



Episcopal Forum of SC

Diocesan Convention Newsletter

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Episcopal Forum Mission and Goals

MISSION: The Episcopal Forum of SC is an organization of Episcopalians committed to preserving unity within the Diocese of South Carolina, the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA) and the Anglican Communion. The mission of The Episcopal Forum is to promote a middle way, a *via media*, where conversation among Episcopalians is sustained, holding diversity in a holy tension that leads to Reconciliation, Spiritual Growth and Unity. The Episcopal Forum will resist any schismatic movements within ECUSA.

GOALS: The goals of The Episcopal Forum are to insure the continued existence of an Episcopal Diocese of SC that is in full participation with ECUSA, its constitution, canons and leadership and to:

- Uphold the Christian faith in the Anglican tradition as revealed in **scripture, tradition and reason.**
- Embrace a wide range of theological understandings.
- Share a **common tradition, one baptism, and one communion in unity with Jesus Christ.**

Is The Network Schismatic?

Episcopalians hold conflicting pious opinions on many issues such as those debated at the ECUSA General Convention (GC) 2003 actions. The Network, rejects the GC 2003 actions and calls on Episcopalians **"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"**.

In this statement and the following statement, **"We are called to preach, convince, rebuke, exhort and teach in accordance with the Scripture's truth"**, the Network Confession condemns the action of the GC as false and sinful.

The Network further makes statements (detailed below) which are counter to the views held by many if not most Episcopalians. The document also by reference to the Barmen declaration could be understood to compare the actions of the 2003 GC to the Church in Germany which was co-opted by the Nazi Government.

Most Episcopalians who opposed the GC 2003 action do not judge the majority as the Network does in the theological statement below. A Diocese, Parish, Clergy or lay person who does not join the Network is free to publicly dissent from the GC 2003 action. Membership in the Network is a definitive statement of judgment which excludes the scriptural understanding of a majority of Episcopalians. This may be why 2 out of 3 dissenting Dioceses have not joined the network, and why any Episcopalian or Episcopal Parish that wishes to respect the diversity of scriptural understanding within ECUSA would not join the Network regardless of their own particular understanding of the issues..... *Continued on page 2*

Is The Network Schismatic? (continued)

Confession and Calling of the Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes: The following paragraphs from this document, in particular, contain the elements which make participation in the Network objectionable to Members of the Episcopal Forum of SC and to most Episcopalians even if they disagree with the GC 2003 action: (Two thirds of those dissenting at the 2003 GC have decided not to join the Network)



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. *(Editors note: Does this deny the possibility of ongoing revelation of God through the Holy Spirit?)*

I.5. We confess, hold and bear witness, in particular therefore "In this way the authorities, which the church needs for her mission, are defined and limited." (Barmen Declaration Article 1). *(Editors note: The 1934 Barmen Declaration was a call by the "confessing true church in Germany" to resistance against the theological claims of a German Church supporting the Nazi state. A church under false leadership)*

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 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). *(Editors note: Have a majority of Episcopalians made an assault on the authority of scripture at GC 2003 and are they thus in sin and disobedience?)*

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. *(Editors note: Is this core doctrine or pious opinion?)*

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. *(Editors note: Does this require us to judge and separate from those who have a different interpretation of scripture or is there a via media?)*

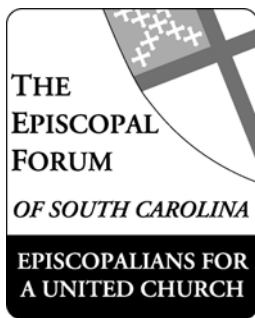
II.8.i. We commit ourselves to the primary organ of stewardship within the Church of Christ, that is, an episcopate rooted in holiness, knowledge of Scripture, and apostolic faithfulness (Titus 1:7-9); *(Editors note: Does this imply that ECUSA episcopate is not rooted in holiness, knowledge of Scripture, and apostolic faithfulness?)*

II.8.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. *(Editors note: Does this mean the Diocese of SC commits to support and send money to the Network?)*

Readers of this Confession are then invited to signup: [Register your own commitment to the principles and practice of this Theological Charter by signing the appropriate page.](#) A Diocese that has voted at Diocesan Convention to adopt this charter may be registered under Anglican Communion Dioceses. A [Mission/Congregation/Parish](#) whose clergy and vestry have voted to uphold this theological confession may be registered under Anglican Communion Parishes and Congregations. An [individual bishop, priest, deacon or lay person](#) who subscribes to this statement may register in the appropriate category under Anglican Communion Clergy and Laity.

Source: Network publications and editorial comment by EFSC

Visit us at www.episcopalforumofsc.org



Episcopal Forum Plan of Action

The Episcopal Forum will seek to fulfill its mission through prayer, conversation and the following action:

DIOCESAN REPRESENTATION

The Episcopal Forum has provided in its bylaws for 24 directors who will be representative of the entire diocese. The Episcopal Forum currently has 12 Directors and is seeking candidates for 12 more to provide leadership which represents the entire Diocese.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Episcopal Forum has disseminated accurate information about the Episcopal Church USA and its mission and ministry including detailed information on the purposes, proposals, actions and published opinions of organizations - (ECUSA, AAC, ACI, Network, etc) acting within the Anglican Communion.

The Episcopal Forum will publish the proceedings of The Episcopal Forum conference "Seeking Unity in Diversity" held 2/21/04. The Episcopal Forum will continue to request space for its articles in the Jubilate Deo. (*Jubilate Deo has yet to publish any Episcopal Forum submissions*). The Episcopal Forum will continue to communicate within the Diocese via forums, conferences, press, website, newsletter and mail.

FORUMS & CONFERENCES

The Episcopal Forum has sponsored six forums to date involving 300 participants. Comments from Forum discussions are available on The Episcopal Forum Website. The first Conference, "Seeking Unity in Diversity" was successfully sponsored on 2/20/04.

The Episcopal Forum will host forums in most regions of the Diocese of SC during the next 3 months. These Forums will address outcomes of the Diocesan Convention, The "Seeking Unity & Diversity" Conference and what it means to be part of the Network, including how to opt out of the Network. Participant comments will continue to be made available on The Episcopal Forum Website. (Continued on Page 4)

VISIT THE EPISCOPAL FORUM WEBSITE TO READ REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM FORUMS AND THE CONFERENCE AS WELL AS OTHER INFORMATIVE CHURCH ARTICLES AND LINKS TO OTHER WEBSITES.

YOU WILL FIND OUT WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN ECUSA. CONSIDER JOINING THE EPISCOPAL FORUM MAILING LIST AS A *MEMBER* OR *OBSERVER*. *MEMBERS* JOIN AND SUPPORT THE EPISCOPAL FORUM. *OBSERVERS* MAKE NO COMMITMENT BUT RECEIVE ALL CORRESPONDENCE.

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Episcopal Forum Plan of Action (continued)

ADVOCACY

The Episcopal Forum will continue to advocate processes and programs that foster inclusiveness and unity within ECUSA embracing the diversity of understandings on the human sexuality issues which exist within ECUSA. The Episcopal Forum will:

- Refrain from issuing theological statements regarding the debate on human sexuality within ECUSA or any other theological issue.
- Encourage the Diocesan Convention to endorse actions and policies that keep the conversation open for reconciling the issues dealt with in the Network Statement, which if not reconciled could lead to schism.
- Encourage the Diocese to set up a "Reconciliation Commission" to examine ways of maintaining unity similar to that established in other ECUSA Dioceses.
- Recognize that through membership in The Episcopal Forum of SC, "Members" exclude themselves from Network participation because the Network excludes a majority of Episcopalians.

**CONVENTION DELEGATES: KEEP THE DIALOG GOING
VOTE YES
TO ESTABLISHING A DIOCESAN RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

NATIONAL VIA MEDIA

The Episcopal Forum has been in regular liaison with "via media" organizations in other dioceses. This relationship has yielded a wealth of shared information and experience. Representatives of The Episcopal Forum will attend a meeting of leaders of independent Via Media from around the USA on March 25-27, 2004 in Atlanta. The Episcopal Forum will remain an independent organization operating within the Diocese of SC.

A PRAYER FOR UNITY

*Heavenly Father,
you have called us
in the Body of your Son, Jesus Christ,
to continue his work of reconciliation
and reveal you to humankind.
Forgive us the sins which tear us apart;
give us the courage to overcome our fears
and to seek that unity
which is your gift and your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

the Revd Canon John L. Peterson

A POEM FOR INCLUSIVENESS

"Outwitted"

*He drew a circle that shut me out...
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win.
We drew a circle that took him in.*

-Edwin Markham (1852-1940)