

August 16, 2005

The Rt. Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, D.D.
Bishop of Florida
325 Market Street
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Dear Bishop Howard,

Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thank you for your timely, thoughtful and thorough response to our initial request in June for adequate alternative episcopal oversight. We also appreciate your request for the prayers of the people of our diocese for all of us as we move forward. With you, we feel heartache for the crisis we face, not only in the diocese but in the larger Anglican Communion.

While disappointed that you did not grant our request, we are grateful for your recognition that we are seeking to act together as two missions and four parishes. We understand that you believe we in “the six congregations have ignored an important avenue for reconciliation,” (your letter, p. 17) and we are together in being open to considering other forms of oversight with you.

Because we fear that your letter may imply some risk of action against the mission congregations and their vicars, we have felt it necessary to apply to the Panel of Reference for protection. We would prefer to work out a solution locally, and will rescind our application if that can be accomplished.

We plan to respond in greater detail to your letter in the future. For immediate purposes of clarification, let us share the following. We have all given to the diocese of Florida financially and in terms of significant service in mutual ministry since 2003. We are simply giving directly to shared diocesan ministries instead of pledging to the diocesan budget. We are concerned that your statement that three of the parishes “have failed to give any monetary support to the mission and ministry of the diocese since 2003” could be misconstrued. For example, two parishes alone have given well over \$120,000 to diocesan ministry since 2003, once you allowed us to do so.

As we made clear in our June letter, our goal is temporary oversight until hopefully the larger Anglican Communion reconciles with a truly repentant ECUSA. We have included our June letter below for reference. To use your language, we are indeed seeking a “time out” or a separation, not a “divorce” (p.16). We likewise do not intend to be a diocese within the diocese (p.5).

We look forward to meeting with you soon to find ways we can move forward which are respectful of your ministry and our diocese for the sake of Christ.

Sincerely in Christ,

The Rev. Neil G. Lebhar
Rector, Church of the Redeemer

William Shroeder, IV
Sr. Warden, Church of the
Redeemer, for the Vestry

The Rev. Samuel Pascoe
Rector, Grace Church

Thomas McKeithen
Sr. Warden, Grace Church,
for the Vestry

The Rev. David Sandifer
Vicar, Calvary Church

Elizabeth Collins
Sr. Warden, Calvary Church,
for the Mission Board

The Rev. James K. McCaslin
Rector, All Souls Church

The Hon. L. Haldane Taylor
Sr. Warden, All Souls Church,
for the Vestry

The Rev. James R. Needham
Vicar, St. Luke's Community of Life

Mary Leffler,
Sr. Warden, St. Luke's
Community of Life, for the
Mission Board

The Rev. Charles Alexander Farmer
Rector, St. Michael's Church

Emily Wilson
Sr. Warden, St. Michael's
Church, for the Vestry