

St. Mark's Chapel – A Community of Episcopalians, Port Royal, South Carolina

Bishop Lawrence Addresses the 219th South Carolina Diocesan Convention

March 26, 2010

Note: The following is taken from the Bishop's prepared written text. Variations will appear in the audio/video version. Both audio and audio/video versions will be posted to the Diocesan website: <http://www.dioceseofsc.org/>

“When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, my spirit was not at rest....” 2 Corinthians 2:12-13a

I have found these words of St. Paul strangely comforting in recent months. Evidently, upon leaving Ephesus, the apostle made arrangements to rendezvous at Troas with Titus who was returning from Corinth. His relationship with the Corinthian Church had become increasingly complex and was a continuous concern for him. When Paul arrived in Troas he found an excellent opportunity for preaching the gospel. Nevertheless, when Titus failed to arrive he grew restless. Even though a door was opened for him to preach the Gospel he could not go through it. Severe problems were afoot. Doubtlessly he was grieved in his heart to set aside church planting and evangelistic work, but the truth of the Gospel and the integrity of the Church were at stake. He could not turn a blind eye to the dismantling of his labors and the labors of others. Professor James Denney's words are worthy of noting, even in the midst of a Bishop's Address to his diocese: *“[Paul's] spirit was absorbed and possessed by hopes and fears and prayers for the Corinthians; and as the human spirit, even when in contact with the divine is finite, and only capable of so much and no more, he was obliged to let slip an occasion which he would otherwise have gladly seized. He probably felt with all missionaries that it is as important to secure as to win converts; The disorders of [a] willful community had engrossed the Apostle's spirit, and robbed their fellow-men across the sea of an apostolic ministry.”* Let no one suggest I am drawing any similarities but the one of comparing the circumstances he faced with what we in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina face at this hour. There are open doors for us to preach the Gospel. Opportunities are plentiful. The fields are ripe for harvest. We are quite unique among the dioceses of TEC--we have many growing, vibrant congregations poised to extended the Kingdom of God and grow the Body of Christ. How I would love to make this my chief business as a Bishop.

An All Too Brief Glimpse at Mission in the Diocese

I have read with wistfulness some of my predecessor's Annual Addresses as they pointed to new construction or restorations across the diocese in prior eras. Or spoke of new evangelistic work making inroads in the mission of Christ and his Church. And let no one doubt we have these as well. I could speak of the remarkable enterprise of several of our large parishes (Church of the Cross, Bluffton, St. Michael's, Charleston, St. Andrews, Mt. Pleasant, Holy Cross,

Sullivan's Island) working in partnership with the diocesan Congregational Development Committee to restore St. John's Chapel to pristine condition. These same parishes now partner with The Reverend and Mrs. Dallas Wilson to expand a ministry of transformation for young girls, youth and families amidst the violence, deprivation and hopelessness that all too often lies as pall over the East Side of Charleston. And there have been other restorations as well that are worthy of note, such as the remarkable preservation at Grace Church with its elegant lines and noble steeple, or the magnificent restoration of that jewel of the Florence deanery, Holy Cross, Stateburg. Then there are the building projects at St. Christophers where Chris Warner and others from the diocese have labored to get the Camp and Conference Center back in sound condition. As for evangelistic work, here too, if things were different, we could speak at length of new initiatives and progress that has been made. Just to pick one department for instance—College Ministry: There is Daron Taylor's ministry on the College of Charleston, Greg Smith's work at the Citadel, John Foster and St. Bartholomew's outreach at Coker College, or the new vicar of St. Paul's Orangeburg, Fr. Jimmy Gallant's ground breaking ministry at Claflin University and South Carolina State University Campuses—with parishes such as St. Philips Charleston, Redeemer, Orangeburg and others assisting with financial resources. Nor should we forget the outstanding leadership that Dr. Cleveland Sellars is exercising at Voorhees College. These and so many, many other remarkable accomplishments by faithful priests, deacons and laypersons must for now go relatively unsung.

Yet one notable work I must pause over since it has been a saga closely followed not just by many in this diocese but by so many elsewhere as well. It is a work of such profound reconciliation that only God's grace and the sacrificial labors of his people could lay down such bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness at the cross of Jesus Christ. Therefore for me not to mention it would be a colossal oversight. Just yesterday I received word from the rector and vestry of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Waccamaw that the litigation with All Saints' Church, of the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA), is over. The case is resolved; and resolved out of court. The prayers of many have prevailed and the Glory is God's. Our gratitude to the leadership of both congregations is now due. This has been a long and painful pathway to walk for those at All Saints' Episcopal as they have stayed faithfully with The Diocese of South Carolina. They have often been misunderstood even by many within our own diocese, for one's heritage, as any South Carolinian knows, is an almost unendurable thing to lose. The details of this agreement or resolution must be told in a separate story, but let it be known for now that the congregation that has gone for the last six years as All Saints' Episcopal Parish, and grown under Fr. Ed Kelaher's leadership from a mere 40 members to 200 members will very shortly be serving Christ and his Kingdom under a new name. The congregation and I will consult together to discern what our Lord has already chosen to name them—but let it be known and celebrated among us today as a church of Christ's Reconciliation! Only those who believe in Jesus Christ and walk as ambassadors of reconciliation could have ever believed this would happen after so many hard words had been uttered, family gatherings divided, and pain and distrust felt on both sides. As recently as Wednesday, as I waited for my luggage at the Charleston Airport returning from the House of Bishop's Meeting, I talked with Mr. Guerry Green. He informed me then of property the vestry was looking to buy in preparation for a new worship site and

building. They are moving on—forgetting what lies behind they press on towards the upward goal of Jesus Christ. May our Lord reward them greatly with continued growth—not merely with transferred members but rescued souls.

There are many other things we could celebrate from every deanery within this diocese. Keeping just with the Georgetown deanery I could go on to speak of the sacrificial courage of the people of Resurrection, Surfside; or the plans of the Reverend Wilmot Merchant and the people of St. Stephen's North Myrtle Beach to plant a congregation in the community of Loris, the forays in evangelism of Holy Cross-Faith Memorial, Prince George, Winyah, Trinity Myrtle Beach, St. Paul's, Conway; or to shifted to the Orangeburg deanery, there's the building project of St. Matthias, Summerton; or the new property purchased in Santee for planting a church right in the middle an anticipated development. Clearly there is much progress and many Gospel opportunities to which I would prefer to give my wholehearted attention this morning. But like St. Paul at Troas my spirit is troubled.

The Trajectory of The Episcopal Church Continues Unabated

The distractions that come from the decisions others have made within The Episcopal Church have created restlessness in my spirit. And I am not alone among the people of this diocese to such a troubled mind. These are matters to which we must attend though grieves our hearts to be distracted from the great work of gospel proclamation and ministry. It would be insufferable to see this great Diocese of South Carolina come under the sway of the same false gospel that has decked so much of The Episcopal Church with decorative destruction and dreadful decline.

Like those in the Church at Corinth with whom St. Paul was confronted, many within the leadership of The Episcopal Church have grown willful. They will have their way though it is contrary to the received teaching of God's Holy Word, the trustworthy traditions of the Christian Faith, and the expressed will of the Anglican Communion—that rich multicultural body of almost 80 million Christians around the world, from many tribes, languages, peoples, and nations. Just last week the Archbishop of Canterbury released a statement from Lambeth Palace in response to The Episcopal Church's consent to a partnered lesbian's election as a Suffragan Bishop of Los Angeles:

"It is regrettable that the appeals from Anglican Communion bodies for continuing gracious restraint have not been heeded. Following the Los Angeles election in December the archbishop made clear that the outcome of the consent process would have important implications for the communion. Further consultation will now take place about the implications and consequences of this decision."

It is not clear what these implications and consequences will be for The Episcopal Church or the larger Communion; but it is up to us to decide what they will be for this Diocese of South Carolina if we want to live freely in Christ in world of spin. Frankly, we must be honest here;

there has been precious little restraint within many dioceses of TEC even when the Archbishop of Canterbury and others within the Anglican Communion thought there was. The march of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Movement has gone on relatively unchallenged. And that is not the worst of the theological heterodoxy, as I and others have stated elsewhere. It is merely the boundary upon which the current challenge is waged. The leaders of the Anglican Communion should know the truth about these matters though some of the leadership of this Church has repeatedly shrouded it in misinformation or spin. Recently, however, the Presiding Bishop has written to the Primates of the Communion regarding the Glasspool election in a more forthright way: *“Know that this is not the decision of one person, or a small group of people. It represents the mind of a majority of elected leaders in The Episcopal Church, lay, clergy, and bishops....”* This at last is an honest admission of where the leadership of The Episcopal Church is today regarding partnered gay or lesbian persons as bishops of the Church. It is also where the majority of the bishops would appear to be regarding same-sex blessings or marriages. I believe it is also the desire of many in TEC to bring the rest of the Anglican Communion to embrace this as well. How could they not if they believe the Spirit of God has inspired it? As was spoken at the recent House of Bishop’s Meeting, “The Spirit has already been expanding our mission. We have become witnesses of what God is doing” —that is witnesses to what the Spirit is doing through same-sex relationships in the life of the Church, whether in same-sex marriage or partnered gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgendered persons in every order of ministry. It begs the question of among whom exactly is the “Spirit” expanding the mission? Is it within the Episcopal Church for now and the Anglican Communion later? It is being presented as it has for decades, ever since the late seventies, as paralleling the inclusion of the Gentiles in the first century into the Church without first having to become Jews. But under what apostolic or internationally ecumenical authority is one to claim such a monumental revelation?

Clearly these are disruptive challenges to the teaching we have received from the last two thousand years in the church of Jesus Christ. It was in part because the Standing Committee and I anticipated these recent developments and confirmation of TEC’s continued trajectory that we called the Special Synod last October and put before the diocese the resolutions for your support. We all need to face this challenge squarely. It is hard to imagine there will be any backing away from partnered gay and lesbian priests and bishops; and there is little reason to believe the move toward an ever wider embrace of sexual understandings for those in ordained ministry should stop here. This we must face without blinking, for as you may have heard me say before: though there are many across this country that hold us in prayer; though there are bishops and archbishops throughout the Anglican Communion who have written or called us to offer their encouragement and support, for which we are inexpressibly grateful, there is no one coming to rescue us—at least with any temporal hand. This is our battle to engage. We are not entirely alone, but our list of allies at home grows thin. This is our time to stand and be humbly counted among the faithful, just as others have in prior generations. We must face reality as it is: Not as it was in some prior time: Not as we remember it through the rose colored glasses of gentility or our gilded memories of an Episcopal Church of yesteryear: Not as we wish it were in our day: But as it is.

This false Gospel of Indiscriminate Inclusivity like kudzu in an old growth forest has suffocated the mission of the Church and has helped to set The Episcopal Church on a denominationally downward spiral of radically decreasing membership and increasing irrelevance. Consider just the Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) figures for The Episcopal Church within the dioceses of the United States: In 2002 the total ASA of domestic dioceses in the U.S. was 860,000; in 2008 the ASA was 670,000--a 22% decline in six years. The decline shows no signs of abating. Rather it is accelerating. Some purport to find comfort in the fact that other mainline denominations show decline as well, but few more pronouncedly than us. Frankly, to know that others decline is poor comfort at best. In contrast the Diocese of South Carolina grew, albeit modestly, during these same years with a 3.5% increase of ASA from 13,441 in 2002 to 13,906 in 2008. And if one would look at the growth of the diocese between 1998 and 2008, (12,439 ASA in 1998 and 13,908 in 2008, an 11.9% increase), it is rather clear that after 2003 our growth became less pronounced. Sadly, we may soon show a temporary decline, for understandably, some among us grow restless. Like St. Paul at Troas there is much to distract us.

The Presiding Bishop's Incursion and Its Significance

I come now to the reason why this Annual Diocesan Convention was postponed. If the challenges I mentioned above were not enough for a diocese to face in a downturned economy, since our Special Convention in October, which addressed the many theological challenges before us, an entirely new challenge has surfaced: A constitutional question about the ability of a diocese to govern its common life in a way that is obedient to the teaching of the Bible, the received heritage of The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America, and in accordance with *The Constitution & Canons of The Episcopal Church*. In December of 2009 our Chancellor, Mr. Wade Logan, was finally informed by a local attorney that he had been retained by the Presiding Bishop's Chancellor. In a subsequent series of letters he presented himself as "South Carolina counsel for The Episcopal Church" and requested numerous items of the Bishop and Standing Committee, as well as information regarding parishes in this diocese. This way of presenting himself fails to acknowledge that this diocese is the only recognized body of The Episcopal Church within the lower half of South Carolina. There is no other representative or ecclesiastical authority of The Episcopal Church here but our Bishop and Standing Committee. Furthermore, this was carried out without the Presiding Bishop even so much as calling me. Subsequently, the Presiding Bishop has stated publicly, as well as to privately to me, that the retaining of this attorney was in keeping with the mutual litigation in the Pawleys Island case of All Saints' Parish versus All Saints', the Diocese of South Carolina and TEC. But as I had pointed out to her privately, and Bishop Ed Salmon made clear during a brief discussion at the recent House of Bishop's Meeting at Camp Allen, in the prior circumstances the Diocese and The Presiding Bishop's Office were partners in a law suit in which both were named by the other party. This present matter is quite different. The retaining of counsel now has all the signs of an adversarial relationship—one of monitoring through a non-constitutional and non-canonical incursion how a Diocesan Bishop and Standing Committee may choose to deal with

its priests and parishes.

What is astonishing is that this Diocese of South Carolina, while seeking to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures, historic Anglicanism and the received teaching of the Anglican Communion as expressed through its four Instruments of Unity, as well as to The Book of Common Prayer, and adhering to *The Constitution & Canons* of this Church, has experienced incursions not authorized by these very constitution and canons. A reference here to Powel Mills Dawley's book in the Church Teaching Series, *The Episcopal Church and Its Work*, may be helpful for many. Writing of the Presiding Bishop's authority, Professor Dawley notes, "[He] exercises no direct pastoral oversight of his own, nor does he possess visitatorial or juridical powers within the independent dioceses of the Episcopal Church." The absence of the Presiding Bishop having juridical powers within an independent diocese makes the hiring of an attorney by the Presiding Bishop's office an unauthorized act. The stated purpose for her incursion is the protection of Church property. Whether there are other more disruptive reasons for such non-canonical intrusion can only be surmised. But in addressing only this stated purpose we can summarize that the Presiding Bishop has decided that the best way to resolve the challenges TEC faces over profound questions of doctrine, morality and discipline is to interpret the so called Dennis Canon as demanding that every diocese institute litigation in the secular courts with parishes that decide to depart, therein exercising coercive power to the fullest extent of the law regardless of the local issues, or the decisions of the diocesan bishop and Standing Committee.

All this is a profound overreach of the Presiding Bishop's authority. Certainly I know there are many within TEC who strongly disagree with my theological commitments, and regardless of how monolithic people may believe this diocese to be, there are those within this diocese who share their disagreement. I acknowledge this and respect it. Even more, some do not like the strong statements I have made criticizing certain actions and resolutions successive General Conventions have affirmed, as well as the steps that many leaders of the "national" Church have taken, tearing the fabric of the Anglican Communion. But the thing we are confronting now is not a challenge of this nature. It is a challenge to how for over two hundred years The Episcopal Church has carried out its mission and ministry. It is one of the ironies of this time that we in a diocese like South Carolina, which has been one of the most vigorous critics of the "national" church, should be the ones that are called to defend the polity of TEC—to defend the way Episcopalians have for so long carried out their mission. But history is full of such paradoxes. In standing up and protecting our autonomy or independence as a diocese in TEC, in protecting the diocesan bishop's authority to shepherd the parishes and missions of his diocese, and in defending the bishop and, in his absence, the Standing Committee as the Ecclesiastical Authority, we are in fact defending how TEC has carried out its ministry and mission for these many years. Every Diocesan Bishop, every Standing Committee, indeed every Episcopalian ought to know that if this is allowed to stand, that if The Presiding Bishop and her chancellor are allowed to hire an attorney in a diocese of this Church, to look over the shoulder of any bishop or worse dictate to that Bishop or Standing Committee how they are to deal with the parishes and missions under their care, imposing upon them mandates or directives as to how they disburse or purchase property then we have entered into a new era of

unprecedented hierarchy, and greater autocratic leadership from the Presiding Bishop's office and his or her chancellor. It may then be the case that a chancellor who has heretofore been only a counsel of advice for the PB can now function, without election, confirmation or canonical authority, as the de facto chancellor of the Church, exercising power not authorized by this Church and therein dictating to the dioceses of this church how they shall deal with their parishes and property.

Recently, the Presiding Bishop and I have had a respectful conversation about this matter, during which she asserted once again what she has stated publicly on many occasions. That she has responsibility for the whole Church. That the property of The Episcopal Church must be protected and this is one of her duties. But if so, it is a duty that she has assumed, not one stated in the Constitution & Canons, nor assumed by any previous Presiding Bishop. The PB's role is to guide the work that the several dioceses perform together as may be voted upon by General Convention. It is not to direct the work or ministry of the independent dioceses that make up the Episcopal Church. That has always been the role of the Bishop of the Diocese and the various elected bodies of the local diocese. The Standing Committee, the Bishop and perhaps the Board of Trustees of the local diocese alone have charge in various ways over these matters of property. As a case in point, should a diocese decide to purchase property to plant a congregation, or alienate or sell the property it possess, it seeks no further authority than itself for such action. So too if a diocese chooses to close a congregation there is no higher authority than the bishop. The Presiding Bishop's decision to hire counsel in South Carolina leads us all into such precarious waters that every diocese and bishop in this Church ought to be concerned, lest the polity and practice of TEC be changed by a precedent without constitutional or canonical authority. As I have said to our various deanery gatherings, and as I stated to the Presiding Bishop, precedent unchallenged may establish practice and practice unchallenged in time may turn to policy. Therefore, we have a constitutional and canonical obligation to demand the removal of her legal counsel. Especially is this fitting in that her public defense of her position was that they had previously had counsel in this diocese to assist in the Pawleys Island law suit. Since the case is now finished there should be no further reason for such a retainer. Unfortunately, after lengthy and respectful conversation, the Presiding Bishop and I stand looking at one another across a wide, deep and seemingly unbridgeable theological and canonical chasm. At present both of us have signaled a willingness to continue the conversation even if it requires phone conversations from vastly different area codes.

So we proceed at this Annual Convention with our various resolutions. R-2 demands not only the withdrawal of legal counsel but a respectfully honoring of the Polity of The Episcopal Church as practiced consistently within this Church since its inception. Resolution R-3 makes explicit what has been implicit all along and affirmed by a federal court that the bishop of the diocese is the sole authority as to the interpretation of Diocesan Constitution and Canons. Once again R-4 declares explicitly what is implicit, and here for good reason. It is difficult not to conclude that in the Presiding Bishop's opinion, any bishop or ecclesiastical authority which chooses to deal with a departing parish in a manner contrary to her stated position is failing in his or its fiduciary responsibility. Without so much as a nod to the apostolic teaching in I

Corinthians 6:1-8, or the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:25-26, this model of litigation has become the official position of the Presiding Bishop's Office—though it has received no endorsement from the General Convention of this Church and more grievous still denies the constitutional, canonical and even legally upheld authority of the Diocesan Bishop to be the ecclesiastical authority of his diocese, and to apply the teachings of Christ and the Church to the needs of his diocese, its parishes and members, as he believes is most in keeping with Christian charity, responsible stewardship, and godly judgment. This is not to imply that a Church, diocese or parish should never go to court or enter into litigation. It is merely to suggest that the imposing of a model of indiscriminate and unbridled litigation on the 110 dioceses of this Church, as if one model fits all, has brought bitter acrimony, a multiplication of law suits and what St. Paul feared so many years ago, public disgrace and scandal upon the Church. For her to demand in this diocese such a policy would be an egregiously inept exercise of non-canonical pastoral leadership. Furthermore, this is the wrong time in the life of The Episcopal Church for such a centralization of power, especially one so far removed from the ethos and issues of regions and dioceses. The irony is that such remote hierarchical authoritarianism without constitutional and canonical restrictions, and in the absence of theological unity, would only exacerbate the crisis of spiritual authority we are experiencing in The Episcopal Church and across the Anglican Communion.

Our Call Under God

Finally, what is it we want for this great and historic Diocese of South Carolina? I believe this diocese wants to be able to decide under God its destiny; to have a choice as to whether it goes down the same destructive path that has caused such statistical and spiritual decline as can be seen elsewhere among so many Episcopal dioceses and parishes across this country. I believe what we seek for this diocese is stated succinctly in Resolutions R-1: It is to be a gospel diocese, proclaiming an evangelical faith, embodied in a catholic order, and empowered and transformed by the Holy Spirit. To strive by God's grace to remain unswerving in our belief that above all Jesus came into the world to save the lost, that those who do not know Christ need to be brought into a personal and saving relationship with him, and that those who do know Christ need to be taught by the Holy Scriptures faithfully to follow him all the days of their lives to the Glory of God the Father by taking their places as responsible members in His Church. As your bishop I also want us to be able to do this while maintaining mutually enriching missional relationships with dioceses and Provinces of the Anglican Communion, all the while exercising a responsible autonomy. That should an Anglican Covenant emerge as adopted by the breadth of the various Provinces of the Communion that we should hope for full participation in such a Covenant. To this end I will be attending the Global South to South Encounter gathering in Singapore in April. Along with Bishop John Howe from Central Florida, I will be one of the Communion Partner representatives. We, along with Bishops from The Anglican Church in North America, will be present as observers. This is all comes under the rubric of what I have summarized in last year's Convention Address, as *Making Biblical Anglicans for a Global Age*.

Many speak to me of the difficult task I have as bishop at this time. They wonder how I am

dealing with the stresses and pressures upon me. I respond by saying I draw strength from God's call, and from the people of this diocese and from our history. For we have faced far more grievous challenges than the ones we face today; and as God was sufficient then He shall be so now. Forgive me if I remind you of chapters of gathering storms and seized opportunities, which you know far better than I. Among the catalogue of challenges I will remind you today of just one. You will remember that as the winds of war began to blow across this fertile land of South Carolina those Anglicans who professed and called themselves Christians had to make difficult decisions regarding not merely their allegiance to King and Country, but to the Church of England as well. Repeatedly I have drawn courage from the story of the Reverend Robert Smith, an Englishman who came to the colony of South Carolina to be the rector of St. Philips Church, Charlestown, and who was later to become the first Bishop of South Carolina, and how he must have struggled as he faced the momentous decision before him. I reflect often upon his perseverance and the sacrifices he made. He like many stared boldly into the reality of his day. He faced reality not as it had been, but as it was at that time; and he along with others helped to create a future in which they and their children would live. Then as the young nation took form, these Anglicans or Episcopalians formed a diocese, elected a bishop, and helped to form the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America. Under a gracious Providence they controlled their destiny. Yet before these events unfolded he preached to the members of the Commons House of Assembly and the members of the Provisional Congress these words on February 17, 1775: *"You have truly joined in owning the necessity of this day's supplication and prayers; that as differences have arisen between our Mother Country and us; not on our part. I hope so some would insinuate through unreasonable [illegible] of power or factious discontent, but in the sole defense of undoubted rights, we should beg the Almighty to bless our endeavors and grant that peace, unanimity, harmony and love with healing in their wings, may again be established between us."* Such a prayer for peace and harmony was not answered as he had hoped. Though we believe God ultimately accomplished His purposes even showing, as the psalmist had once testified, His sustaining "love in a besieged city."

As I bring this Address to a close I must say something about my decision, which was unanimously affirmed by the Standing Committee, not to adjourn but to recess to a date certain—that date being, Saturday, October 16, 2010. If there is no further reason to meet we can adjourn at the chair's announcement. This will have the unfortunate but necessary effect of causing those newly elected to office, or appointed thereto, to not assume their positions immediately, and for those presently in office to continue until that date. But in consultation with the chancellor and the Standing Committee it has seemed prudent to at least to allow the newly elected Standing Committee members to attend meetings until such adjournment, therein allowing a smoother, even seamless transition. This is of course an unusual practice, but then these are unusual times. There are many unanswered questions before us, not least of which is, should this convention pass the resolution demanding the withdrawal of the Presiding Bishop's counsel, "How will her office respond?" There are also questions which may arise from the Global South to South Encounter. Attendant to this last question is the Anglican Covenant. At our Special Convention in October we signaled our support of the Ridley Draft of

the Anglican Covenant. Now it is in final form. How will the Global South and those Provinces and dioceses with which we have ongoing or developing relationships through the work of our parishes and our diocesan Anglican Communion Development Committee respond? What exactly does the Archbishop of Canterbury mean when he refers to implications and consequences to TEC's consent to the Glasspool election in Los Angeles and her scheduled consecration on May 15? What do these consequences mean for The Diocese of South Carolina? All of these, as well as unforeseeable events which can arise quite abruptly, suggest we must carry out our ministry and mission upon an ever changing landscape. We need to give ourselves latitude of maneuver. We did this when we used such language at last October's Special Convention in the resolution that stated we would "begin withdrawing from bodies of The Episcopal Church...." Such language was carefully crafted because we recognized the fluidity of the environment; that is, since anomalous situations were sure to emerge prudence suggested to us that we draft the resolution to allow for a principled flexibility; and so we did.

In conclusion, I must return to St. Paul and to his willingness, with much inner struggle and grief, to leave a work of evangelism to face the unpleasant demands of protecting the Church and defending the faith. A dreadful choice to sure! Yet such a time is where some of us in diocesan leadership find ourselves. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon most of our diocesan membership to stay engaged in the work of ministry, and for priests and deacons to continue equipping God's people for such work, (Ephesians 4: 12ff) remembering that when the apostle wrote to the church in Ephesus encouraging them in their work he also reminded them to put on the whole armor of God that after having done all, they may stand firm. (Ephesians 6:10-20) He who has called us to this is faithful, and so I trust by God's grace stand we shall.