

## A Letter to the Bishops of the Episcopal Church

9 March 2015

Dear Bishops,

We have watched developments over the past years. We are loyal members of this Church. We have long-serving family members in this Church. We have known this Church over several generations. We are watching the precipitous decline in attendance in the Episcopal Church. Current proposals to restructure the church are ignoring basic problems.<sup>1</sup>

We are frankly concerned. We put this question to you as loyal Episcopal priests:

**"Is this any longer a Church one wants to join?"**

We are looking at a Church in which the following are facts or likely outcomes in the very near term:

- A proposed modification of the Book of Common Prayer Marriage Rite wherein the rubrics are malleable and the Biblical and canonical warrants<sup>2</sup> are ignored or abandoned;
- The BCP definition of marriage is subverted without constitutional procedure;<sup>3</sup>
- Tens of millions of dollars, perhaps over \$40 million, have been spent on litigation without any budget line accountability;<sup>4</sup>
- The rewriting of the Title IV canon gives the Presiding Bishop metropolitan authority vis-à-vis fellow Bishops, against the Constitution's plain sense;<sup>5</sup>
- Bishops are disciplined for filing an amicus brief while other bishops and leaders file them with impunity with SCOTUS;<sup>6</sup>
- Bishops are declared to have renounced their Orders without ever doing so in the manner called for by canon;<sup>7</sup>
- The 'National Church,' when it is urged by GC to move its offices, simply ignores the recommendation;<sup>8</sup> and
- Mandatory Diocesan giving is called for without any constitutional authority;<sup>9</sup>

This list is incomplete, but it is sufficient to indicate the state of lawlessness into which we have moved, and to pose the questions: Are we any longer a Church of constitutional and canonical order? Are we acting decently and in order? How can we hope to restore a level of trust across differences of theological conviction when the good order that this Church constitutionally and canonically expects is simply ignored?<sup>10</sup>

- ✝ If the BCP is to be changed, let it be done in accordance with the rules established to do that.
- ✝ If money is being spent on litigation, let there be a public accounting of that.
- ✝ If the Presiding Bishop is to be given new authorities, let the Constitution be altered in the manner required.
- ✝ If it is not proper to file an amicus brief in one case, then it is not proper to file one in another case.

- ✠ If Bishops are declared to have renounced their Orders, let it happen in the manner called for by the Constitution and Canons.
- ✠ If we are uncertain, how can we assure the members of the church and those who are seeking a church home?

It seems to us that these are reasonable and fair requests to put before the Bishops of this church, who have solemnly vowed before God that they will “guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church” (BCP, page 518).

Faithfully in our Lord,

Alley  
Fuller  
Radner  
Seitz  
Turner

---

<sup>1</sup> The Task Force For Reimagining the Episcopal Church has produced a long report that is simply silent about theological conflict and its sources, that has so drained the church; or the litigation of the past decade or more, that has drained resources and the structural issues around this; or the need to reconcile with Evangelical members and ex-members, whose loss and alienation has so limited the church’s outreach.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Genesis 1-2, Matthew 19, Ephesians 5; BCP pp. 422, 423, 861; Canon I.18.Sec. 2(b)

<sup>3</sup> The first proposed resolution by the Convention’s Marriage Taskforce seeks a change in canon that renders the actual language and context of the BCP’s marriage service both semantically incoherent and without authority.

<sup>4</sup> Figures are hard to come by. A reputable, even if partisan, incomplete list of lawsuits can be found at <http://accurmudgeon.blogspot.ca/2015/02/annual-litigation-survey-for-episcopal.html>; Haley’s estimate is over \$40 million, carefully detailed at <http://accurmudgeon.blogspot.ca/2014/02/how-much-has-ecusa-spent-on-lawsuits.html>.

<sup>5</sup> A full analysis of these changes, which was never properly rebutted, is given at <http://www.anglicancommunioninstitute.com/2010/09/title-iv-revisions-unmasked/>.

<sup>6</sup> The recent example is found at [file:///C:/Users/radne\\_000/Downloads/US%20Supreme%20Court%20Amicus%20Brief.Jennings%20et%20al%203.06.15.pdf](file:///C:/Users/radne_000/Downloads/US%20Supreme%20Court%20Amicus%20Brief.Jennings%20et%20al%203.06.15.pdf); earlier, of course, <http://openjurist.org/290/f3d/699/dixon-v-l-edwards-w-b-j-a-g-e-e-j-l-m-l-w-b-iii-so-l-w-h>.

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.episcopalcafe.com/confusion\\_about\\_bishop\\_scriven\\_and\\_renunciation/](http://www.episcopalcafe.com/confusion_about_bishop_scriven_and_renunciation/); <http://www.anglicancommunioninstitute.com/2009/01/is-the-renunciation-of-orders-routine/>; An interesting commentary on the novel approach, can be found in the blog of AKM Adams, and in the comments.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/07/06/deputies-vote-to-sell-the-church-center-headquarters-in-new-york/>; yet other resolutions enacted are treated as law.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. The TREC proposed Resolution A002.

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Sisk of New York: “Where then does that leave us? We are left with a situation in which the mind of this recent Convention appears to be to allow such services. **However, The Constitution and The Book of Common Prayer still say something else...** It is my interpretation that the actions of this 2012 General Convention permit, perhaps even encourage, those of us who live in jurisdictions such as New York, to act on that conviction” (bold added). See <http://www.livingchurch.org/full-marriage-equality>