

Conference Held: Connecting With The Episcopal Church in 2007

November 19, 2007

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Make the most of 'incredible moment,' House of Deputies president tells South Carolinians



Abstract of Episcopal News Service
Article 11/5/07]

House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson urged a group of Episcopalians in the Diocese of South Carolina November 3 to take advantage of an "incredible

 moment" in the life of that diocese to begin talking to people "whom you may not have talked to recently" so that together they might develop new models for mission.

The moment to which Anderson was referring was created when the Very Rev. Mark Lawrence, the diocese's bishop-elect, recently received the canonically required consent to his ordination and consecration from a majority of the standing committees of the Episcopal Church dioceses and from a majority of bishops with jurisdiction.

"You have some opportunities for newness," Anderson said told nearly 150 who attended the "Connecting with the Episcopal Church in 2007" event sponsored by the Episcopal Forum of South Carolina for which she was the keynote speaker. The meeting took place in Charleston at the Inn at Middleton Place.....

South Carolina Bishop Ed Salmon spoke during the day-long gathering and participated in a question-and-answer panel that closed the day. Forum President Lynn Pagliaro read the letter of greeting from Lawrence in which the bishop-elect said in part that it was his "firm conviction that in Christ's reconciling work we shall find the key to our unity."

The day was marked by discussions of mission, canon law, the organizational behavior of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, and the implications of the current tensions in the Episcopal Church.

Anderson has been visiting the small number of dioceses whose leadership is at varying stages of positioning their dioceses to disaffiliate from the Episcopal Church. Not all of the members of the dioceses support their leaders' plans. She had spent time in the dioceses of Pittsburgh, Rio Grande, and San Joaquin before her trip to South Carolina.....

Acknowledging that they are part of an Episcopal Church that is "alive and well and doing amazing work" in mission,.....

.....Saying that Episcopalians and all Anglicans are related to each other through Hooker, a 16th-century Anglican theologian who argued that scripture, tradition and reason are the threefold Anglican sources of authority, Anderson said "we take strength from the community of saints, and from our community represented here.".....

(Bishop) Salmon, who described himself as trying to live "graciously" as an Episcopalian "on the short end of the stick," acknowledged that there is "profound disagreement" in the Episcopal Church and in his diocese, and predicted that no solution will make everyone happy.

He said he is convinced that the Episcopal Church will not change its stance and that people on all sides of the issues are "deeply convicted about the Gospel upon which they stand."

"What we need to do is deal with each other on that basis," Salmon said.....

(The Rev. Frank) Wade reviewed the course of the Anglican Communion's consideration of issues surrounding human sexuality and suggested that those who pose the debate's questions in terms of orthodoxy or the authority of Scripture ask the wrong questions. Orthodoxy, he said, is not a constant, but instead "has a growing edge." Questions on the authority of Scripture are often more focused on the authority of the persons who would enforce their own applications of Scripture, he said.

The right question, Wade suggested, is: "is God calling us to a new understanding of human sexuality?" While Wade said he is not certain how to answer that question, he noted that people of faith often arrive at such new understandings "slowly" and "badly," in part because "the language of religion...draws its power from pastoral certainty" often despite "substantial evidence to the contrary.".....

(Sally) Johnson reviewed how the Episcopal Church determines membership of dioceses in the wider church, parishes in dioceses and people in parishes. The General Convention votes to accept dioceses into union with it or to allow them to leave, dioceses do the same for parishes, and members take actions to have their baptisms recorded in an Episcopal parish or transferred to another parish when they want to move.

While the General Convention has at times allowed dioceses to leave, Johnson said it is "highly, highly unlikely" that Convention would allow the dioceses currently in dispute with the Episcopal Church to break their union with it.

General Convention, she noted, holds much of the authority in the Episcopal Church, in large part by approving changes to the Constitution and Canons and The Book of Common Prayer. Convention cannot, however, change the doctrine of the Episcopal Church, she said.

Title IV of the Canons defines doctrine as "the basic and essential teachings of the church as found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer."

-- The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg is national correspondent for the Episcopal News Service.

[Link to complete ENS Article](#)

Comments from Conference Attendees

We enjoyed attending the Forum meeting at MiddletonGardens.

You and the others that put this meeting together deserve our thanks!



It was splendid! The speakers were fantastic!!!!



Indeed! This conference was exceptional in every way. The three speakers complimented one another's gifts and



subject matter in very useful ways. I was so glad to be gathered in a community of 150 fellow South Carolina Episcopalians who are not caught up in excluding those on the path with us, but rather who were grateful to hear the truth told.

It was great to feel excited and proud about being an Episcopalian.

This weekend was the first time (that I can remember) in over ten years a national leader in the Episcopal Church has met with Episcopalians in this Diocese, and may have been the first time in over twenty-five years an incumbent national Church leader has appeared at a venue open to any lay person. It also was the first time not one, but two Bishops of South Carolina have in some way acknowledged the Forum as a credible presence in the Diocese



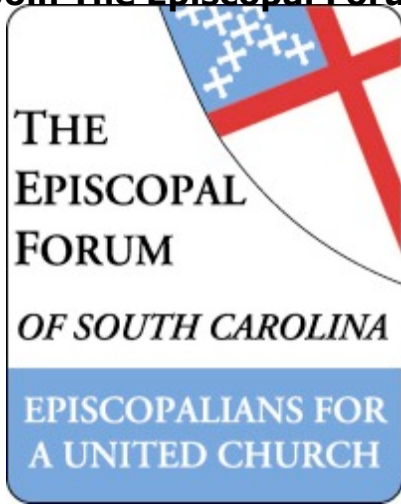
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