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## *Sharing the Experience*

**From the Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip and Deputy to General Convention  
The Tri-Annual Episcopal Church General Convention  
June 13-21 in Columbus, Ohio**

21 June 2006

The Episcopal Church Needs Mercy

"Show us your mercy, Lord; and grant us your salvation." I plead this morning for mercy, mercy from our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion, from within our own Episcopal Church, and from the world itself that is waiting and watching for salvation.

Have mercy on us as the Episcopal Church clings to two different, and perhaps competing, truths.

One truth is that we commit ourselves to this evolving and sacred mystery that is the Anglican Communion. We are Anglicans and proud of it. We earnestly desire the highest degree of communion possible with other Anglicans. We want to walk together with folks who share our common heritage (and with Christians everywhere, for that matter).

The second truth, just as urgent for many of us, is the truth of blessed same-sex unions among our faithful local communities. We have witnessed some of that blessed grace on the very floor of convention, and many of us believe that God can call such leadership to the episcopate.

How, and where, can these truths be expressed together in a coherent way?

I believe there is such a place, a place described in Psalm 85, where "mercy and truth meet together, where righteousness and peace kiss each other." Let us cling to that place.

I believe we can go forward in the name of mercy and truth, and with deep, deep respect for the right and for the left in this church. The Episcopal Church walks in the Spirit when we do not discard the right and when we do not abandon the left.

The Episcopal Church is not the middle way. The Episcopal Church is the comprehensive way, which includes fully the right and the left. Mercy and truth can meet together. It will be a miracle, yes, and I believe in miracles.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip  
Atlanta, Georgia

19 June 2006

The Election of Katharine Jefferts Schori is an Incarnational Response to the Windsor Report

A special committee of convention has been working mightily and faithfully to agree on a Windsor Report response they might recommend to us. They have prayed and struggled fervently. They join many, many others, around the world praying and struggling, too. The Episcopal Church is committed to two different realities: commitment to the Anglican Communion, and commitment to the full membership of gays and lesbians in the church.

However, as the world -and the press- awaits the careful crafting of the Episcopal Church's response to the Windsor Report, the Episcopal Church delivers not words, but a person. The election of Katharine Jefferts Schori as presiding bishop represents a different sort of response to Windsor, and it will probably be far more powerful than any document we adopt. When she is consecrated, the Episcopal Church will be represented by a woman, when just over thirty years ago women were not even allowed to be ordained priests. Only two other members of Anglican Communion churches (Canada and New Zealand) have women bishops.

Thus, the Episcopal Church is choosing to respond incarnationally, with flesh, as is proper for any church who is part of the Anglican Communion. And the Episcopal Church is responding in a way that is faithful to our local expressions of Christian faith. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory famously advised the first Archbishop of Canterbury not to impose upon the new church in England customs which were unfamiliar to them: "Choose, therefore, from every Church those things that are pious, religious, and upright," That remark set the tone for local respect.

The Anglican tradition of Christianity takes flesh seriously, and it takes local expression seriously. We are an incarnational church that respects local custom and order. Of course, we take words and doctrine and creed seriously, too. But we find our greatest authority in the Word made flesh, Jesus our Lord. We believe that God became flesh in Jesus Christ, and we believe that God continues to become flesh, in a correlative way, in men and women today.

The Episcopal Church formally realized thirty years ago our church could ordain women as priests and bishops. The Lambeth Conference of 1988 stated that "each province respect the decision and attitudes of other provinces in the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate." The Windsor Report's rather incomplete summary of the women's ordination process yet relies on that Lambeth statement. Today, the Episcopal Church benefits from the ordination and consecration of women, and we will benefit from the person of Katharine Jefferts Schori as our next presiding bishop.

June 13

What Would it Take for Convention to be a Success?

Grace and greetings to you from Columbus, Ohio! By the time many of you read this, several important votes may have already occurred at the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church. However, I am writing these remarks on Tuesday morning, the day that opens our formal convention.

"Years from now, if you were to be characterizing this 75th General Convention as wonderfully successful, what would you say happened?"

That was the question many General Convention deputies were asked as we sat in random tables of ten, most of us with people we did not know. We were engaged in opening "conversations," ways to share our lives and stories before formal business began.

For me to call this Convention a success is to believe that God has poured his spirit out upon this community.

This Convention would be a success if we could say, afterwards, that no one person emerged as a hero, no one faction won the day, and no one vote determined everything. Rather, each of us went about our days with deep faithfulness, loyalty to our tasks, and commitment to the gospel as we understand it.

Of course, we do have different tasks here. I am amazed at all the busy-ness. Convention resembles some sort of an ant colony, with every ant doing something rather important, but no ant doing exactly the same thing at the same time. Here at Convention, some are writing new resolutions, others are hanging out in the exhibit space, many are renewing friendships, some are testifying at open committee hearings, some are wandering around lost, others are catching up with a nap, some are praying, others are rehearsing music. Some are worried about one resolution; others have never heard of it. I am worried about how to properly file my own committee's motion.

This Convention would be a success if everyone remained faithful to their calling, as God has directed them. I realize that some of our understandings of that faithfulness are in disagreement. I realize that some of our tasks seem at cross-purposes.

But I do not believe that such disagreements are stronger than the Spirit of God. I believe God honors commitment to faith and love. If every individual here can remain focused and faithful, even if that puts us in occasional disagreement with friends for a time, then I believe Convention will be successful.

What will make this General Convention "successful" will be the same thing that makes any event in our lives successful. It is the same thing that makes any life of ours successful. It is not success that we are focusing on. We are to be focusing on the unity of God and the grace of the gospel. Can we be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we know it? The outpouring of God's spirit that arrives -not because we try to force it"but because it simply bubbles up during our common faithfulness.

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