



Episcopal Forum of SC Diocesan Convention Newsletter

Published by: The Episcopal Forum of SC, Inc.
P.O. Box 1772 - Mt. Pleasant, SC 29465
Website: www.episcopalforumofsc.org.

March 4, 2005
Newsletter

Episcopal Forum of South Carolina Supports “The Middle Way”

Organized in 2003 as a 501c3, the Episcopal Forum of South Carolina (EFSC), actively supports the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) in South Carolina. Its goals 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.*

EFSC seeks ways for persons of differing persuasions and points of view to walk together in faith, rather than fracturing into “we and they” relationship. In 2004 EFSC sponsored regional forums and a major conference on seeking “Unity with Diversity” Similar events are being considered for 2005.

The Network

The Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes (Network) in conjunction with the Primates of the Global South have been the most vocal critics of ECUSA’s position on human sexuality as reflected in the consecration of Bishop Robinson last year. Approximately 10% of Dioceses in ECUSA are in the Network including the Diocese of SC. Members of the Episcopal Forum expressly exclude themselves from membership in the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes because they support ECUSA polity and leadership.

It remains to be seen how this continuing deep chasm of understanding and acceptance can be mediated within ECUSA and within the AC. Many Network members call for establishing an “Orthodox Anglican Province” in the USA to replace ECUSA. This would likely include The Network, Forward in Faith, The Anglican Mission in America and the Reformed Episcopal Church. Should this cause a schism in ECUSA, the legal problems related to real estate have the potential to cause turmoil in individual parishes for years to come. The Episcopal Forum continues to work with Via Media USA and the majority of Episcopalians in ECUSA to bridge this chasm and achieve reconciliation with those who threaten schism.

The Primates

The Primates of the Anglican Communion held their regular meeting in Northern Ireland, between 21-25 February 2005 primarily to discuss the Windsor Report 2004, in which the Lambeth Commission on Communion had offered its recommendations on the future life of the Anglican Communion in the light of developments in Anglican life in North America. Addressing the nature of same sex committed relationships the Primates held that “Whilst there remains a very real question about whether the North American churches are willing to accept the same teaching on matters of sexual morality as is generally accepted elsewhere in the Communion, the underlying reality of our communion in God the Holy Trinity is obscured, and the effectiveness of our common mission severely hindered.”

(Continued on page 2)

Prayers for Love and Unity

A SONG OF PAUL

**Should I rehearse with human voice
the words which angels make their choice,
devoid of love, my song resounds,
magnificent but empty.
And should I preach with earnest tone
and know whatever can be known
and move the hills by faith alone
if I lack love I'm nothing.**

**In love is patience always found,
for love kind hearts make common ground,
from love, conceit and pride take flight
and jealousy is banished.
Love keeps no score of what's gone wrong
nor sings a pessimistic song
nor lets regret or guilt prolong,
for love expects tomorrow.**

**Let strange and startling language cease,
let tongues their ecstasy release,
let knowledge come and go in peace
these things are not eternal.
For all the thought and skill we show
are but a stage through which we grow
till, face to face with God, we'll know
that love which lasts forever.**

**Text: 1 Corinthians 13, para. John Bell.
© 1988 Iona Community (Scotland).**

**Gentle me,
Holy One,
Into an unclenched moment,
a deep breath,
a letting go
of heavy experiences,
of shriveling anxieties,
of dead certainties
that, softened by the silence,
surrounded by the light,
and open to the mystery,
I may be found by wholeness,
upheld by the unfathomable,
entranced by the simple,
and filled with the joy
that is you.**

- Ted Loder

(Episcopal Forum of South Carolina Supports "The Middle Way" - Continued from page 1)

The Primates recommended a moratorium on disputed activities and requested that the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) hear presentations on the divisive issues. They further have asked ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada to temporarily withdraw its delegates to the ACC. Response to these requests is still forthcoming.

Scripture

The Members of EFSC understand the authority within the church in a traditional Anglican way, defined by "scripture, tradition and reason." While other denominations emphasize one or another of these foundational entities as central, Anglicanism holds that they, like the Trinity itself, are of equal importance. This concept was described by Richard Hooker in the 16th century as "the three legged stool." Scripture has been interpreted in very different ways over the centuries by men and women of faith. 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 of Faith places elevated emphasis on specific scriptural understandings.

EFSC and others in "via media" groups strive to be inclusive of a wide range of scriptural understanding and liturgical experience, resisting the dictums of authorized belief and judgmental scriptural interpretation that divide the Church. The Book of Common Prayer unites us in worship. We view scripture through the lens that Jesus provided in his life on earth and continues to provide in His risen and living presence in the Church universal today. As Bishop Michael Marshall, Assistant Bishop of London commented at Grace Church last fall, "Scripture is the finger that points to Jesus Christ." We worship Jesus, who provides the nourishing spiritual meal, not scripture." Members of EFSC believe that it is important for all of ECUSA to stay together to discuss, pray, and be spiritually engaged with one another. That is, in short, to stay in communication and communion.



In Our Many Voices

The Via Media USA Report to the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church

Ash Wednesday, 2005

"In Our Many Voices" is a Via Media USA report on the state of the Episcopal Church in the dioceses in which its affiliates are active, and on particular ministries within them. Via Media USA is an alliance of thirteen groups in twelve dioceses around the country that have gathered together to preserve and protect the unity and integrity of the Episcopal Church. Via Media USA was invited to provide information to the Standing Committee on Congregations in Ministry of ECUSA at the Executive Council's February, 2005 meeting in Austin, Texas on the experience of via media groups in the dioceses where they are active.

Via Media USA's goals include providing structures and communities of support for Episcopalians who feel disconnected and isolated from the Episcopal Church; identifying threats to our church's unity, integrity, and mission; and working for reconciliation within the Episcopal Church, particularly in our own dioceses and parishes. "In Our Many Voices" addresses each of these goals. Members of via media groups hope that they can contribute to efforts underway throughout the church to bring acts of healing, reconciliation, and grace to bear on our common life in Christ. Copies of the report may be accessed online via through <http://viamediausa.org> or directly at <http://viamediausa.org/voices.pdf>

In Our Many Voices - Executive Summary

Via Media USA is an alliance of independent groups who have joined in common cause to support the Episcopal Church and its traditional middle way—the via media. The via media perspective is a priceless gift from the Anglican tradition to an increasingly polarized world. We strive to be a voice for the ordinary Episcopalian who treasures the Church as a sacramental and service community that rejoices in multiple understandings of God's call to us.

We are currently gathered in thirteen groups in the following dioceses: Albany, Rhode Island, Pittsburgh, Springfield, Tennessee, South Carolina, Central Florida, Southwest Florida, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Rio Grande, and San Joaquin. Some groups focus more on education, others on making a difference in the diocesan activities, still others on providing a forum for dialogue. Our allied groups are not all in dioceses claiming affiliation with the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes (NACDAP), but have emerged first where challenges to the via media have been most pronounced. All the groups are committed to strengthening the Episcopal Church and to preserving its unity.

Our members mirror the face of the Episcopal Church: we are laity and clergy; high-church Anglo-Catholic, low church and broad church, liberal and conservative. We are male and female, of a variety of races, married and single; young, old and everything in between. Our sexual identities and relationships reflect the range found in the Episcopal Church, and, we hope, God's love to us. While not all of our members agreed with the decisions of General Convention in 2003, we all support the decision-making processes of our church.

(Continued on page 4)

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. VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.episcopalforumofsc.org.

Via Media USA Goals - We, Via Media affiliates, share three major goals:

- **To Provide Support for Each Other:** Our first goal is to provide structures and communities of support for Episcopalians whose parishes or dioceses have left them on the margins, discounted and isolated from the rest of the Episcopal Church. Our mutual call is to continue to live out our faith as members of the Episcopal Church with a ministry that is both prophetic and healing for our parishes, our dioceses, and our church.
- **To Protect the Church:** Our second goal is to address what made us so isolated in the first place. This involves identifying certain threats to our church's unity, integrity and mission, and to encourage others to do so as well. In the dioceses in which we are active, these threats come from those who are working to take the Episcopal Church apart from within and reorient it as a confessional evangelical institution. Others are intent on causing the destruction or replacement of the Episcopal Church if it does not repent. We believe that this is particularly true of the American Anglican Council, and of some of the leaders of the NACDAP. Some of our dioceses have joined these groups; others are poised to; some have resisted. Together, they merit further study by the church in order to assess their parochial and diocesan dynamics and to find ways to address their particular challenges. When a moderate, inclusive Christian church community threatens or decides to veer from Anglicanism's traditional broad, middle way, much is lost. The question before the church now is how that middle way can be restored.

As the attached reports from several of the groups in the Via Media USA alliance, collected under the title "In Their Own Words," make clear, the leadership of our dioceses—especially those who have joined the NACDAP—has not served the church well. Many of our diocesan leaders, knowingly or unknowingly, have acted in ways that engender unhealthy institutional dynamics throughout the church, suppress dissent and discourage dialogue, elicit fears of reprisal, exacerbate isolation, offer inadequate and limited theologies of the Bible and the church, turn diversity into divisiveness and dissension, diminish Episcopalians' abilities to trust and support each other in our lives in faith, and denigrate the integrity, polity, and mission of the Episcopal Church. If our experiences are any guide, leadership with these outcomes diminishes the church's unity and Gospel witness, and makes both lay and ordained Episcopal ministries less effective. We are particularly concerned about the lack of support for ministries that draw from the wide spectrum of current Episcopalians' theological and ecclesial understandings. For reasons that others may be better able to explain, some of our leaders appear capable of successful leadership only of those whose vision is congruent with their own.

- **To Work for Reconciliation:** Our third goal in this alliance is to work for reconciliation within the Episcopal Church, particularly in our own dioceses and parishes. We are mindful that the Anglican Communion, as well as our own House of Bishops, have called the Episcopal Church to find ways to care for its dissenting minorities even as it calls on them to desist from destructive actions. We believe that reconciliation can be achieved in ways that not only avoid the threat of schism—which, we must emphasize, is quite real in our dioceses—but also enhance the integrity of the church and respect the consciences of individual believers.

We believe that the Episcopal Church needs to reach out to overcome the isolation in these dioceses. For our members and many other Episcopalians, the isolation feels like abandonment and is involuntary and painful. For others the isolation is a deliberate act they have taken to shield themselves from contact with the rest of the church.

It is not in keeping with our evangelistic mission simply to let this movement further wall itself in a theological and ecclesial ghetto, whether inside or outside the Episcopal Church. Through the Windsor Report, the Lambeth Commission has called us as a church to account for the innovations that have become necessary for us in living out the love of Christ in contemporary North America. Likewise, we must also call to accountability those whose vision for the church leads them not only to resist these innovations, but to isolate themselves from the rest of their church and, potentially, to leave it for good. No matter what else is true of us, we share a common savior and a common call to witness to his love throughout the world in a united church.