrorism of the worst kind, by a group of American bishops who lost a vote on sexual morality and would rather blow us all up than have to learn to live with the diversity of the church," Sorensen wrote with palpable anger in an email. "I'm particularly distressed, and I keep speaking out, because many church leaders seem to forget that we had an event called the English Reformation, whereby the church in England freed itself from the tyranny of the Pope. I, for one, find it no improvement to replace the tyranny of the Pontiff with the presumption of the Primates."

Another smaller Via Media group in the Albany diocese, still in its infancy, calls itself Concerned Episcopalians of St. Lawrence Deanery. The largely rural deanery is home territory for Bishop Herzog, and according to CESLD member Joseph Liotta, the clergy are virtually united behind his

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positions-but the laity are not. "Many people in our deanery were dismayed to learn that our bishop is a member of the board of the AAC," Liotta explained. "The special diocesan convention our bishop called was seen as a tool to implement the AAC agenda. We do not agree with the policies and programs the AAC stands for. We expect to contribute to all efforts to keep our Diocese in the Episcopal Church of the USA-in fact and in spirit."

Another St. Lawrence Deanery lay member, Suzanne Smith of Trinity Episcopal Church in Potsdam, said there is "a strong divide between the position of the bishop and clergy in our diocese and the laity in our church. Many Trinity members support [Gene] Robinson and do not support the bishop on this issue. People in our church who agree with the bishop's basic position are still unwilling to separate or realign in any way. They are comfortable agreeing to disagree with ECUSA's decision and letting it go at that."

"It is difficult to get information on where our diocese is going from our clergy who remain fairly silent on the issue," Smith added in an email. "It is politically imprudent for them to disagree with the bishop and they are weary from listening to angry church members."

Neither of the Albany bishops responded to an email request for comment on the group.

Episcopal Voices of Central Florida

Like Herzog and bishop suffragan David Bena in Albany, Bishop John Howe of Central Florida called a special September diocesan convention to consider resolutions of disassociation from the actions of General Convention.

"Our called special convention in September sent up alarm bells in that all of the resolutions, from my viewpoint, pointed toward what the 'Catholic Encyclopedia' calls passive schism: rebel against the authority, blame the other side, seek outside intervention, etc.," wrote moderator Donna Bott. "As the senior warden of my parish [Holy Trinity, Fruitland Park], I proposed a resolution to the vestry to request alternative episcopal oversight."

Howe responded and met with the vestry during his visitation October 5. "Because I perceived a sense of conciliation along with conversation that led me to believe he would be the bishop to all people of the diocese, I withdrew the resolution," Bott said, but in the meantime a group of "concerned" clergy and laity had convened and wanted to continue their conversations about the direction of the diocese. Four of the founding members of the group, now calling themselves Episcopal Voices of Central Florida, are also on the diocesan board.

Although group members are of differing opinions about sexuality issues, they say they are dedicated to "remaining in full support and union" with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

"We are mainstream Episcopalians who represent the middle ground-the place where everyone is welcome and we can find unity despite our differences," said Bott, a member of the diocesan board. "We oppose and will continue to oppose any attempts to take our churches, our property, our congregations, or our diocese of the national church. Our bishop, John Howe, has stated that he wishes to remain in the Episcopal Church and we are here to support him."

At present, Bott maintained, Howe is "welcoming and candid" and the Episcopal Voices group has been promised "comparable space" in the diocesan newspaper with the AAC. "Separation or schism, for us, is just not the Anglican way!" Bott wrote.

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With the annual diocesan convention set for the end of January, Episcopal Voices is beginning a petition drive to assure that the diocese remains part of the national church.

In a personal reply to an email query, Howe wrote that in his opinion Episcopal Voices "is committed to preserving unity in the diocese and in the Episcopal Church. They have said of themselves that they hold a diversity of views of the sexuality issues that are so very divisive just now, but they share a desire remain in communion with each other and throughout the Church."

Fort Worth Via Media

Fort Worth Via Media's website describes it as "an organization of ordained and lay Episcopalians in the Diocese of Fort Worth who are going to remain within the Episcopal Church of the United States of America."

Acknowledging that some are "deeply troubled and grieved" by the actions of the 2003 General Convention while others "celebrate these actions," the Fort Worth group maintains that it is uniquely positioned to know that opposite views can remain in the same fellowship. "We know this is possible to do, because since our diocese was founded in 1983, it has been 'out of communion' or in 'impaired' communion with other parts of the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Communion over the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate," the group said in a press release issued December 5. "We also have survived intense internal disputes over the use of the 'new' Book of Common Prayer. Through all this, we have remained together. We know from experience that there is a via media—a middle way—between complete agreement and schism.

"We are deeply concerned about steps taken by Fort Worth Bishop Jack Leo Iker and other diocesan leaders that appear to be leading toward schism," the statement said. "We believe that these actions do not warrant leaving the Episcopal Church of the United States of America."

Members of the group have voiced objections to Iker's signing the name of the diocese to a petition supporting a new "Network of Confessing Dioceses and Congregations" headed by Pittsburgh bishop Robert Duncan. "The problem we have is that he signed up 18,000," wrote Barbi Click, a spokesperson for the group, in an email. "The diocese, according to the main office, only has 19,000 in it. That means he signed up 94.7 percent of the diocese. However, only 82+% of the lay delegates and clergy voted for the resolution. Therefore the numbers are incorrect and misrepresentative of the entire diocese."

Asked about the group, Iker replied simply by email: "No comment."

Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh

Perhaps because Duncan, a vice president of the AAC, has been one of the most outspoken proponents of "realignment," the Via Media group in his diocese is one of the more vocal in opposition to it. Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh (PEP) began organizing even before Duncan declared his determination to "stand against the actions of [General] Convention with everything I have and everything I am."

According to member Sue Boulden, the Pittsburgh group had its genesis in a regular meeting of the local Episcopal Women's Caucus in September 2002, held the same day deputies to the diocesan convention received their information packets. The first resolution under consideration,

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modeled on a South Carolina resolution, was touted as an attempt to build a 'firewall' between self-described 'orthodox Anglicans' and decisions of the General Convention.

"When we women came together that evening and realized what was going on, we immediately called for an ad hoc committee to be formed to deal with said resolution," recalled Boulden. The committee soon became known as Those Opposed to Resolution One (TORO), which lobbied unsuccessfully against the resolution.

"Following that diocesan convention, those of us who were the most involved felt we needed to come together on a regular basis to support each other," Boulden said, and out of that grew PEP and the PEPChat list, which convened online prior to the 2003 General Convention.

But it was their bishop's passionate statements in Minneapolis that galvanized PEP members to take action. "I became increasingly alarmed by the many statements of our bishop, Robert Duncan, and the actions of the AAC," said current PEP president Lionel Deimel. Following General Convention, he and a conservative friend, Celinda Scott, began circulating a petition for unity in the diocese, with the help of PEP members. Then PEP's focus shifted to opposing the six resolutions proposed for the September special convention called by Duncan.

The PEPChat list now has participants from all over the country, and has provided advice and resources to groups elsewhere. The group is increasingly taking on an educational role within the diocese, encouraging parishes to support national mission programs financially and resist the inclusion of their congregations "in any network established by Bishop Duncan and the AAC," said Deimel.

PEP vice president Joan R. Gundersen is an historian and "seventh generation cradle Episcopalian" who has been active in at least nine Episcopal dioceses over the years, and is on the board of editors of *Anglican and Episcopal History*. "What we agree on is that the Episcopal Church we know and love is a place open to multiple Biblical interpretations, united through the Creeds and worship," Gundersen wrote. "My worst nightmare is that the Episcopal Church will not be able to hold the center-to be broad enough to have room for both a liberal like me and my father and siblings who are conservative Rite I traditionalists."

Like Gundersen, Jennifer Sinclair is a cradle Episcopalian, born and raised in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. When she returned to Pittsburgh after several years as a student in London, she said, "I had no idea how far right the diocese had swung, or that my parish and beloved members of its clergy had gone along with it."

For Sinclair, "Resolution One was the final straw. I church shopped for a couple of weeks, and landed at Calvary [Episcopal Church] one morning," she recalled. People there "agree on the substantive issues-that the Gospel is about love, that the Creeds are sufficient statements of faith, that those things are more important than the details of the style in which one worships...Above all, we agree that the Scriptures must be read in the dual lights of Reason and Tradition."

PEP member Karen Kapsanis said she was "raised unchurched, spent my early adulthood church shopping, did a graduate degree in theology in the hope that it would help me in my search for God and for a church, and in the midst of all that happened on Calvary Episcopal Church, a haven for all who want to belong."

She joined PEP on the recommendation of a friend. "I don't think the real issue for the AAC is homosexuality. I think the real issues are money and power, and the AAC and groups like them

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seem to think it is worth sacrificing ECUSA for money and power," she wrote. "I feel that if there is anything I can do to make up for the damage that has been done, I need to do it.

Asked about PEP, Bishop Duncan's secretary responded, "He has no comment."

Remaining ECUSA, San Joaquin

A group of five priests in the Diocese of San Joaquin began the "Remaining ECUSA" " web page after the Diocese of San Joaquin voted in October to withhold budgeted funds from the national mission programs of the church. In a question-and-answer section authored by the Rev. Keith F. Axberg, rector of Fresno's Church of the Holy Family, the website states:

"Q. Some say the Episcopal Church has departed the faith and order of the Anglican Communion, and others say the diocese is maneuvering to leave. Who leaves whom in a schism?

"A. There are two kinds of schism: schism in the Church, and schism from the Church. ... The debate raging within the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church is partially clouded by the use of the term 'schism' without the defining prepositions: in or from. The Episcopal Church is clearly experiencing schism in the Church over such issues as Prayer Book revision, the ordination of women, gay, and lesbian persons, human sexuality, etc. Those persons, parishes, or dioceses not able to abide such changes are, themselves, departing from the faith and order of the Church by choosing not to accede to the authority of the Constitution & Canons of the Episcopal Church (USA) and the actions of General Convention, and not the other way around."

One of the Remaining ECUSA priests is the Rev. Mark Hall, rector of St. Anne's in Stockton, California. "St. Anne's is one of the 'liberal' parishes in the diocese, but that is a very relative term," said Hall. "Our vestry put our money where our voices are by passing a resolution at the last regular vestry meeting." The resolution, passed unanimously, declares that St. Anne's will designate an amount equal to 10% of its Diocesan Assessment for the year 2004, or the sum of \$2501, to be sent directly to the support of the General Convention Budget during the year 2004." Monthly payments begin in January, Hall said.

"San Joaquin bishop John-David Schofield did not respond to an email request for comment.

Episcopal Forum of South Carolina

"I think that all of us have had long-standing concerns that the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of South Carolina is much more concerned with being 'right' and 'pure' for the 'right' people than it is in what is addressed in the Beatitudes," said Thomas Myers Jr., a parishioner at St. Stephen's in Charleston, South Carolina and spokesperson for the fledgling Episcopal Forum of South Carolina. In the 1990s, Myers, the father of a gay teenager, founded We Are Family, a Charleston nonprofit devoted to helping gay and lesbian teens and their families. "For me, the resounding defeat of a proposed resolution committing us to continue to meet, study and pray was the final act that made me feel I had to do something."

"We are now in the process of establishing a steering committee and a plan for action, as well as holding a conference in February," said Myers. "We have a list of 33 people who have all responded to the Special Convention held here in early October and the letter I sent out the next day."

Asked for comment on the formation of the group, South Carolina bishop Ed Salmon replied, "I have never heard of it."

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Episcopal Free Speech of Springfield

According to the introduction on its Yahoo!Group page, Episcopal Free Speech was created "in response to allegations that the Diocese of Springfield is censoring the news that goes into 'The Springfield Current' [the diocesan newspaper]."

Wrote list member Jestin Trahan:

"WE WANT OUR NEWSPAPER BACK.
WE WANT OUR VOICE TO BE HEARD AT THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL.
WE WANT OUR VOICE TO BE HEARD AT THE SYNOD.
WE WANT TO REMAIN IN ECUSA.
WE WANT OUR BISHOP TO GIVE US SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE.

"I think most Episcopalians in our Diocese are in agreement with this. We must not touch on issues that may divide us, for not all of us agree that the national church did the right thing when it allowed a gay person to become bishop. But I have not talked to anyone who is in disagreement with the above demands."

Trahan said that until recently he was a member of the diocesan council, and his wife LaVonne is still is a member. Both belong to Church of the Holy Trinity in Danville, Illinois. Trahan attended the last meeting of the diocesan council held before the annual Synod meeting, and confirmed that at that session the council "voted not to withhold funds from the national church."

By the October meeting, Trahan said, several council members had either resigned or their positions "were terminated" by Springfield bishop Peter Beckwith. When a withholding resolution was brought up again, the newly constituted council passed it. Some on the Springfield list are angry that no resolution regarding withholding was brought before parish representatives at the annual synod earlier in October, effectively depriving them of voice and vote on the matter. "This seems to be a first step in working toward delivering our diocese to the AAC," Trahan maintains.

Other concerns include the cancellation of a new mission effort, called Sacred Journey, "because the priest in charge apparently disagreed with the bishop," Trahan said.

Beckwith did not respond to an email request for comment.

Pushing back

To date, the Via Media groups have been active primarily within their own diocesan boundaries, but that may be changing rapidly. Just as widespread email networks energized opposition to General Convention's actions, the same kinds of links are enabling those who want to stay in ECUSA to do some "pushing back" of their own.

In a news release dated December 16, three of the groups-Albany Via Media, Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh and Fort Worth Via Media-united to blast an online petition effort by the conservative coalition Anglican Mainstream, saying it "uses a dubious signature counting method that does not meet any Christian ethical standard for honesty or truth-telling." They based their objections on the petition's acceptance of a signature by a single individual-a bishop, parish rector or organizational officer-as representing the signature of every individual in the diocese, congregation or organization. "It matters not whether a bishop has limited the numbers of

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'signatures' to the proportion he believes support his position," the release said. "The count was made without asking the individuals where they stood on this statement. Such 'mass signatures' account for over 97% of the total signatures on this 'petition.'"

"We call on our Diocesan Bishops Herzog, Iker and Duncan, who belong to both the Anglican Mainstream and to petition co-sponsor the American Anglican Council, to uphold the Ten Commandments and not 'bear false witness' when seeking support for their network," the release concluded.

Some members have also criticized a December 17 New York Times report indicating that 13 US dioceses had joined the new Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes. Within hours after the story broke, the communications officer for the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida informed other diocesan communicators that neither the Diocese of Southwest Florida nor the Diocese of Central Florida were allied with the network.

News reporters confirmed that the incorrect number had been given to the media by the network's moderator, Duncan, and by an American Anglican Council news release. According to the Diocese of South Carolina's canon theologian, the Rev. Kendall Harmon, only the dioceses of Pittsburgh, South Carolina, and Fort Worth have formally agreed to be part of the network.

The Via Media lists contain some commentary and analysis of conservative proposals as well, some of them based on personal observation. One member of the St. Lawrence Deanery group, Andrew Grimmke, had attended a meeting of the Georgia chapter of the American Anglican Council in Atlanta. In a later essay posted on the list, Grimmke criticized what he had heard from Duncan and AAC executive director David Anderson about their concept of "adequate episcopal oversight," in which a parish would be able to contract with a bishop other than their diocesan for oversight without the diocesan's consent or even knowledge.

"Sadly, the AAC proposal bears a remarkable resemblance to the process used to switch long distance phone companies," Grimmke wrote. Such a "free-market model" for episcopal oversight could lead nervous bishops to politicize parish search processes in order to "stack the deck with ideological cronies and yes men; to remove, over time, ideological diversity from the diocese and cast it in his own image, whether 'orthodox' or 'inclusive'. ... the impulses which drive the markets can not be expected to push our churches on the path to Christ."

-- The Rev. Jan Nunley is deputy director of Episcopal News Service.

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Confession and Calling of the Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes

*(Copied from AAC Website 12/18/03- proof texts omitted)
(Major issues of division highlighted)*

Preface

There are times within the history of the church when Christians have been faced with threats, some internal and some external, to the integrity of their common life and faith. **The recent actions of the Diocese of New Westminster and the General Convention of the Episcopal Church U.S.A. confront the various provinces of the Anglican Communion with just such a threat to the historic Faith and Order that defines their existence as a communion.** In the face of this, obedience requires a faithful statement of belief and a renewed commitment to the practices that give expression to the saving truth of the Christian Gospel. The statement of confession and calling that follows has been occasioned by actions that have compromised the witness and mission of Anglicans throughout the world, rent the unity of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church U.S.A., torn the fabric of the Anglican Communion, and violated the trust so necessary for the fruitful relations with other churches and other faiths. It is offered with an admission of common responsibility for the dire circumstances in which the Anglican Communion finds itself, with a deep sense of penitence for shared disobedience. We are committed to amendment of life, the genuineness of which we pray shall be attested by the appearance among us of the fruits and the gifts of the Spirit. The statement is offered also with the knowledge that the spiritual health of our Communion and the authenticity of its witness and mission require of us not only fidelity to the faith of the Apostles but amendment of life in ways marked out by the path of suffering taken by our Lord.

Stewards of a Trust

I. 1. We confess, hold and bear witness before God and the world, that we have been “entrusted with a glorious Gospel” by God (*1 Tim. 1:11*), a “message of reconciliation” in Christ Jesus (*2 Cor. 5:19*); and that as “stewards of God’s mysteries” our calling is to be “trustworthy” (*1 Cor. 4:1f.*), willing to “guard the truth” that the Holy Spirit has shared with us through our baptism (*2 Tim. 1:14*) in the Church, passed on to us from the apostles (*1:13*). Our identity as Anglicans, whether in the Episcopal Church, USA or the Anglican Church in Canada, is founded on this trust and this calling.

I. 2. We confess, hold and bear witness that this “mystery of the faith” (*1 Tim. 3:9*) is the Church’s knowledge and proclamation of and life within the glorious reality of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This trust embraces the full knowledge of God, given for the life of the world (*cf. Jn 1:18*) and revealed in Christ through the Church’s own life and teaching (*cf. Eph. 1:15-23*).

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I. 3. We confess, hold and bear witness that we are obliged to share this “mystery of Christ” even and particularly in suffering (*Col. 4:3*). Its form and meaning is embodied in the historical reality of God’s own self-giving, the Father “sending the Son” (*1 Jn. 4:9f.*) in Jesus’ incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension (*1 Tim 3:16*). It is given testimony through and for the sake of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives (*1 Cor. 2:7 ff.*), “sending us” in the same movement as the Father sends His Son (*Jn. 20:21f.*), so that, in the end, God might be glorified (*cf. Rom 16:27*). This is our mission, located in God’s own life.

I.4 We confess, hold and bear witness that this sending, the work of the Holy Spirit in particular, is accomplished not through drawing us into new truths, but by binding us more fully to Scripture’s remembered word, especially the living testimony to Jesus’ very words, rooted in the Old Testament’s promises and meanings. Thus, the mystery of God’s own life as Trinity lived in mission is shared with the world through his revealed word and human lives that listen and live within the revelation of God’s own being in Christ (*compare Jn. 2:22; 14:24ff; Acts 11:16*).

I.5. We confess, hold and bear witness, in particular therefore, that this trust is given to us in the Holy Scripture’s received authority: the “Word of God” making known the “mysteries” of God through the prophets and apostles by the Holy Spirit (*Col 1:25ff.; Rom. 16:25f.; Eph. 3:5; Nicene Creed*). This Word is made known and rightly apprehended, furthermore, in the Church’s life as it is bound in the unity of love and truth before the eyes of the world (*Jn. 17:20-26; Col 2:1-6*), expressed in the common Creeds and Canons of the Christian churches, as they have been led in recognized council across the ages. Within the Anglican Church of which we are a part, this means that Scripture’s meaning is rightly discerned in addition through the theological ordering of our common historic formularies, including the sixteenth and seventeenth century authorized Books of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles which ground the belief and practices of our Communion’s life. “In this way the authorities, which the church needs for her mission, are defined and limited.” (*Barmen Declaration Article 1*).

I.6 We confess, hold and bear witness finally that Scripture’s authority is fruitfully received and fulfills its formative function for the people of the Church when it is read in common, as a whole, coherently and comprehensively, Old and New Testaments together, as a single revelation of God’s mysteries which teaches and builds up the Church in truth and holiness (*2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 10:6*).

Trustworthy in Obedience and Communion

II. 1. In light of this trust, we are called by God to two primary acts and attitudes of faithfulness: obedience and communion. The preaching of Jesus Christ is done for the sake “bringing about the obedience of faith” (*Rom. 16:26*), and to this we submit ourselves, standing firm over against “every wind of doctrine” precisely for the sake of “growing up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together [...] upbuilds itself in love” (*Eph. 4:14-16*).

II.2 We are called because of this to found our communion in Christ on common obedience to God’s word which requires of us not pluriformity of truth and practice, but that we be of one mind and follow the pattern of holiness marked out for us by our Lord and his Apostles (*Jn. 17:14 & 17; Phil. 2:2 & 5; 1 Pet. 2:21; II Pet. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:15-16*).

II.3 We are called therefore to oppose assaults on the authority of the Scriptures. We are also called to oppose assaults on the way of life that the Scriptures enjoin (*1 Tim. 6:3-6*). This opposition comes, not from

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a divisive spirit, but from the precious vocation to holiness, which leads us away from sin into the clear and obedient participation in God's own nature (*Lev. 11:44-20:26; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Pet. 1:4*).

II.4 We are called in our day and place, to oppose all those actions of synods, conventions, individual bishops and priests, that contradict the apostolic and the Church's commonly accepted scriptural teaching on marriage between man and woman as the divinely ordained, holy, and exclusive context of human sexual activity, as the privileged social sacrament of God's covenant of faithfulness for and figure of human redemption (*Hosea 2:16-21; Mark 10:5-9; Eph. 5:29-32; Rev. 19: 7-9*), and on chastity outside of marriage as a holy and worthy calling (*Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:32*). Such contradictions of Christian teaching subvert the communion of our churches within the Anglican Communion and rend relationships within the larger Church. In doing this, they represent an attack on the very mysteries of God, the evangelical trust of which we are stewards

II.5 We are called to confess our profound sorrow for how these actions have broken ecumenical trust within the wider household of faith. We are further called, then, to oppose all such actions that subvert the truth of the gospel and the unity of the church that flows from it. We recognize that this opposition will involve a struggle to discern true witness and in this struggle we seek to be governed by charity and the desire to build up and not tear down others in the integrity of their faith (*1 Cor. 8:1, 9; II Cor. 13:10; 1 Tim. 6:11; Titus 3:9ff*). For we uphold the truth that all persons are called in baptism to a life that is daily renewed in the image of Christ Jesus according to his word (*2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:5-17*). We seek always to witness to this universal gift and challenge together.

II.6. We are called to preach, convince, rebuke, exhort and teach in accordance with the Scripture's truth that draws us together in Christ (*2 Tim. 4:2*).

II.7. Our calling to *obedience* in particular commits us to follow the apostolic injunction to direct ourselves to the knowledge and commending of Holy Scripture (*Acts 20:27; 1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 3:16*), devoting ourselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (*Acts 2:42*). To that end,

- II. 7. i. We commit ourselves to the study of Scripture, through serious, regular, and responsible discipline and scholarship;
- ii. We commit ourselves to the clear explication of Scripture's full and perspicuous meaning as apprehended within the common witness of the Church, in our preaching, writing, and witness;
- iii. We commit ourselves to an obedient following of Scripture through disciplined habits of prayer, zeal to maintain the unity of the body in the bond of peace, a common life conformed to the pattern of our Lord's, and through humble listening, conforming, and mutual correction according to the teaching of Holy Scripture;
- iv. We commit ourselves to teaching the people and leaders of the Church through word and example the truths of Scripture's mysteries through disciplined and accountable means of Christian and priestly formation.

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II.8. Our calling to *communion* in Christ in particular leads us to a commitment to engage, be formed by, contribute to, and promote the “proper working” of the “knitted joints” of Christ’s Body within the church in which we are placed by God:

II.8. i. We commit ourselves to the primary organ of stewardship within the Church of Christ, that is, an episcopate rooted in holiness, knowledge of Scripture, and apostolic faithfulness (*Titus 1:7-9*);

ii. We commit ourselves to the organs of communion within the Anglican Fellowship of churches, respecting, living within, and holding accountable the representative bodies of our larger church, especially in its faithful witness to the Gospel of which she is a steward;

iii. We commit ourselves to conciliar discussion and decision-making, and reject the patterns of autonomous and sectarian self-rule that characterize the present age;

iv. We commit ourselves to the virtues of communion (*cf. Rom. 12:9-21; Eph. 4:25-5:21*), which embody the revealed truth of the Scripture’s witness to the very being of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the pattern of love itself;

v. We commit ourselves to the work of healing schism and estrangement within the Body of Christ (*1 Cor. 1:10*), through truth-telling, testing of the faith, repentance, humility, apostolic authority, and building each other up (*2 Cor. 13:5-11*).

vi. We commit ourselves to the support of communion, through our ministry, mission, and the sharing of our goods and resources in partnership with those to whom God has joined us in the Body of His Son.

Repentance, Reconciliation, Reform, Renewal

III.1. We know that the trust we have been given is ours to guard even in the face of divine judgment, and even through the midst of suffering (*2 Tim. 1:11f*). Our faithfulness as stewards is tied both to our own penitence and accepted affliction, “rejoicing in the sharing of Christ’s sufferings” and in the testing and justice of God, “entrusting our souls to a faithful Creator” (*1 Pet. 4:12-19*). Our confession and calling therefore lead us to repent (*Mk 1:14-15; Lk 24:45-47*); to seek reconciliation among ourselves, in the church and in the world (*2 Cor. 5:18-20*); to reform our lives and the life of God’s Church (*Matt. 5:17-20*); and to renew the church where God has placed us (*Rom 12:1-2*), and to do this:

III. 1.i. through disciplined patterns, held in common among us and our leaders, of prayer, bible study, and the humility of constant repentance, gentleness, and suffering (*James 4:6ff; 1 Tim. 1:15; Gal. 6:14*). These patterns will be founded on a rule of life, of prayer, fasting and almsgiving as outlined by our Lord (*Matt. 6:1-21*) including but not limited to: the Daily Office using the Lectionary, Daily study of Scripture, weekly Communion, submission to appropriate spiritual authorities, regular fasting, and sacrificial giving.

ii. through the mission of sharing the glorious Gospel of God and teaching obedience to its revelation among all peoples (*Matt.28:18-20*), that “every family in heaven and on earth” might come to know and be transformed by the “fullness” of Christ’s love (*Eph. 3:14-19*);

iii. through the formation of believers in the image of Christ (*2 Cor. 3:12-4:6*), in knowledge and sacrificial service;

A PLACE TO STAND

AMERICAN ANGLICAN COUNCIL STATEMENT OF FAITH

PREFACE

The mission of the Church is, according to Jesus' Great Commission, to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). In a fresh commitment to that mission, we join together in common confession of the Gospel and in a radical commitment to support one another in accordance with classical Anglican orthodoxy.

A COMMON CONFESSION OF THE GOSPEL

The Gospel and the Triune God: We rejoice in the grace of the Triune God, who has forgiven our sins and given us redemption in Jesus Christ. We proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, who became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, lived a life of perfect obedience to his heavenly Father, died on the cross to atone for the sins of the world, and rose bodily in accordance with the Scriptures. God the Holy Spirit draws us to faith in Jesus Christ, through whom alone we are justified and found acceptable by God the Father.

Christian Obedience: We confess Jesus as the Lord to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given by the Father. We commit ourselves to follow him and love him above all else and to conform our lives to his example and teaching by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Scripture: We believe all Scriptures were "written for our learning" (Romans 15:4), that they are "God's Word written," and that we are to "hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." We commit ourselves to regular Bible study and to preach and teach only that which is in accordance with Holy Scripture.

Congregational Life. We hold corporate worship, discipleship, and mission to be interconnected and indispensable aspects of our response to God as he revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ. We are committed to being sacrificially involved in all three aspects of congregational life.

Mission and Missions. The Risen Lord commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel and to follow his commandments. The mission of the Church includes both evangelistic proclamation and deeds of love and service. We commit ourselves and our resources to this mission, both locally and to the uttermost parts of the earth. We affirm our particular responsibility to know, love, and serve the Lord in our local settings and contexts. Since the biblical pattern of witness moves from the local to the global, we will endeavor to be well-informed about our local communities and active in church

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planting, evangelism, service, social justice, and cross-cultural, international mission, with particular concern for the poor and the unreached peoples of the world.

Historic Faith, Ecumenical Vision. We affirm the Faith of the Church as it is set forth in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds and in the classical Prayer Book tradition, including those documents contained in the "Historical Documents" section of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer (BCP p.863). We further affirm the principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (BCP p.876) as an expression of the normative authority of Holy Scripture and as a basis for our present unity with brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion and for the future reunion of all the divided branches of Christ's one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOSPEL

Christian mission is rooted in unchanging biblical revelation. At particular times, however, specific challenges to authentic faith and holiness arise which require thoughtful and vigorous response. We therefore speak to the following issues of our time and culture.

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ. While religions and philosophies of the world are not without elements of truth, Jesus Christ alone is the full revelation of God. In and through the Gospel, Jesus judges and corrects all views and doctrines. All persons everywhere need to learn of him, come to know and believe in him, and receive forgiveness and new life in him, as there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Church and State. Biblical social commandments and Christian ethical principles are foundational to the well-being of every society. Recognizing the call of Christians to be faithful witnesses and a challenging presence in society, we are committed to seek ways to express these commandments and principles in all spheres of life, including the public life of the nation.

Sanctity of Life. All human life is a sacred gift from God and is to be protected and defended from conception to natural death. We will uphold the sanctity of life and bring the grace and compassion of Christ to those who face the realities of previous abortion, unwanted pregnancy, and end-of-life illness.

True Inclusivity. In grateful response to Christ Jesus, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, we will extend the welcome of the Church to every person, regardless of race, sex, social or economic status, sexual orientation, or past behavior. We will oppose prejudice in ourselves and others and renounce any false notion of inclusivity that denies that all are sinners who need to repent.

Marriage, Family, and the Single Life. God has instituted marriage to be a life-long union of husband and wife, intended for their mutual joy, help, and comfort, and, when it is God's will, for the procreation and nurture of children. Divorce is always contrary to God's original intention, though in a fallen world it is sometimes a tragic necessity. The roles of father and mother, exercised in a variety of ways, are God-

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given and profoundly important since they are the chief providers of moral instruction and godly living. The single life, either by call or by circumstance, is honored by God. It is therefore important for unmarried persons to embrace and be embraced by the Christian family.

Human Sexuality. Sexuality is inherent in God's creation of every human person in his image as male and female. All Christians are called to chastity: husbands and wives by exclusive sexual fidelity to one another and single persons by abstinence from sexual intercourse. God intends and enables all people to live within these boundaries, with the help and in the fellowship of the Church.

SUPPORT OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

We desire to be supportive of congregations, dioceses, provinces, and the national structures of the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion. However, when there arise within the Church at any level tendencies, pronouncements, and practices contrary to biblical, classical Anglican doctrinal and moral standards, we must not and will not support them. Councils can err and have erred, and the Church has no authority to ordain anything contrary to God's Word written (*Articles of Religion* XIX, XX - BCP p.871). When teachings and practices contrary to Scripture and to this orthodox Anglican perspective are permitted within the Church - or even authorized by the General Convention - in obedience to God, we will disassociate ourselves from those specific teachings and practices and will resist them in every way possible.

INVITATION TO ASSOCIATION

We invite all members of the Episcopal Church who concur in this classical Anglican perspective, to stand with us for mutual enlightenment, encouragement, mission, and ministry, and, where necessary, for protection of the right to live and minister in obedience to Scripture, Anglican tradition, and conscience. We further invite all persons who share this faith to stand with us.

Adopted August 7, 1996

Letter to Seminarians from the AAC President

The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson

Source: AAC News

December 9, 2003

The following letter was written to ECUSA seminarians who attended the AAC's (Dallas event - but it also shares helpful news for all orthodox Episcopalians.

American Anglican Council

The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson, President & CEO

Advent 2003

Dear Seminarians,

It has been nearly three months since we all met at the Anatole in Dallas. What a blessed time we had. I am thankful to you for being there...and for bearing the burden of ministry and education at a particularly difficult time in the life of the church.

I write to give you an update on what is going on in the developments since the Plano gathering. Frankly, so much has been happening and at such great speed, that it has been difficult to give timely communication. No doubt you have read many of the statements and much of the documentation on the web. If you need additional updates, please go to the American Anglican website: www.AmericanAnglican.org. From there you can read just about any other website for relevant updates.

Here is the way things stand right now.

1. We have the start of a confessing church movement underway. At a recent gathering of primates, bishops, and church leaders from around the world, this historic movement began to take shape. It will take some time to develop the outline and implications of this movement, but it is a significant step forward. It has the endorsement of the Primates of the Global South. It is a movement that the Archbishop of Canterbury himself encouraged. Some may ask, what difference will it make? Well, with the energy of the Plano conference and the power of the Holy Spirit, it will make a huge difference. A confessing church movement is a way of standing against the prevailing culture...and a church that wishes to bless the prevailing culture. It is a way of standing together; a confessing church movement is a determination to stand and proclaim, against an unbelieving church and generation, the historic truth.

There is much to be done...and it will take shape over the next few years. But I can say without hesitation, that your role in the future shape of Anglicanism has never been more important. If you feel the call to the Anglican way of life, and others around you who are in godly authority confirm and consent to your ordination and ministry, please know that you are and will be part of the key to a new and rejuvenated orthodox Anglicanism in North America. Frankly, we need you.

2. There are scheduled conferences and consultations over the next few months that will be exploring the ways we can move forward. The American Anglican Council is planning a

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leaders conference in Plano in January. The Anglican Communion Institute has two major conferences planned in January and April. These are all important and all necessary. This is the way the church processes and understands the times we live in and the options available to us. Stay tuned to the relevant websites and read the news reports as they are posted nearly every day.

3. The hierarchy of ECUSA is deeply troubled by the backlash to the consecration of an openly homosexual bishop. They are struggling to make their version of 'supplemental episcopal pastoral care' compatible with the directive of the Primates to provide 'adequate episcopal oversight', but they still don't get it. They're hearing reports of the slashing of funds and withdrawal from participation in the national church. It is very significant that the Presiding Bishop has resigned from a very important post in the dialog with Roman Catholicism. I am sure you read other reports of the terrible cost of this consecration concerning the Russian Orthodox Church. We have not even begun to see the fallout on the Anglican Communion. The impact is strong. The dismissive words of the national leadership that it will blow over were only half right. It is blowing up.

Each diocese is processing the actions of the General Convention in a different way. We may not all agree that the way forward is as clear or certain as we would like to see. Admittedly, we all would like an easy path, a straight way to move forward with our ministry. Brothers and sisters, God has not granted us that way at this time. The road will be hard and the way forward may appear uncertain much of the time. But we are being trained and shaped for a ministry that is of great consequence for the Kingdom. Be strong and of good courage.

All of this, both the bad and the good, make it imperative that you stay focused in your studies and preparation for ministry. The network will need mission minded leaders who can plant churches, raise disciples, and do post-modern apologetics for the new century. Share this letter with your friends, family, and acquaintances in the faith. I pray it will encourage them as well. Stay faithful in prayer. Stay focused in your studies. Stay tuned to the events. And may the God of peace be with you.

Your brother in Christ,
The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson,
President AAC

AAC Talking Points on Issues of Faith, Morality and Doctrine

June 11, 2002

The Gospel and the Triune God. We rejoice in the grace of the Triune God, who has forgiven our sins and given us redemption in Jesus Christ. We proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, who became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, lived a life of perfect obedience to his heavenly Father, died on the cross to atone for the sins of the world, and rose bodily in accordance with the Scriptures. God the Holy Spirit draws us to faith in Jesus Christ, through whom alone we are justified and found acceptable by God the Father.

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Homosexuality. Homosexuality is a state of human brokenness that, like any other brokenness, God can transform and heal. We love homosexual persons and, for this reason, we cannot support their lifestyle. Rather, we encourage all persons to seek the transforming love of Jesus Christ. We do not support same-sex unions or the ordination of non-celebrate homosexuals, and we will actively oppose attempts by homosexual activists to force their agenda on our church and society.

Women's Ordination. The AAC represents a broad base of biblically orthodox believers who hold differing opinions on this difficult issue. Despite these differences, we have decided to respect the consciences of each other for the sake of moving forward in mission and ministry. Therefore, we have not taken any formal position on women's ordination.

Archbishop of Canterbury's statement at the final press conference of the Primates' Meeting

Good evening everyone. Thank you very much for joining us. I hope you've had a chance, at least, to glance at the statement which has been produced by our meeting which has, in fact, been unanimously agreed by the meeting of the primates. And I'd like to offer a few words of introduction to this before we turn to questions.

It has been a very remarkable couple of days in the life of the Anglican Communion and it has certainly been anything but easy. It has not been without pain. But it has been honest and open and I hope that we have grown in some real shared understanding as a result. And I do want to take this opportunity of paying tribute to my colleagues in the Communion for all the dedication and the energy and steadfastness in Christian service that they show generally and that they have shown in these two demanding days.

Such understanding as we've achieved has been very hard won and it couldn't have been otherwise given the enormous challenges that we have faced in these two days and the very widely differing positions that we have brought to them. That makes our work together all the more significant. We have, very emphatically, found the will to keep talking and working together. In short we have grown closer together rather than, as many people predicted, further apart during this meeting. And that is what matters most to all of us and what I think renders any talk of winners and losers in this irrelevant.

Now it's quite clear from our discussions that issues around human sexuality will continue to be difficult and divisive for the Anglican Communion, as they are for many Christians. These issues will continue to cause pain and anger, misunderstanding and resentment all around. But I must make it clear that the Primates' Meeting has no legal jurisdiction, it's not a supreme court of the Communion and it would have been rather surprising had we been able, at this gathering, to make all the problems go away at once. We haven't. The challenge we have worked hard to meet has been to find some way of coping with divisive issues as a Communion. So these two days have not been primarily a seminar on sexuality or an attempt to revisit discussions and decisions already taken, but rather an attempt to see what it means to be in Communion and that remains our shared commitment.

A word about Communion: people have talked about being in or out of Communion within our Church. The fact is, of course, as came out very clearly in our discussions, that Communion means a great many things, and means more than simply a set of structures, a regular pattern of meetings between Primates or any other official leaders. Communion means the Mother's Union group from Lancashire going to visit Burundi, it mean the youth workers in the West Indies going to spend five years in the United States, and all manner of things like that. It means the existing close relationships between provinces as, for a long time, between Australia and Papua New Guinea whereby the life and the resource of different bits of the Communion is shared. So the degree to which we are in or out of

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Communion, as between local churches, is never that easy to determine. Having said that, a superficial unity just clinging to structural forms for the sake of it is not at all what we are about. That's why I emphasise the deeper levels of Communion.

I believe that the family we belong to, the family of the Anglican Church around the globe, has to be an instrument of God's love for the world and that means that, in seeking to hold together as a Communion, we have to be seeking to serve that purpose and no other. So by attempting to work through our differences within our family we may come to a better discernment of what we're called to be in mission. I must say that some of the hardest issues that were presented to us in the last few days were ways in which mission can be affected in one part of the world by what happens in another.

So we look outwards again at the wider world we're in: a world that has remained in the focus of our prayers in our time together and we can be in no doubt about the work that is still to be done by the Church of God at large. And that greater challenge we attempt to look and in the service of that calling we have met and deliberated and sought God's guidance. What has emerged I think is a statement - an honest statement - of where we are, a statement of our willingness to work together and a recognition of the obstacles in that working together which we still face, but also some suggestions as to how we might cope with those obstacles. Thank you.

AAC Posted Strategy Post ECUSA 2003 Convention

What just happened?

Source: AAC News August 11, 2003

1. The Episcopal Church has departed from Biblical truth, from the historic teaching of the Christian faith and from the near universal consensus of the Christian Church around the world.
2. In the words of the Primate of Kenya, the Episcopal Church has "kicked itself out of the [Anglican] Communion."
3. In the words of the Primate of Nigeria, the 43 bishops who voted no on Gene Robinson "have refused to bow their knees to baal."
4. The Archbishop of Canterbury has called an emergency meeting of the Primates for October 15-16, 2003, the first such meeting in the history of the Anglican Communion.

What do we do next?

1. **Rejoice...** in all circumstances. God is still on the throne.
2. **Repent...** for our participation in our Church's sins. Continue in a spirit of repentance, not arrogance, in the days ahead.
3. **Forgive...** as Jesus did, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."
4. **Pray...** for God's grace to guide and sustain us.
5. **Love...** those who consider themselves to be homosexual, sharing the transforming power of God.
6. **Reject...** the unbiblical, unconstitutional actions of General Convention. Repudiate them, disassociate yourself from them. Do this personally, as a parish, as a diocese. Communicate with your rector, your bishop (even those bishops who share your views; they need to be supported!), the Presiding Bishop (815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017), and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Lambeth Palace, London SE1 7JU, England). Copy the American Anglican Council (1110 Vermont Ave., NW Suite 1180 Washington, DC 20005. lhuntington@americananglican.org).
7. **Reach out...** to those who are lonely and isolated in unsupportive parishes or dioceses, and those who share our concerns but are not at General Convention; they

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are likely confused about what happened, unaware of the strength of our coalition, and uninformed about the Primates, the Plano meeting, etc.

8. **Redirect**... money from structures which support these actions (parish, diocese, national church), and give to parishes, dioceses, organizations and mission agencies which are upholding mainstream Anglicanism, such as the AAC, FiFNA, and Ekklesia.

Do's and Don'ts

1. Do **NOT** say you are leaving the Episcopal Church.
2. Do **NOT** say you are breaking Communion with your bishop.
3. **DO** say you are **NOT** leaving the Anglican Communion.
4. Do **NOT** sue for your property or take unilateral action.
5. **DO** hold on until Plano.
6. **DO** give the orthodox bishops and archbishops six months to achieve a framework for dramatic realignment.

What is Plano and what will happen there?

1. It is a gathering of bishops, clergy and lay leaders who embrace biblical faith and teaching and who reject the actions of General Convention, to be held October 7-9, 2003 at Christ Church, Plano, Texas.
2. We will pray, worship, study the Word and preach the Gospel.
3. We will hear reports on actions of specially-convened diocesan conventions.
4. We will prepare a detailed petition and proposal for the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates, who will meet October 15-16, 2003
5. We will offer training and specific help with canonical, legal and financial issues.
6. We will build relationships and organize our network.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CONCERNED PRIMATES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Most Reverend Fathers in God:

As Bishops of the Church catholic with jurisdiction (or office) in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECDSA) we are speaking to address the crisis of Faith and Order that is increasingly unfolding among us, among our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Anglican Church of Canada, and, for now, in limited other places throughout our worldwide Anglican Communion.

We begin by stating that we utterly repudiate the recent actions of the Synod and the Bishop of the Diocese of New Westminster in authorizing liturgies for blessing 'same-sex partnerships. At the same time, we wish to speak in more detail to the unfolding situation in the Episcopal Church, among whose leaders we have been called and consecrated.

The election in New Hampshire of a man who openly confesses an active homosexual relationship to be Bishop Coadjutor, and the inclusion of a measure affirming the blessing of same-sex unions on the agenda of the upcoming General Convention, both serve as symbols of a desperately confused, errant and disintegrating Anglican province. At stake are the fundamental doctrines of apostolicity and of marriage. The confirmation by national synodical vote of the bishop-elect or the adoption of any same-sex marriage provisions would be unparalleled departures from received church order and universal church teaching. We further regret to have to state that it is our assessment that the likelihood of the approval of these church-rending innovations has been dramatically increased by a letter sent by our Presiding Bishop to all bishops of this province, a letter which can have no other interpretation than encouragement for confirmation of the New Hampshire election.

In the face of these looming departures from evangelical truth and catholic order, and in line with our commitment to oppose all such innovations in every Godly way, we do hereby affirm the moral and spiritual authority of you, the "Concerned Primates" of the Anglican Communion, and do join in commitment with you to address the situation under your leadership. We desire to act in concert with you, and are ready to take counsel from you. We pledge solidarity with you in sharing common faith and practice within an Anglicanism that is submitted to her sovereign Lord, true to his holy Word, and at one with his catholic Church.

We now join in your declaration of impaired communion with the Bishop and Diocese of New Westminster. We also join you in affirming bonds of fellowship and communion with those in the Diocese of New Westminster (ACiNW) who have stood firm in resisting that conciliar and episcopal authority which has exceeded its legitimate boundaries. We further state that we stand ready, in concert with you, to commit to common responses to the deteriorating situation within the Episcopal Church, and elsewhere. We take these actions and make these commitments in order that Anglicans everywhere might ever be numbered among the mainstream witnesses of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, who alone is true God and true man, the only Savior of humankind, whose disciples are ever constrained by the plain sense of God's Word written.

15th July, A.D. 2003

St. Swithun's Day

SIGNED: (SEE FOLLOWING PAGE)

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<i>DANIEL HERZOG - Bishop of Albany</i>	<i>ROBERT DUNCAN - Bishop of Pittsburgh</i>
<i>EDWARD SALMON - Bishop of South Carolina</i>	<i>HUGO PINA-LOPEZ - Assistant Bishop of Central Florida</i>
<i>JOHN HOWE - Bishop of Central Florida</i>	<i>KEITH ACKERMAN - Bishop of Quincy</i>
<i>BERTRAM HERLONG - Bishop of Tennessee</i>	<i>DONALD PARSONS, Bishop of Quincy, Retired</i>
<i>JAMES STANTON - Bishop of Dallas</i>	<i>CLARENCE POPE - Bishop of Fort Worth, Retired</i>
<i>FITZSIMONS ALLISON - Bishop of South Carolina, Retired</i>	<i>TERRENCE KELSHA W - Bishop of the Rio Grande</i>
<i>STEPHEN JECKO - Bishop of Florida</i>	<i>HENRY SCRIVEN - Assistant Bishop of Pittsburgh</i>
<i>MAURICE (BEN) BENITEZ - Bishop of Texas, Retired</i>	<i>GETHIN HUGHES - Bishop of San Diego</i>
<i>JACK IKER - Bishop of Fort Worth</i>	<i>WILLIAM SKILTON - Suffragan Bishop of South Carolina</i>
<i>ALEX DICKSON - Bishop of West Tennessee, Retired</i>	<i>JOHN-DAVID SCHOFIELD - Bishop of San Joaquin</i>
<i>ANDREW FAIRFIELD - Bishop of North Dakota</i>	<i>WILLIAM WANTLAND - Bishop of Eau Claire, Retired</i>
<i>ALDEN HATHAWAY - Bishop of Pittsburgh, Retired</i>	<i>PETER BECKWITH - Bishop of Springfield</i>

Feast of St. James of Jerusalem

TO THE BISHOP AND STANDING COMMITTEE
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF DELAWARE:

Beloved of the Lord,

How well I remember the motto of the Diocese of Delaware – omnia in caritate – and my ten years of service as a priest and rector alongside you. Among other works for the common good, I chaired Diocesan Council and the Commission on Ministry, and three times was elected to represent you in the General Convention.

I write to you with a heavy heart and a troubled spirit, for you have taken an action which I – as one now sworn to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church -- totally reject and from which I must completely dissociate myself.

You have authorized rites of blessing for human relationships that do not conform to the consistent witness of Holy Scripture and that do not conform to the undivided practice of the Christian Church.

Do you not see that you are directly rejecting the unambiguous warrant of God's Word written, vastly exceeding that which you have any right to teach, risking the gross misdirection of tender consciences?

Does it not register with you that by this act you have separated yourselves from catholic practice, and by implication, therefore from us?

Do you not recognize the authority of Anglican councils both at home and abroad which continue unable to embrace the course you have chosen, a course for which there is precisely no consensus?

Do you not perceive that by this act you scandalize countless brothers and sisters in Christ, us among them, thus breaking communion in the Body of Christ?

Do you not understand that to authorize this innovation, no matter how well intended, is to initiate schism, and that to stand by your action is to institutionalize this schism?

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Dear Bishop and Standing Committee of Delaware, with a deep desire to

Advent Letter from the Bishop of Pittsburgh

15th December, A.D. 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters;

I feel it is important for me as your bishop to keep you informed about post-convention activities. Some of you may have read an article in the Washington Times that alluded to "setting up an alternative denomination" and further commented that our Diocesan Convention 2003 passed "a measure allowing it to secede."

Of course, having participated in convention, you know that the amendment had nothing to do with secession. We passed the first reading of a constitutional change, similar to the one adopted by Ft. Worth in 1997, which rejects accession to actions contrary to the Historic Faith and Order. If we were leaving, we would have removed our accession to the ECUSA constitution and canons altogether, which, of course, we did not do.

The second claim of the Washington Times article is also in error. There are no activities under way to create a separate province. Rather, a group of orthodox bishops, who stood against the decisions of General Convention, has agreed to form a Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses - dioceses which, through their stand against General Convention's decisions regarding the consecration of Gene Robinson and the development of rites for same-sex unions, remain in communion with the rest of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. Archbishop Rowan Williams has encouraged the formation of such a network in private dialogue with members of the orthodox caucus. The network is being formed, in good faith, within the constitution of ECUSA.

It continues to be my stand, as bishop of this diocese, that we have not left ECUSA; that we are the ones living under ECUSA's constitution and canons. We are adhering to the traditions of the faith and the teachings of Holy Scripture. I believe it is my duty to remain firm on the biblically-based historic and redemptive teachings of the church in order to convince even those who support the vote of General Convention that popular culture cannot dictate to a Holy God. Cultures fail, but God's offering of a reclaimed life will never change. All down through history, the testimonies of the saints bear witness to the transforming power of God's love in their lives.

The formation of a Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses was essential to prevent the orthodox minority from being marginalized. As the revisionists become more aggressive in ECUSA, the Network is a family table - a gathering place - for those who stand in solidarity regarding the repudiation of the anti-Scriptural decisions of General Convention.

So, take heart in this Advent time. Jesus is coming again. In the end, nothing will stand that is contrary to his will or his word. And as at his first coming, the message of the angels to fearful workers (shepherds) on a lonely hill is: "Fear not!"

In Christ,

+Bob
VII Pittsburgh

Advent Letter from the AAC President

The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson

Source: AAC News

December 8, 2003

Advent 2003

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we begin this Advent season, a time preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Savior, I am writing to share with you about the preparations the AAC is making to help insure a lasting future for Anglicanism in North America. I'd also like to offer you some of my thoughts on how to approach the coming Christmas season.

To begin, let me assure you that orthodox Episcopalians have many reasons to be hopeful right now. Positive things are happening. The AAC is pressing forward, in concert with others, to create the infrastructure and under-girding for the new Anglican realignment that is being born. Not all that is occurring can be shared publicly right now, and some things are happening more slowly or in a different way than we initially anticipated. I know this may be frustrating, but I ask you to please bear with us. Much progress is being made, and it comes as the result of the hard and sacrificial work of many. In the end, this whole endeavor isn't about you or me; it is about God's Church and our role in its reformation and restoration.

One of the most exciting developments is the two-stage establishment of a new Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Congregations in the Episcopal Church. The Network is based upon a confessional understanding of our Christian faith. Thirteen Bishops have already agreed to form the Network, which is the initial framework of the Anglican realignment in the United States. It is being formed at the recommendation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. The Rt. Rev. Robert Duncan, Bishop of Pittsburgh, has been selected by his fellow bishops to be the Network's Moderator and Convening Authority. The goals and next steps of the Network include the development of formal foundational and organization documents and the appointment of a steering committee by the moderator to oversee the formation process. In addition, the Network, working in coordination with the Anglican Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury, will participate in providing adequate episcopal oversight to congregations within ECUSA that

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request it.

The Bishops' agreement to form the Network came out of a meeting held two weeks ago in London between mainstream Anglican leaders in the U.S., Canada, and the UK and several Anglican Primates. The London meeting is just one of the many ways that AAC leaders have been keeping in regular, and in some cases almost daily, contact with the Anglican Primates and other orthodox Anglican leaders. Because of our firm commitment to the Gospel, coupled with the blessing of modern technology, the AAC is engaged in unprecedented global coordination with these leaders. I can personally assure you that there is an unwavering commitment on the part of the Anglican Primates to ensure that there remains a home for you and me in the Anglican Communion.

But how will these developments impact you personally? To be honest, it is a tough question, and the answer isn't going to be the same for everyone. Each of us is living in different circumstances in our post-General Convention, post-Gene Robinson consecration Episcopal Church. We are all struggling with how to be faithful to the Lord during this difficult time when previously unthinkable questions like "Where is my family going to church for Christmas this year?" have suddenly been forced upon us.

As for Christmas, my biggest concern is that you and your family worship together in a place where you will be comfortable and in the presence of the Lord. For some of you this may be your current parish. For others it may mean attending an orthodox Episcopal parish in another town, even if it means driving some distance. Still others may be faced with having to attend a church that is of another Christian denomination or tradition altogether.

No matter what your decision for Christmas is, I continue to ask you to remain in the Episcopal Church. Immediately after General Convention, the AAC asked orthodox Episcopalians to wait at least six months before they make a decision on whether or not to leave. We are still inside that six-month window and I believe that any decision to leave now would be premature. Please stand firm a little while longer. I realize that this is asking a lot of those of you situated in congregations and/or dioceses that supported Gene Robinson's consecration, but I urge you be patient and persevere until the Network is fully in place. We are actively building the infrastructure right now. In the meantime, the AAC has already put into place a process by which congregations can apply for adequate Episcopal oversight from an orthodox bishop. You can download the application form from our website, or we can send you a copy. We are moving forward on this provision, and the applications are coming in.

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If it is simply impossible for you to remain where you are, and there is no orthodox Episcopal congregation you can attend within reasonable driving distance, then you may wish for the time being to consider gathering together with other orthodox Episcopalians in your same situation to form a new informal "congregation" that meets in a home or school. New church starts are going to be an important component of the new realignment.

And what about year-end financial giving? You and I are accountable to God for our tithes and offerings and where we place them. Most churches receive about 1/4 of their yearly income in the five weeks between Thanksgiving and December 31. If your parish is orthodox, you need to help make sure that they receive the necessary financial resources to continue proclaiming the Gospel. If your parish is theologically liberal, then I would encourage you to redirect your giving (bypassing your local church) and instead give to outreach organizations in your community that help to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and proclaim faith to those who do not yet know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Do also remember the many mission organizations that need your financial support at year's end as well. You can find many of them listed on the AAC Ministry Affiliate page on our website. The American Anglican Council also needs your financial support. Calls for help to our organization have risen exponentially as the crisis has deepened. We are committed to responding to these calls, assisting congregations and dioceses who are under attack, and at the same time birthing this new Network. We need your help today to meet these needs.

Finally, be of good cheer. Encourage one another, strengthen the household of the faithful and pray for us in this season, pray for our church and her leaders, our clergy who are often in real peril, and the courage to claim the reformation and the renewal of a great church.

Blessings and Peace,

The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Jack Leo Iker
Bishop of Fort Worth

December 9, 2003

DIOCESE JOINS NETWORK WITHIN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

By joint action of the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, the diocese has agreed to join a newly formed Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes within the Episcopal Church.

The Network is being established in good faith within the Constitution of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA) as a response to the unfortunate divisions within our Church resulting from the actions of the 74th General Convention. Its purpose is to bring together those dioceses and congregations which hold to the centrality and authority of Holy Scripture, and, in keeping with the Preamble to the Constitution of ECUSA, to be faithful in upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order of the Church. The Network is committed to pursuing the apostolic mission to a troubled and fallen church, nation, and world.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, this action implements the provision adopted by Diocesan Convention to “work with those Bishops, Dioceses, and congregations and those Primates and Provinces that will now move forward with a realignment of the Anglican Communion.”

The Network is comprised initially of 13 dioceses. Each has accepted as its founding document a Memorandum of Agreement formulated November 20, 2003, and reproduced below. The Network will continue to operate in good faith within the Constitution of ECUSA, with membership open to all dioceses and congregations sharing the intent of the Memorandum of Agreement.

The Rt. Rev. Robert William Duncan, Bishop of Pittsburgh, has been appointed Moderator and Convening Authority of the Network, and he is charged with taking the necessary steps to obtain recognition of the Network from Anglican Primates and Provinces worldwide, as well as from other churches with which we have ecumenical relationships.

The Network will, in co-operation with the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglican Primates, participate in the provision of adequate episcopal oversight to congregations within ECUSA that request it.

An organizing convocation of the Network is to be held January 19 & 20, 2004, for the purpose of adopting a charter. Each member diocese will be represented at the convocation by its diocesan bishop, two clergy delegates, and two lay delegates. From this diocese, the Very Rev. Ryan Reed and the Rev. Thomas Hightower have been selected as clergy representatives, and Walter Viriden III and Jo Ann Patton have been selected to represent the laity. All are members of the diocesan Standing Committee.

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MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The undersigned bishops of the Episcopal Church ("ECUSA"), being of a common mind on the unfortunate divisions and canonical oppression within our Church, declare a need to establish a Network of Confessing Dioceses and Congregations, and to that end agree as follows:

1. The purpose of the Network is to bring together those dioceses and congregations which hold to the centrality and authority of Holy Scripture and, in keeping with the Preamble to the Constitution of ECUSA, to be faithful in upholding and propagating the historic faith and order; pursuing the apostolic mission to a troubled and fallen church, nation and world.
2. The Network shall be formed and shall operate in good faith within the Constitution of ECUSA.
3. Membership in the Network shall be open to those dioceses and congregations which share the intent of this agreement.
4. We hereby appoint the Rt Rev Robert William Duncan as Moderator and Convening Authority of the Network to be formed.
5. The Moderator shall direct the preparation of an appropriate Charter as the incorporating document for the Network for formal adoption by member dioceses.
6. The Moderator shall appoint a steering committee to provide for the prompt and orderly formation of the Network.
7. The Moderator shall take necessary steps to obtain recognition of the Network from Anglican Primates and Provinces, as well as from other churches with which we have or may have ecumenical contact.
8. The Network, in co-operation with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates, shall participate in the providing of adequate episcopal oversight to congregations within ECUSA that request it.
9. The signatory parties may amend this Memorandum of Agreement by subsequent written agreement.

In witness whereof we have fixed our hands this twentieth day of November 2003.

+Edward L Salmon
Bishop of South Carolina

+Jack L Iker
Bishop of Fort Worth

+James M. Stanton
Bishop of Dallas

+Robert W Duncan
Bishop of Pittsburgh