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EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SOUTH CAROLINA

MEET THE EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SC

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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. It's mission 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.

Members of the Episcopal Forum of SC represent the full range of responses to the General Convention's actions ratifying the election of Bishop Gene Robinson. As is true throughout the Episcopal Church, some approve of the action, some believe it to be inconsistent with their understanding of scripture; others are unsure and are seeking new insights into the word of God. The Forum recognizes the Convention's actions represent the majority of Bishops, Clergy and Deputies present, but also recognizes the ongoing and faithfully held theological position of those who disagree with these actions.

The Forum's goal is to insure that the Episcopal Diocese of SC continues to exist in full participation with ECUSA, its constitution, canons and leadership.

The Episcopal Forum of SC was founded in December, 2003. The Episcopal Forum is a SC Corporation and has filed for 501(c)3 status and has provided in its bylaws for 24 directors who will be representative of the entire diocese. The founding members of EFSC were motivated by what they perceived as sharply divisive positions taken by the SC Diocesan Special Convention in October, 2003 and with the overwhelming defeat of a resolution from All Saints Hilton Head which the forum perceived as a call for ongoing conversation toward reconciliation.

Episcopalians in South Carolina may join the Forum as a "Member" and by doing so affirm the Forum's mission statement. As an alternative, one may participate as an "Observer" making no specific commitment to the mission statement but indicating interest in being involved in the ongoing conversation. For additional information on the Episcopal Forum go to www.episcopalforumofsc.org or call 843-768-7055.

The Forum sponsored a major conference, "Seeking Unity in Diversity," in February. Speakers addressed the full range of differing perspectives regarding the General Convention and discussed its actions which have brought about dissension within the denomination. They explored ways through which unity might be forged in the midst of serious conflict that threatens the denomination's stability. Further information about the conference can be found on the Forum's website: www.episcopalforum.org. CDs of this conference are also available from the website.

In addition, the Forum has sponsored six regional meetings, which have involved over 300 participants. Comments from these meetings also are available on the website. Further meetings will be held throughout the Diocese during the next several months to address outcomes of the

Diocesan Convention, the conference, “Seeking Unity & Diversity”, what it means to be part of the Network, and how to opt out of the Network. Forum schedules and participant’s comments will be available on the website at www.episcopalforumofsc.org.

The Forum observes that although the Diocese of SC has joined the Network, most Episcopalians who opposed General Convention’s action have not joined the Network. Forum members reject what they perceive to be judgmental in the Network’s theological statement. Further, they contend that a diocese, parish, clergy or lay person who does not join the Network is free to publicly agree or disagree with the General Convention’s action.

The Forum also perceives that membership in the Network makes a definitive judgmental statement that we believe excludes the scriptural understanding of a majority of Episcopalians. An 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.

The Forum applauds the action of the recent Diocesan Convention in passing, almost unanimously, two resolutions that addressed reconciliation. This was seen as an encouraging step toward seeking to prevent schism. The Episcopal Forum will take a keen interest in the actions of the Reconciliation Commission mandated by the Diocesan Convention.

On March 25-27, 2004. Episcopalians from 11 dioceses across the United States including “The Episcopal Forum of SC” met and joined together to promote unity within the national church. Each diocesan based organization will remain independent in its activities.

They agreed to form an alliance, named Via Media USA, representing laypeople and clergy from grassroots organizations that hold diverse opinions about many issues facing the church but are solid in their desire to remain in communion with The Episcopal Church of the USA and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Two observers from The Episcopal Church’s Executive Council attended the meeting, and Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold sent a letter that encouraging the group’s efforts to promote unity.

“The diverse center is the overwhelming reality of our church and its voice is urgently needed, both within the church and in our fractured and polarized world,” Griswold wrote.

The newly formed Via Media USA has established a website at www.viamediausa.org and has adopted the following mission statement:

Via Media USA, an alliance of associations of laity and clergy, is committed to promoting and protecting the faith, unity, and vitality of The Episcopal Church as the American expression of Anglican tradition.

Via Media USA

- Strives to emulate Jesus Christ, respecting the dignity of every human being;
- Affirms the four principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral—the Nicene Creed as a sufficient statement of belief, the Holy Scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation, the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist, and the Historic Episcopate;
- Acknowledges that Holy Scripture must be understood within the context of its origins and traditions of interpretation, as well as with the mediation of reason and the Holy Spirit;
- Nurtures greater understanding of Anglican tradition and Episcopal polity; and

- Celebrates its diverse understandings of matters outside the basic tenets of the faith as indicative of humanity's struggle to understand God's will for contemporary societies.

Via Media, the middle way, is not a compromise for the sake of peace, but a comprehension for the sake of truth.

Officers and directors of the Forum include: Gayle Fellers, Greg Haysom, Betsy Luke, Barbara Mann, Tom Myers, Jr., Dolores Miller, Dottie Pagliaro, Lynn Pagliaro, Jonathan Poston, Jan Van Norte, Warren Redman-Gress, John Sands, Marcy Walsh, and Steve Ward. Information about the officers and directors can be found on the website at www.episcopalforumofsc.org.