

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PRESS RELEASE # 3**

**January 17, 2004**

**EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

**THE EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SC SPEAKS OUT FOR UNITY IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH USA – FORUM IS CRITICAL OF DISCLOSED AAC PLAN TO DIVIDE ECUSA**

A rapidly expanding group of lay and clerical Episcopalians is working to stem the tide of divisiveness within the Episcopal Church in South Carolina. Organized as the Episcopal Forum of South Carolina (EFSC), its mission is to provide an opportunity for loyal Episcopalians to openly discuss mutual concerns about the controversies within the Diocese and the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA).

Members of EFSC generally take a moderate position, but they are concerned about what they perceive to be the exclusive and harshly judgmental attitude of the conservative American Anglican Council (AAC) and those affiliated with the Council, according to Dottie Pagliaro, an EFSC Steering Committee member: “EFSC is especially concerned by a recent report, published originally in the Washington Post, which described the intention of AAC leaders that would “realign Anglicanism on North American soil.”

The call for preserving unity in the Episcopal Church USA was strengthened this week when Bishop Don Johnson of West Tennessee, who has been recognized as a conservative voice working within the church, issued a pastoral letter highly critical of the AAC report. Acknowledging the value of “loyal opposition and honest dissent” within the church, he strongly objects to the “deceitfulness and subversive sabotage” the AAC intends. “I do not endorse, nor will I have this diocese in any way associated with this effort,” says Johnson.

Part of a national informal network of similar organizations often referred to as “Via-Media” groups, the EFSC contends that the work of the ECUSA continues to be both faithful and consistent with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and that the church is strengthened by the diversity of its members. In a related Press Release the EFSC joined with other via-medias to praise the strong leadership of Bishop Johnson of West Tennessee.

The EFSC seeks to provide conversation among all “sorts and conditions” of Episcopalians in South Carolina toward the goal of maintaining both unity and breadth, to include all who choose the traditional Anglican “via media.”

The EFSC was organized late last year following a special convention of the Diocese of South Carolina that was called to discuss the actions of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in September, when the election of an openly gay priest to be Bishop of New Hampshire was ratified. Founding members of the EFSC were distressed by the sharply divisive positions reflected in resolutions passed by the special convention, and with the overwhelming defeat of a resolution that called for ongoing conversation, study and prayer within and among parishes of the Diocese, leading toward the resolution of differences, of which the General Convention issue is only the most current example.

In January the Forum has begun to hold meetings in all areas of the Diocese of SC. The goal of these meetings is to provide individual Episcopalians with knowledge and discussion about the issues and choices they face within the Episcopal Church.

In mid-February EFSC will sponsor a public conference in Charleston on issues of concern to ECUSA and Forum members. Details for these forums and conferences will be available through the EFSC website: [episcopalforumofsc.org](http://episcopalforumofsc.org). Long range plans for the group are to continue to encourage conversation, study and prayer about issues on which participants may agree or disagree.

**Attachments: The following letters are attached as references to sources only:**

- **Episcopal Dissenters Plan Their Strategy**  
Many Traditionalists Prefer Not to Flee  
*By Alan Cooperman*  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Sunday, January 11, 2004; Page A03
- **Confidential Letter dated 12/28/03 by Geoff Chapman, Rector of St Stephens Church in Sewickley, Pa. (Diocese of Pittsburgh) on behalf of the American Anglican Communion.**
- **A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Don Johnson of the Diocese of West TN – as reported in the press Thursday, January 15, 2004**
- **A Pastoral Letter from Bishop John W. Howe, Episcopal Bishop of Central Florida - as reported in the press Thursday, January 15, 2004**
- **Joint Press Release of Via-Media groups – January 17, 2004: Groups Praise the Strong Leadership of Bishop of West Tennessee.**