

PRESS RELEASE

WIDENING CHASM IN WORLD'S THIRD LARGEST CHRISTIAN BODY REACHES SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

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Elm Grove, December 31, 2008: The accelerating gap between traditionalists and liberals in Anglicanism, the world's third largest Christian expression, has reached southeastern Wisconsin. St. Edmund's Episcopal Church, Elm Grove, a congregational founded in 1874 in Milwaukee that re-established itself in Waukesha County in 1962, voted overwhelmingly to move its canonical jurisdiction from the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee to the Convocation of North American Anglicans based in Herndon, Virginia. CANA (the Convocation of North American Anglicans) forms the core of the new traditionalist Province of the Anglican

Communion announced earlier this month at an international conference held in Wheaton, Illinois led by the Rt. Rev. Robert Duncan, Bishop of Pittsburgh, whose diocese removed itself from the Episcopal Church in October. The Wisconsin congregation is following the example of approximately 100 Episcopal parishes and four entire dioceses that have removed their allegiance during the past two years from an ecclesiastical body that they view as increasingly hostile to orthodox, traditional Christian belief and practice.

St. Edmund's is the first Episcopal parish in Wisconsin to take this step.

The difficult decision to make this lateral move within valid jurisdictions of the Anglican Communion was finalized after months of prayer and discussion at the parish in Elm Grove. The final Declaration, however, was signed by 75 of the 84 adult communicant members of the congregation. A spokesman for the parish noted that "our final decisions were made during the period of heavy snowfall and sub-zero temperatures and we have more communicants that have indicated they want to sign the Declaration. The standard operating procedure of the Episcopal Church when a parish or even a diocese changes jurisdiction is to claim that 'a small group of dissidents have chosen to leave the church.' This was their statement when the

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Diocese of Pittsburgh with 50,000 members voted overwhelming to depart. In St. Edmund's case, the decision to seek a haven in a jurisdiction that has an unwavering commitment to the authority of the Bible and the uniqueness of the Atonement of Jesus Christ as Savior was not just an absolute majority, it was practically unanimous."

In the formal letter to Bishop Steven Miller, Episcopal Bishop of Milwaukee (who only last month was quoted in the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel saying the new Anglican province in North American would have "no impact on the Diocese of Milwaukee"), the congregation of St. Edmund's made it very clear that their decision is not related to the consecration in 2003 of Gene Robinson, a gay activist, as the Suffragan Bishop of New Hampshire.

"We respectfully ask that our decisions not be skewed or misrepresented by anyone in the Diocesan Offices as a reaction to whatever staffing decisions have been, or will be, made in New Hampshire or any other diocese. Our crisis with the spirit and direction of the Episcopal Church

goes far beyond suffragan episcopal bedrooms in New England; we are contending for the "faith once delivered to the saints" and nothing less. We are defending the irrevocable stance on biblical authority and order firmly held by the vast majority of the world's Anglicans." *From the Letter to Bishop Miller, 29 December, 2008.*

Attached is a copy of the Declaration.

Attached is a copy of the letter to Bishop Miller.

Contrary to the portrayal in media sound bites, the issue amongst traditionalists is not the consecration of a gay bishop in New Hampshire. It is the authority of Holy Scripture and the uniqueness of Christ's Atonement.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God
unto salvation to everyone that believeth..." Romans 1:16*

In the following statement, the congregation of St. Edmund's Church is creating no exigencies, but simply acknowledging matters of fact. The conclusion, therefore, is the logical summation of existing realities rather than a declaration of innovation.

We believe that the canonical Holy Scriptures impart all things necessary for salvation. We believe that men fully inspired by God wrote the Bible and, therefore, in a unique and authoritative form, it is the Word of God. As the primary goal of biblical interpretation is to understand the attributes, mind, and actions of God (as much as this task is humanly possible), it should be undertaken with the utmost care, humility, and prayerful reliance upon Him. Exposition of Holy Scriptures begins from the perspective of the unchanging character of Almighty God, not current political, social, or economic perceptions. In these beliefs, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.^{1†}

We believe that the Bible gives us very clear, unchanging, and eternal instructions on moral and ethical behavior and that these biblical standards of morality and conduct should be maintained at all times and in all places. In this belief, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.²

We believe that the primary mission of the Church is to fulfill the Savior's commission to His Apostles: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."³ In this belief, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.⁴

¹ General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 417-418.

[†]The Episcopal Church as referenced is represented locally by the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

² General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 615f.

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 704.

³ St. Matthew 28:19.

We believe that role of the Church in the world is to reconcile men to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In this belief, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.⁵

We believe that as "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity is the sole Mediator between God and man.⁶ In this belief, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.⁷

We believe that the focus of Christian worship is Almighty God and, consistent with His holiness and sovereignty, He expects His people to worship Him in majesty and dignity. In this belief, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.⁸

We believe in the communion of saints. Physical, structural unity on earth must never be exalted over the invisible and spiritual union of contemporary Christians with the faith and practice of the saints and martyrs who, having given a true testimony here on earth, now worship before the Throne of God. We believe that we are responsible for maintaining the Faith for the whole people

⁴ General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 522-524.

⁵ General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 265f.

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 522-524.

⁶ St. John 14:6,

⁷ Resolution D058, *General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007),

⁸ *Episcopal News*, 060506-1-A, June 5, 2006

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 682.

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 482.

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 426-427

of God, for the entire experience of the revealed truth of the Christian Church. In these beliefs, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.⁹

We believe that for the Church to meet the distinguishing criteria of the Apostle's and Nicene Creed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic it must maintain the pure teaching of God's Word,¹⁰ the proper administration of the Sacraments,¹¹ and Biblical morality and Order.¹² In this belief, the Episcopal Church has departed from us.¹³

Furthermore,

We find that the ordination of women to Holy Orders is a matter of dispute in which the Episcopal Church places itself in opposition to the overwhelming majority of the world's Christians. We believe that, at the very least, the conscientious objections of faithful Christians should not be subject to the compulsory dictates of those sworn to "be merciful to all."¹⁴

We find that the leadership of the Episcopal Church has become increasing intolerant and abusive toward conservative, biblical moral positions.¹⁵

⁹ General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), p. 351.

¹⁰ John 8:31, 47; 14:23; Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:4; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 9-11

¹¹ 1 Cor. 10:14-17, 21; 11:23-30 Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25-26; Gal. 3:27; Exod. 12:48; Gen. 34:14; 1 Cor. 10:21; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21;

¹² Matthew 18:17; Acts 20:28-31a; Rom. 16:17-18a; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13; 14:33, 40; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 5:6, 11; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; 5:20; Titus 1:10-11; 3:10; Rev. 2:14-16a; 2:20

¹³ Note: Per other cited sources, certainly erred on the first and third and with debasement of the sanctity of ministry given rise to serious questions about the second.

¹⁴ Service for the Consecration of a Bishop, Book of Common Prayer, 1979, p. 518

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 343.

¹⁵ Executive Council Minutes, Jan. 9-12, 2006, Des Moines, IA, pp. 4-5.

General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 690-691.

Executive Council Minutes, Jun. 11-14, 2004, Burlington, VT, pp. 20-21

We find that orthodox praxis and faith are increasingly marginalized and that the leadership of the Episcopal Church is rapidly moving to further restrict or abolish the remaining testimony of Christian orthodoxy.¹⁶

We do not acknowledge the departure of the Episcopal Church from St. Edmund's Church in anger, but in grief. Like the bride of an abusive and unfaithful spouse, for our own safety and the secure future of our children, we must find shelter outside of this unhappy house.

As stated clearly by St. Paul "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" we are compelled by the dictates of Holy Scripture and the testimony of the Church throughout the ages to acknowledge that, having been abandoned by the Episcopal Church, we cannot seek reunion with it in its present state.¹⁷ Following the Episcopal Church's example when departing the Diocese of London (1784) we will seek a haven in a lateral, orthodox branch of the Anglican Communion.

We grieve for the contemporary state of the Episcopal Church "for they [have] exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."¹⁸ May Almighty God grant His mercy to us all.

December 16 in the Year of Our Lord, 2008

¹⁶ Ibid.

Title IV Task Force proposes revisions to canons on ecclesiastical discipline, *Episcopal Life*, September 8, 2008

¹⁷ I Corinthians 6:14

¹⁸ Romans 1:25.

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December 29, 2008

The Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Archbishop and Martyr

The Rt. Rev. Steven Miller

804 E Juneau Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Bishop Miller:

Eight hundred thirty-eight years ago this evening, Thomas à Becket gave his life defending the integrity of the Faith. His unwavering defiance of powerful forces intent upon polluting the purity of the Church by forging an unholy amalgam of contemporary political and social mores, compliant clergy, and murky theology sparked murderous hatred in the hearts of his adversaries. In an act of poetic tragedy, his assassins struck him down while he prayed the Vespers Service in Canterbury Cathedral's Chapel of St. Stephen, Deacon and First Christian Martyr. That late December afternoon St. Thomas was doing what he had always done – kneeling before the Throne of Grace praying for his king, his people, and those lost in spiritual darkness.

Anglicanism, as the expressed faith of the English people and their spiritual heirs, continued to do "what had always been done"¹⁹ for the next 800 years: "defend the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). For 178 years this defense was embodied in the United States by the Protestant Episcopal Church. For the last thirty years, however, if St. Thomas à Becket lived amongst us, he would probably spend a great deal of time at the altar looking over his shoulder.

By any objective paradigm of continuity, the Episcopal Church has ceased to be the Episcopal Church. While the leadership of the truncated body may claim the name, they certainly have no moral right to lay claim to the Faith as proclaimed and lived by such men of spiritual stature as Samuel Seabury, Philander Chase, William Augustus Muhlenberg, and James DeKoven.

People of Faith are not leaving the Episcopal Church; the Episcopal Church has left them.

The people of St. Edmund's Church, Elm Grove, find ourselves in an untenable position. Our insistence upon the supreme authority of Holy Scripture and the clear meaning of the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds as standards of doctrine, our unwavering belief in timeless standards of biblical morality that neither bend nor fold before contemporary trends or fashions, and our firm assurance that the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, God Incarnate,

¹⁹ In the Canon of St. Vincent of Lérins: "Magnopere curandum est ut id teneatur quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est"."

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is the sole means of salvation place us *in step* with centuries of Anglicanism, but clearly *out of step* with those who claim to lead the Episcopal Church in this first decade of the 21st century. Attached to this letter you will find a simple Declaration signed by seventy-three (73) of the eighty-four communicant members of St. Edmund's Church elucidating our position.

We respectfully ask that our decisions not be skewed or misrepresented by anyone in the Diocesan Offices as a reaction to whatever staffing decisions have been, or will be, made in New Hampshire or any other diocese. Our crisis with the spirit and direction of the Episcopal Church goes far beyond suffragan episcopal bedrooms in New England; we are contending for the "faith once delivered to the saints" and nothing less. We are defending the irrevocable stance on biblical authority and order firmly held by the vast majority of the world's Anglicans.

We have sought and received solace and a spiritual haven in the Convocation of Anglicans in North America; the canonical North American outreach of the Church of Nigeria (Anglicanism's largest body of believers). Our decision is neither novel nor unique. In both Europe and the Middle East, Episcopal parishes under the auspices of their dioceses share geographical space with Church of England parishes serving their dioceses. As you are well aware, the distance between the American Cathedral in Paris and St. George's Church of England Parish is less than ten blocks. While both are full-fledged members of the Anglican Communion, each reports to a different bishop in a different jurisdiction while sharing the same Parisian *arrondissement*. There is unassailable precedence rather than innovation, therefore, in a parish 13.3 miles from your cathedral praying, celebrating, worshipping, and reaching out to the wider community from the security of an orthodox Anglican jurisdiction.

While your actions towards us have demonstrated callow disrespect for our faithfulness, good will, integrity and the ability of a congregation of thinking adults to make fully informed decisions, we wish the Diocese of Milwaukee no ill will. For over a century, the Diocese was a bastion of godly witness to southeastern Wisconsin and we, like all people fortunate enough to have a heritage in this tradition, owe past generations in this Diocese a debt of gratitude.

The Corporation of St. Edmund's Church continues intact. No action on our part may be construed by any person or persons as a dissolution, devolvement, abolition, or alienation of St. Edmund's Church and all assets, properties, chattel, and resources of St. Edmund's Church remain those of St. Edmund's Church.

May Almighty God lead the Diocese of Milwaukee and pour His abundant grace upon its people.