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QUESTIONS FOR MS. SCHORI

On Saturday 13th September Kathryn Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, will be meeting with ticketed laity at St. Peter's Church, Skidaway Island. (There will be two sessions, the first from 9-11:15am and the second from 1-3:15pm.). After her address there will be limited time for questions and answers. At a time when alienation from the national leadership of the Episcopal Church is great, we must hope that she will take the opportunity to respond clearly and honestly to the questions that have been raised about her leadership. And that means we must hope that the organizers will resist the temptation to turn these meetings into choreographed exercises in institutional solidarity designed to shore up support for the litigation the diocese and national church have initiated against Christ Church (Anglican).

In my view the most fundamental questions arise in relation to the constitution of the Episcopal Church. It commits the Episcopal Church to the task of "upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order [i.e. Ministry] set forth in the Book of Common Prayer" – a commitment which predates the 1979 Prayer Book and therefore must be understood in terms of the historic Prayer Book tradition. Ms Schori's published theological opinions often bear only a vague resemblance to the historic Faith. In her investiture sermon, for instance, she gave an account of the Gospel which seemed to consist exclusively in the pursuit of the United Nations Millenium Development Goals, none of which include the glory of God, the salvation of souls, or the faithful ministry of Word and Sacrament. In other published remarks she seems incapable of making an unequivocal profession of faith in Christ as the incarnate Son of God and only Saviour of the world.

Second, the Constitution commits the Episcopal Church to "constituent member-ship" in the Anglican Communion. Ms Schori's record in upholding the responsibilities of such membership is mixed. Most notably, she is an open proponent of doctrine contrary to that re-affirmed at Lambeth 1998. Contrary to the Windsor process, she eschews reconciliation in favour of litigation to resolve disputes with conservative parishes and dioceses. Her compliance is openly tactical and temporary. All of these contribute to the grievous impairment of unity in the Communion, and belong to a pattern of arrogant unilateralism by western liberal leadership. Perhaps this past Lambeth Conference has modified her perspective and policy. If so, then her visit to Georgia would be a good time and place to make this public.

The Rev'd Gavin G. Dunbar

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