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WHERE WE STAND: A STATEMENT BY THE CLERGY, WARDENS, AND VESTRY OF SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH IN SAVANNAH

This statement was adopted without dissent on August 24th, the Feast of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, by the Wardens and Vestry of Saint John's Church, together with the Clergy. It is not a declaration of war, a line drawn in the sand, or a step towards secession. Amid the confusions and ambiguities of the Episcopal Church, especially those generated at General Convention in Anaheim this summer, it is an attempt to declare with clarity and honesty what we consider our witness to Christ must be. Please feel free to bring your comments or questions to the Clergy or to members of the Vestry (listed on page 2).

Where do we as Episcopalians stand? Our Christian heritage and constitution commit us to uphold the historic Faith taught by the Word of God written in Holy Scripture and set forth for us in the Book of Common Prayer. It is this fundamental commitment to our Lord, to one another, and to our partner churches in the Anglican Communion, that defines us as Episcopalians and unites us with seventy-seven million Anglican Christians world-wide.

Since the 1970's, the national leadership of the Episcopal Church, through the actions of its General Convention, has repeatedly undermined and violated this fundamental commitment in a series of unilateral decisions. Thereby they have impaired, and even broken, communion and compromised our witness and worship.

We are reluctant to speak out in a way that may cause hurt or embarrassment to anyone, for we are committed to "receive one another, as Christ also received us" (Romans 15:7). We all stand under the judgment of God; we all depend upon his grace and mercy in Christ. That is why we welcome all who come to worship with us in sincere repentance, faith, and charity. Nonetheless, the integrity of our witness requires that we speak out against the actions of General Convention 2009.

At that Convention, two resolutions were passed: D025, which opens the door to the ordination of persons living in same-sex partnerships; and C056, which permits the blessing of sexual partnerships outside of marriage. We are not convinced by attempts to whitewash these resolutions as changing nothing. In passing them, General Convention has again violated its own constitution, further deepened the existing divisions within the Anglican Communion and further compromised the Church's witness to Christ.

St. John's will continue to stand where the vast majority of the world's Christians stand and where the Anglican Church has always stood.

Therefore we, the Clergy, Wardens, and Vestry of St. John's Church in Savannah:

1. reaffirm our commitment to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as set forth in the Word of God, written in the Holy Scripture, and received by this Church in the Book of Common Prayer (1662 and 1928);
2. reaffirm our commitment to uphold the sanctity of marriage, instituted by God as the union of a man and a woman;
3. reaffirm our commitment to observe "the proper constraints of the bonds of affection" within the Anglican Communion, including wholehearted observance of the moratoria on the blessing and ordination of persons in same-sex partnerships requested of us by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other Instruments of Unity in the Anglican Communion;
4. welcome the opportunities for strengthening our ties with the Communion set forth in the proposed Anglican Covenant;
5. deplore, and dissociate ourselves from, Resolutions C056 and D025 of General Convention 2009 as divisive of the Communion and destructive of the Christian Faith;
6. thank the Bishop of Georgia, the Rt. Rev. Henry I. Louttit, and the majority of the delegates of the Diocese of Georgia for voting against these resolutions; and
7. call upon the Presiding Bishop and the House of Bishops to renounce the license granted them by General Convention in these resolutions, and to work for their repeal, as the first step in the reform of the Episcopal Church in accord with its constitution's commitment to historic and Biblical Faith and Order.

Explanatory Notes

Para 2. The text of these resolutions may be read at:

<http://gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/>

Clause 3. The phrase in quotation marks is from the Windsor Report, and refers to the limits on the autonomy of action by national churches in the Communion. The "moratoria" are those requested by the "Instruments of Unity" (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting, as well as the Lambeth Conference) as necessary conditions for restoring the broken unity of the Communion.

Clause 4. The "Anglican Covenant" is a proposal to strengthen the ties of unity in the Communion. Its current "Ridley-Cambridge" draft may be read at:

www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/ridley_cambridge/intro_text.cfm

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