

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PRESS RELEASE # 12

March 27, 2004

EPISCOPAL FORUM OF SOUTH CAROLINA

EPISCOPALIANS UNITE TO FORM VIA MEDIA USA

ATLANTA – Episcopalians from 11 dioceses across the United States have joined together to promote unity within the national church.

The alliance, named Via Media USA, represents 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. The name – “via media” means “middle way” – reflects the group’s focus on preserving the church and its traditional openness to differing interpretations of scripture, tradition and reason.

“There is room for everyone in the Episcopal Church,” said The Rev. Michael Russell, Rector of All Souls’ Episcopal Church in San Diego, Calif., and a member of Episcopal Way of San Diego. “We believe that the Christian way is to love, work and worship together – to resolve disputes within the church without tearing it apart.”

The 12 groups, from California, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, New York, Illinois, Texas, South Carolina, and Florida, met for three days of worship and fellowship during which many members talked about specific concerns in their dioceses. Most of the groups are in the minority in the leadership of their dioceses, many of which have joined a newly formed network. Via Media USA has ongoing concerns that the network’s actions may ultimately result in schism within the national church.

“We learned about and from each other, drawn together in fellowship,” said Dr. Joan Gundersen of Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh. “Some people who were feeling isolated now feel supported. This meeting has helped us move closer together and has given us a better working relationship.”

The organization of Via Media USA is in its preliminary stages, and all of the represented groups will be consulting with their own members in coming weeks about how to move forward. Two observers from The Episcopal Church’s Executive Council attended the meeting, and Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold sent a letter that encouraged 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.

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Mission Statement of Via Media USA – Adopted March 27, 2004 in Atlanta, GA

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.

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