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# The Parish Paper

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## **A Time of Crisis: A Time of Call**

This has been a sad year for St. John's. We lost beloved William to a sudden protracted illness and untimely death. I lost a mentor, colleague, and friend of over a decade. You lost a priest, friend, and defender of the faith of over twenty-five years. What William Ralston gave to this Parish Church cannot be estimated, but at the center was a definition and vision that continues and will continue. The definition was given in the Book of Common Prayer, and the vision was to see through the Book of Common Prayer into that "great cloud of witnesses" of which the author of Hebrews speaks. Now William lives with them where he can hear Homer sing and converse with St. Francis. But most of all he stands before the throne of God, in the light and communion of the Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of William's faith and ours. We must always remember that he shares with us every moment in the deepest fellowship of prayer.

It is our task now to follow in the same definition and vision. That is not hard for us, because these were not only William's definition and vision; they are the essence of Anglican Christianity and the inheritance of every faithful Anglican. St. John's Church is a Christian Church of the Anglican Way. By God's grace, this is what we are and shall be until the Lord comes again.

The sadness of our loss of William is gathered up in a truer joy. But now we have another loss, and that is the loss of the Episcopal Church. With the actions of the General Convention this past summer, and the recent consummation of their action in the pseudo-consecration of the Bishop-elect of New Hampshire this past week, the structures of the Episcopal Church have been rent asunder, the Anglican Communion has been divided at the deepest level, and the realignment of Anglican Christianity has begun. I want to say something about where we are at present and what lies ahead for us as a Parish. Ours, dear friends, is a matter of pith and moment. I cannot say this any more plainly. The worldwide Anglican Communion, including St. John's Church, is at an historic crossroad.

Let me put this in perspective. The meeting of the General Convention acted by majority vote contrary to warnings both from within the Episcopal Church and also from without the Episcopal Church in the greater Anglican Communion. As a consequence of their actions, the Archbishop of Canterbury called an emergency meeting of the Primates from all over the Anglican world to convene in London and to consider their response to the Episcopal Church.

That response came in the very strongest terms. The Primates affirmed the unassailable authority of Scripture, and stated that no province of the Communion has the authority to alter unilaterally the teaching of the Communion as a whole. The Primates warned that if the Episcopal Church did not repent, the fabric of the Communion would be torn at the deepest level. Furthermore, the Primates called on the various Provinces concerned "to make adequate pastoral provision for Episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities" in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates. And a commission was formed to include theological and legal reflections on these "dangers" to the communion and how they will need to be "addressed." The Primates were deadly serious.

Along with a unanimous consent, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church agreed to the statement and signed it. Now, this past week, just several weeks after the meeting of the Primates in London, our Presiding Bishop betrayed the counsel of the Primates and took part in the pseudo-consecration of the Bishop elect of New Hampshire. That act has placed him, and those who participated in the consecration, and those who voted for it, into a state of formal heresy and schism. It is a very sad time indeed, not only for Anglicans throughout the world, but also for Christian churches everywhere.

As for me, my dear friends, by my baptism and priesthood in Christ's one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, by my devotion to the gospel of Jesus and to the healing power of his forgiveness and his love, I must tell you that I am not in communion with the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, or with those who participated in the consecration, or with those who voted for it. They have a different spirit. And unless they repent of their willful ignorance of Scripture and their total disregard for the rest of the Anglican Communion they will remain precisely what they have become - a tiny arrogant sect of secular ideologues.

But I must also tell you that I am happily in communion with the Bishop of Georgia, and with the rest of the Episcopal Church, all those who submit to the authority of Scripture, and who honor the collective counsel of the Anglican Primates and their churches throughout the world. This is not my position alone. Already, throughout the larger communion, a realignment of confessing churches and congregations has begun. Anglican Primates from all over the world have stated the terms of their communion as I have. Bishops, priests, parishes, and entire dioceses in the Episcopal Church are forming a confessing alliance. The sun is rising again on the Episcopal Church. As I said just after the General Convention, and I repeat now, you are the inheritance of the Episcopal Church. You have the privilege and the responsibility to pass on the beauty of the Anglican Way to generations to come.

What do we do now? We continue as we are. Above all we pray. God is gracious and the Lord Jesus is with us every moment. But now we must pray in particular for several concerns. First, for the Archbishop of Canterbury, for courage and patience to implement the decisions that were formulated by the Primates for "adequate Episcopal oversight" for those who need it. Second, for the Bishop of Georgia that he may find encouragement and strength in the fellowship of orthodox bishops in the Episcopal Church and throughout the Anglican

world. Our Bishop has already appointed a commission to draft a new Canon for the Diocese of Georgia that addresses the ethical standards of the clergy. And third, pray for the Primates of the Anglican Communion that they may persevere in the defense and proclamation of the truth. These are brave men. They are not willing to compromise the gospel. They have already said that they will not yield, even if it means that the rich of the Episcopal Church cut off their aid money. According to reports on the internet, it seems that some have already made this threat.

And after our prayer we must act positively in relation to the rest of the diocese. We must encourage the weak hearted to be strong. We must affirm that true marriage is only that which is created by God as a union of male and female. We must repent of our own sins, and pray for all who are disobedient to God's commands, that we all might come to repentance and a better mind.

And beyond the diocese we must join in the efforts of organizations that are working for reform in the church. This includes the American Anglican Council, of which Leonard Trosten will speak to you in a moment. The American Anglican Council has a special place now in facilitating the realignment of the Episcopal Church. Other organizations such as the [Prayer Book Society](#), [Forward in Faith](#), and [Ecclesia](#) are also worthy of our support.

Finally, I want to speak to you about our mission. We will continue with our educational mission with the Elliott House. That is something we can do here. But there is also something missing, and that is our fellowship with and support of Anglican Churches in the global south. Those are the churches of our communion that are growing at a remarkable rate, and yet they have very little materially in comparison to us. Those are the churches, which have so little materially, but are strong in faith and doctrine, that are taking the risk to defend orthodox Anglicans, orthodox Episcopalians like us, even at the threat of wealthy liberal Episcopalians cutting off their aid.

I had an epiphany about this this past week. I was in Las Vegas for a meeting of Forward in Faith/North America. When I got off the plane I was shocked at the glitz and tacky indulgence that was already evident in the slot machines in the airport. That shock was reinforced as I took a taxi into town, with the hotels and advertisements that fill that city, glaring in the dim late afternoon sun. The glitz became intense in the hotel, full of mirrors and strange light. After I got my room key, I began my way to my room, moving through the hotel with a thousand other feeble souls. And just as I rounded this large corner of the lobby, the first person that I laid eyes on, and almost bumped into, was Archbishop Bernard Malango of Central Africa. (You will remember that Bishop Malango visited us here last December with his wife Charity.) Well, we embraced in the middle of that great flux of humanity, and with a twinkle in his eye, and that big broad smile, he called my name. For you it may seem just an anecdote. For me it was an epiphany. Bishop Malango, Primate of Central Africa, one of the principle authors of the Primates' recent statement from London had come to the same meeting. It was as if the Lord was saying, "I am here." And I was reassured that Christ is with us, not just in the tackiness of Las Vegas, but everywhere in this fallen world, and in this broken Episcopal Church. My hope is that we as a parish can have a greater intention and support for the poor but faithful churches of the global south.

And finally there is this. We ourselves are in need of a deeper conversion. I do not mean that we are not all here faithful Christians, I believe that we are. And I know that the Body of Christ is full of believers of different degrees and maturity. But our need now is to deepen our faith and our devotion to the Lord Jesus. We will need to be soldiers for Christ in the weeks and months ahead. Remember, at your Baptism you were signed with the sign of the cross in token that you would be a faithful soldier and servant of Jesus Christ until your life's end. Well dear friends, now is the time. It is a time for prayer and holiness and witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus. There is no vision without holiness of life and there is no holiness of life without charity. Hold fast to the truth in charity, and all shall be well. All manner of thing shall be well.

**The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker**

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