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The Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes

This is the name of the voluntary association which, at its last meeting, the Vestry voted unanimously to join. The parish should commend the Vestry for their judicious consideration and determined action.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Rowan Williams, first suggested the idea of the Network. Thereafter, at a gathering of mainstream Anglican leaders, meeting in London in November of 2003, an agreement was forged which moved toward the organization of "confessing" dioceses and congregations within ECUSA. Subsequently, thirteen active Bishops of the Episcopal Church signed the agreement. Their intention was and is to preserve a faithful remnant of true Anglicans under the Constitution of the Episcopal Church.

Since then, with the drafting of a brief, limited, theological confession and an organizational charter, twelve dioceses of ECUSA have joined what is called, in short, the Network. In addition to these twelve dioceses, five geographical convocations have been formed throughout the country for congregations whose dioceses have not joined. And an additional non-geographic convocation was also formed which includes parishes affiliated with Forward in Faith, North America.

The Network, or ACDP, was formed as a means for Episcopalians to remain true to the authority of Scripture and to the fellowship of the Anglican Communion. Unlike the General Convention, the Diocese of New Hampshire, and the recent statement of the House of Bishops, the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes truly believes in the supreme authority of Scripture in matters of faith and moral practice. And therefore, as truly Anglican, the Network confesses that the Scriptures are expressed essentially in the common Creeds of the Church Catholic; and furthermore, the Network declares that the theological content of the Scriptures is ordered in the historic formularies of the sixteenth and seventeenth century authorized Books of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. In making this confession, members of the Network hold fast to the Anglican form of the Church Catholic.

Moreover, unlike the arrogant indifference of the House of Bishops toward the rest of the Anglican Communion, the Network seeks to preserve the unity of the Communion of Anglican Churches throughout the world. That is why it is the Network, and not the current national

church, which adheres, authentically, to the Constitution of the Episcopal Church. We are the inheritors and propagators of the Faith of our Fathers, of the true meaning of being an Episcopalian, which the political machinery of ECUSA has clearly abandoned.

Although the liberal apparatus of ECUSA continues to demonize our position with charges of individualism, congregationalism, and fundamentalism, it is they who have caused a majority of the Primates of the Anglican Communion to declare themselves in impaired or broken communion with them. On the other hand, thirteen of these Primates, representing forty-five million Anglicans, have signed a statement, which says they are in solidarity with the Network and all orthodox Episcopalians. Their statement is quite clear in saying the liberal apparatus of ECUSA has "separated itself from the remainder of the Anglican Communion and the wider Christian family."

At the latest meeting of the House of Bishops this past month, we heard nothing at all of sorrow or regret for this alienation of so many of our brothers and sisters, especially in the Global South. Instead the Bishops relish the notion, which the Presiding Bishop recently expressed in a letter to the Lambeth Commission, that ECUSA is pursuing a different reality which has arisen in the context of our culture, a different reality to which ECUSA must conform itself. And thus the Presiding Bishop and the entire House of Bishops has taken it upon themselves to revise St. Paul's admonition "Be not conformed to this world" by removing the not!

Of high importance in the Vestry's deliberations was the fact that this association is altogether voluntary. St. John's continues as she is, an orthodox parish of the Anglican Way, committed to Catholic Faith and Order and to the liturgical tradition of the Book of Common Prayer, the last integral expression of which, in the Episcopal Church, is the version of 1928. (One should add that our Canadian brethren adopted a revision in 1962 which is also within the historic lineage.) We will persevere in these great gifts of God to the Church Catholic.

It is on these points that the Network is strong. Their leadership understands that the ordination of women is still under official discernment of the Anglican Communion, and therefore, our position coincides with most of the Anglican world as well as with Roman Catholic and Orthodox teachings on ordination. Equally important, the Network correctly discerns that the doctrinal standard of the Anglican Way cannot be found in the new liturgical revisions, but is located definitively in the Creeds and in the historic formularies. Other liturgical services might be used, but the doctrinal standard remains as it has always been. Our use of the 1928 BCP is thus not only understood but also honored.

So then, what do we mean to accomplish by joining the Network? We intend to continue within the fellowship of the Anglican Communion, firmly under the authority of God's Word written. No parish or diocese or national church is a self-sufficient spiritual entity. Either we abide as branches of the vine and flourish in Him, or we fall away, dry up, and become good for nothing except the burning. Within the Anglican Communion, we continue to teach our children about the goodness and integrity of marriage as the Bible understands it. We continue, as Christians, to call ourselves and all men to repentance from sin in all its forms, and thereby to allow the blood of Christ Jesus to wash us

clean. We continue to embrace the view of catholic order in a priesthood that is biblical, apostolic, and iconic of Christ himself. And we continue to worship in the beauty of holiness with the Book of Common Prayer, which may not be the only way to worship, but which is certainly the most beautiful and the most profound in true religion. By associating ourselves with this voluntary organization we continue as we are.

One final thing should be said about the Network. From its inception, this "confessing" organization has been firmly committed to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to planting new churches. This intention to spread the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ is altogether crucial inasmuch as the national church, by its recent actions, has committed itself to becoming a liberal urban sect of avant-garde religion and morality. Within the fellowship of the Network, we should look forward to a renewed sense of mission.

In its decision to join the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes, the Vestry has accepted its responsibility and exercised its freedom admirably. We can all applaud their action. The Network may not be the end of our journey, but it continues in the direction of authentic Christianity in her Anglican form.

The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker



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