



MINUTES

104th Annual Council of the Diocese of Atlanta

Atlanta, Georgia, November 12 and 13, 2010

The 104th Annual Council met in Child Hall at the Cathedral of Saint Philip the Deacon, Atlanta, Georgia, on November 12 and 13, 2010. The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander, the Ninth Bishop Diocesan, was in the Chair. The Assistant Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Keith B. Whitmore, was present. The Cathedral (The Very Rev. Samuel Candler, Dean) was the host.

FIRST DAY

Friday, November 12, 2010

Registration of Clergy Members and Lay Delegates began at 8:30.a.m.

Call to order, quorum call and organization for business

Following a hymn and prayer, The Presiding Officer, Bishop Diocesan Alexander, called the Council to order at 10:00 a.m. The Secretary, the Rev. Herschel R. Atkinson, announced that a quorum was present, based on registrations. The Council was organized for business.

Admission of Church of the Common Ground to Council

On motion by Secretary Atkinson and seconded, the Council admitted the Church of the Common Ground, Atlanta, Georgia, as a worshipping community with one Lay Delegate to this Council.

Minutes of preceding Annual Council

The Council unanimously approved the minutes of the preceding 103rd Annual Council as published on the diocesan web site and dispensed with the reading of them. The Bishop announced that printed copies could be obtained from the Secretary.

Agenda adopted

The Council unanimously adopted the agenda as printed and distributed.

Announcements and Introductions

Mr. Stan Meiburg, Chair of The Diocesan Commission on Environmental Stewardship, announced the Commission is sponsoring this Council.

The Very Rev. Samuel Candler, Dean of the Cathedral, welcomed the Council.

Mrs. Janet Patterson, Chair of Annual Council Committee, welcomed the Council.

The Bishop recognized first-time Lay Delegates and Clergy Members to the Council.

The Bishops introduced the deans of the 10 Convocations:

Chattahoochee Valley, Douglas Hahn, East Atlanta, W. McCord Thigpen III;

Macon, S. Chadwick Vaughn; Marietta, Robert Wood; Mid-Atlanta, Robert Wright; North Atlanta, Eddie Ard; Northeast Metro, Kent Branstetter; Northeast Georgia, Douglas Dailey; Northwest Georgia, Janice Bracken Wright; Southwest Atlanta, Hazel Glover.

The Bishop introduced the Rt. Rev. Don A. Wimberly, Retired Bishop Diocesan of Texas, who now lives in Roswell.

The Bishop introduced Dr. Bonnie Anderson, the President of the House of Deputies of the General Convention.

The Bishop introduced the Rt. Rev. Keith B. Whitmore, Assistant Bishop of Atlanta; and officers of the Council, the Rev. Herschel Atkinson, Secretary; the Rev. Timothy Graham, Assistant Secretary; Mrs. Marianne Joris, Recording Secretary; Richard Perry, Esq., Parliamentarian and Chancellor of the Diocese; Thomas Christopher, Esq., Vice Chancellor of the Diocese; and the Rev. Hazel Glover, Dispatch of Business.

The Rev. Glover instructed the Council concerning conduct of its business.

Introduction of Resolutions and their referral to legislative committees

The Bishop introduced the following pre-filed resolutions and referred them to the legislative committees shown:

C10-1: Amend Diocesan Canons 42 and 44-Ecclesiastical Discipline, to Constitution and Canons

C10-2: Amend Constitution Article 2-Campus Ministries (first reading), to Constitution and Canons

R10-1: Health Insurance Coverage, to Special Policy and Benefits

R10-2: Extend Task Force on Sex Trafficking, to Sex Trafficking Task Force

R10-3: Affirm Tithe as the Standard of Financial Giving, to Stewardship

R10-4: Expand Anti-Racism Training, to Commission on Education

R10-5: Research Parental Leave Policies, to Special Policy and Benefits

Elections

The Bishop appointed Mr. Karl Sachsenmaier as Chief Teller. Vergers from the Diocesan Verger Guild served as Assistant Tellers. The Rev. Canon Beth Knowlton led the Council in prayer.

Four ballots were taken for elections dispersed among other business. The results are herewith consolidated into a single narrative.

Pre-filed nominees for the offices listed below are as shown. The Bishop called for additional nominations. Unless indicated, there were no nominations from the floor.

Standing Committee, One Lay Member: Timothy Raasch, David Stooksbury.

Standing Committee, One Priest Member: Troy Beecham, Robert Certain, Harriette Simmons, W. McCord Thigpen.

General Convention, four Lay Deputies: John Andrews, Bruce Garner, Norma Givens, Bennie King, Janet Patterson, Gini Peterson, Arthur Villarreal, Angela Williamson

General Convention, four Clerical Deputies: Janice Bracken Wright, Samuel Candler, Douglas Hahn, (nominated from the floor), John Sewak Ray, Alicia Schuster Weltner, Michael Sullivan, W. McCord Thigpen, Robert Wood, Robert Wright

University of the South, one Clerical Governor: Sharon Hiers, Robert Wood

First Ballot

A ballot was taken for elections to the offices listed.

The Bishop announced the following persons, who were unopposed, were elected:

Mikell Camp and Conference Center, two Governors: Dawn Diedrich, Timothy Lytle
Appleton Family Ministries, two Governors: The Rev. Hal Weidman, Ms. Nell Fletcher, both
nominated from the floor

Results of the first ballot

The Bishop announced the following persons were elected to the offices shown.

Standing Committee Lay Member: Timothy Raasch

General Convention Lay Deputy, in order of votes received: Norma Givens, Angela Williamson, John Andrews, Arthur Villarreal

General Convention Clerical Deputy, in order of votes received: Robert Wright, Janice Bracken Wright, Samuel Candler, Alicia Schuster Weltner

University of the South Clerical Trustee: Sharon Hiers

Second ballot

A second ballot was taken for Standing Committee Priest Member from between Robert Certain and W. McCord Thigpen

A second ballot was taken for Alternate Deputies to General Convention. The Bishop announced the following persons had been elected as Alternate Deputies in each order because the number of remaining nominees equaled the number of vacancies. He directed that the votes on this and any other ballots be for only one of the nominees because the Alternate Deputies are reported to the General Convention Office in the order in which votes are received.

General Convention four Alternate Lay Deputies: Bruce Garner, Bennie King, Janet Patterson, Gini Peterson

General Convention four Alternate Clerical Deputies: John Sewak Ray, W. McCord Thigpen, Robert Wood, Douglas Hahn

Results of the second ballot

The Bishop announced these elections:

Standing Committee Priest Member: W. McCord Thigpen

General Convention Alternate Lay Deputy: Bennie King as the fourth Alternate Lay Deputy

Third ballot and fourth ballot

The third ballot and the fourth ballot were taken for Alternate Deputies to General Convention in both orders. The result of the third ballot was inconclusive. The nominees on both ballots were:

General Convention Alternate Lay Deputy: Bruce Garner, Janet Patterson, Gini Peterson

General Convention Alternate Clergy Deputy: Douglas Hahn, John Sewak Ray,
W. McCord Thigpen, Robert Wood,

Results of the fourth ballot

The Bishop announced the Alternate Deputies to General Convention were elected in the order of number of votes received as follows.

General Convention Alternate Lay Deputies: Janet Patterson, Bruce Garner, Gini Peterson, Bennie King (previously elected).

General Convention Alternate Clergy Deputies: W. McCord Thigpen, Robert Wood,
John Sewak Ray, Douglas Hahn

Announcement of Clergy Changes

The Bishop announced the following clergy changes since the preceding Council:

New Clergy Members from the dioceses shown: Mary R. Demmler (VA), St. Matthias', Toccoa; Philip C. Linder (Upper SC), awaiting call; Walter J. Lowe (Indianapolis), Candler School of Theology, Atlanta; Patricia D. Stevens, (Upper SC), awaiting call; Brian C. Sullivan (Western NC), St. Benedict's, Smyrna; George Wilde, (Northern IN), Trinity, Columbus; George S. Yandell (West TN), Holy Family, Jasper

Retired Clergy: John Bolton, Our Saviour, Atlanta; William T. Deneke, Holy Trinity, Decatur; Karen P. Evans, St. James', Marietta; Deacon Charles Gearing, Diocesan Archdeacon
Clergy who died: Herbert J. Beadle Jr., Emmett Jarrett, Ralph O. Marsh, Martha J. Mercure, Thomas E. Moody

Priests ordained: Timothy H. Black, Holy Innocents', Atlanta; Joseph K. Dunagan, St. Christopher's, Perry; Kimberly S. Jackson, Absalom Jones Center, Atlanta; James C. Pappas III, Diocese of Tennessee; Elizabeth L. Schellingerhoudt, St. Luke's, Atlanta; Daron J. Vroon, St. Columba's, Johns Creek

Priests who returned to the Diocese from work in other dioceses: Amanda Brady, Chaplain, Emory University, and Joan Pritcher, Interim Rector, Holy Trinity, Decatur.

Continuation of the Diocesan Review Board of the Diocese

The Bishop announced the following elected members will continue in office until June 30th, 2011, pursuant to a resolution of the 103rd Annual Council:

The Rev. Mary Johnson, The Rev. John McCard, The Rev. Ruth Cummings, Nedra Wick, Esq., Ms. Ruth Heppler

Election of the Disciplinary Board of the Diocese

The Bishop nominated and the Council elected the following members of the Disciplinary Board of the Diocese of Atlanta to serve from July 1, 2011 to December 31 of the years shown:

The Rev. Ruth Cummings, 2011, Ms. Sherry Wade, 2011;
The Rev. Barry Griffin, 2012; Mr. Ramsey Myers, 2012;
Deacon Edward Fuller, 2013; Ms. Jean Stafford, 2013;
The Rev. Carolynne Williams, 2014; Ms. Dawn Diedrich, 2014;
The Rev. Robert Salamone, 2015

Election of Diocesan Officers

The Bishop nominated and the Council elected the following Officers of the Diocese:

Chancellor, Richard Perry, Esq.; Vice Chancellor, Thomas Christopher, Esq.; Secretary, the Rev. Herschel Atkinson; Assistant Secretary, the Rev. Timothy Graham; Treasurer, Mr. Bennie King

Committee Appointments

The Bishop appointed the members of these committees;

Memorials and Courtesy Resolutions: The Rev. John Bolton (chair), The Rev. Anne Elizabeth Swiedler, The Rev. Wallace Marsh, Ms. Judy Melton, Mr. Douglas Keith.

Bishop's Address: The Rev. Pat Grace, the Rev. Benno Pattison, the Rev. Mary Erickson, Ms. Ann Canipe, Mr. W.C. Wyatt

Reports

The Council received reports on the following matters by the persons shown.

Refugee Resettlement: Mr. Tom Van Laningham

Episcopal Charities Foundation Board: Ms. Ginny Heckel, Chair

University of the South: The Rev. C. Dean Taylor, Trustee

Rainbow Village: Ms. Suzie Whitmore. A video presentation on the Village was shown.

Commission on Environmental Stewardship: Mr. Stan Meiburg, Chair

Commission on AIDS: Mr. Bruce Garner, Chair

Canon 20 Review Committee: The Rev. Douglas Dailey, Chair

Episcopal Church Women: Ms. Diane Burrows, President

The Rev. Canon Beth Knowlton led noonday prayers.

The Council was in recess for lunch from 12:01 to 1:01 p.m.

Honoring Mrs. Lueta Bailey

The Bishop introduced Dr. Bonnie Anderson, President of the House of Deputies of the General Convention. Dr. Anderson paid tribute to Mrs. Lueta Bailey, St. George's, Griffin, on the fortieth anniversary of her seating as a Lay Deputy to General Convention. Mrs. Bailey, then President of the Triennial Meeting of the Women of the Church (now ECW), was the first woman to address both Houses of the General Convention in 1967 when they were considering authorizing women as Lay Deputies. Mrs. Bailey was among the first women seated as lay deputies at 1970. She recalled the events of both Conventions. Dr. Anderson presented her with a crystal glass bowl. The Council responded with a rousing round of applause.

Bishop's Address

The Bishop addressed the Council. Text of the address is attached and is made a part of these minutes.*

Milestone Parish Anniversaries

The Bishop announced the following parish major anniversaries: Christ Church, Macon, 185th; St. Paul's, Atlanta, 130th; St. Christopher's, Perry, 50th; Trinity, Columbus, 175th; Ascension, Cartersville, 175th of consecration of the church.

Report of the Treasurer and Finance Committee

Treasurer: Mr. Bennie King reported on the financial status of the diocese, referring to the materials given to persons at the Council.

Finance Committee: Mr. Steve Burnett, Chair, introduced the proposed draft budget for 2011, previously distributed. The Bishop referred the proposed draft to the Finance Legislative Committee for consideration and thereafter to the Diocese Executive Board for final consideration and adoption.

A film on Christ Church, Norcross, and its ministry was shown.

Milestone Anniversaries of Priests' Ordinations

The Bishop announced these major anniversaries of ordination of priests:

Twenty-five years; Kent Branstetter, Richard Callaway, Donna Gafford, David Galloway, James Hamner, Barbara Patterson, Isaias Rodriguez, Bernard Rosser

Forty years: Frank Balz, W. Thomas Martin, Stanley McGraw, David Moss, John Templeton, James Yeary

Fifty years: John Hall, Donald Harrison, Joseph Herring, Sipo Mzimela, Robert Rickard, Herbert Wentz

Reports

Emmaus House: The Rev. Claiborne Jones, Director

Discussion of Haiti Meeting: The Rev. Brian Sullivan announced an open meeting this evening.

Episcopal Relief and Development: Ms. Debbie Betsill, diocesan ER-D coordinator

Announcements and adjournment

After announcements by the Rev. Hazel Glover, Dispatch of Business, and Mrs. Janet Patterson, Chair of Annual Council Committee, the Bishop adjourned the Council at 3:17 p.m. until 9:00 a.m., Saturday, November 13.

Legislative committees met after adjournment to consider matters referred to them. Bishop Alexander celebrated the Council Eucharist in the Cathedral at 5:00 p.m. Dr. Bonnie Anderson preached.

SECOND DAY

November 13, 2010

The Bishop convened the Council at 9:01 a.m.

The Bishop noted that the 2009 General Convention has established full communion with the Moravian Church. He led the Council in singing a Moravian hymn, "Children of the Heavenly Father."

Reports

Institute for Theological Education and Ministry. Ms. Nancy Armstrong and Ms. Linda Scott reported on its work. The Rev. Don Tate presented certificates to the Certified Christian Educators who had graduated from this program.

Holy Comforter, Atlanta: The Rev. Michael Tanner, Vicar, reported on its work and offered thanks for the support offered and for volunteers' services. The Council was shown a video presentation on this ministry.

Church of the Common Ground, Atlanta; The Rev. Robert Book, Vicar, told the history of this church without walls that began four-and-a-half years ago in downtown Atlanta. About 45 people worship in Woodruff Park on Sunday afternoons.

Chattahoochee Valley Ministry: Ms. Vicky Partin reported on this ministry.

Legislative Committee Reports

Finance Committee: Mr. Steve Burnett, Chair, reported the Committee unanimously approved to move the proposed draft budget as presented and that the Executive Board adopt it at its December 2010 meeting.

Council approved sending the draft to Executive Board for action

Mr. Bennie King, Treasurer, presented an outline of new guidelines regarding annual audits. The Finance Committee task force has developed new guidelines that will be published later.

Stewardship: The Rev. Brent Owens, Chair, recommended adoption of Resolution R10-3.

Affirm the Tithe as the Standard of Giving

Resolved, that the 104th Council of the Diocese of Atlanta affirm the tithing as the standard of financial giving.

The Council voted on the recommendation.

**Recommendation adopted
Resolution R10-3 adopted**

Constitution and Canons: Richard Perry, Esq., Chair, recommended adoption of Resolution C10-1 with amendment to correct a typographical error in the numbering of one canon.

C10-1a

Amend Canons 42 and 44

Resolved, that Canon 44 - Of the Diocesan Review Committee - of the canons of the Diocese of Atlanta, be rescinded *in toto* effective July 1st, 2011; and be it further

Resolved, that Canon ~~43~~ 42 - Of the Ecclesiastical Court and of Ecclesiastical Discipline - of the Canons of the Diocese of Atlanta be revised *in toto* effective July 1st, 2011, to read as follows:

Canon 42-Of Ecclesiastical Discipline

Section 1. Applicability. Except as otherwise implemented by this Canon, all matters of Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Diocese of Atlanta, including appointment of officials and composition of boards and panels by whatever name, shall be governed by the provisions of Title IV-Ecclesiastical Discipline-of the Canons of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, hereafter, "Title ~~IV~~".

Section 2 Disciplinary Board

(a). Composition. There is hereby established a court to be known as The Disciplinary Board of the Diocese of Atlanta, hereafter, "Board" and "Diocese", comprising five priests or deacons and four lay persons. All priests or deacons on the Board must be canonically resident in the Diocese but need not be domiciled in the Diocese. All lay persons on the Board must be Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing of a congregation in the Diocese but need not be domiciled in the Diocese. All Members of the Board must be at least 24 years of age. A priest or deacon shall serve for five years, and a lay member shall serve for four years.

(b). Ineligibility. The following persons shall be ineligible for election or continued service on the Board: (1) a Member of the Standing Committee; (2) a Member of the Board elected to the Standing Committee; (3) a Member who has served two consecutive full terms of office unless one year has elapsed since the end of the Member's second term.

(c). Elections. At each Diocesan Annual Council the Bishop Diocesan shall nominate and the Council shall elect one priest or deacon to serve five years and one lay person to serve four years. The terms of office of elected Members shall begin on January 1st of the year following election.

(d). Vacancies. The President of the Board shall declare when a vacancy in the Board occurs and shall so notify the Bishop Diocesan. In the event of a vacancy not the result of a challenge, within two months after such notification the Bishop Diocesan shall appoint with the advice and consent of the Executive Board an eligible replacement of the same order to serve the remaining portion of the replaced Member's term. The term of office of Members appointed to fill a vacancy not the result of a challenge shall begin on the adjournment of the Executive Board meeting that consented to their appointment. If the vacancy is the result of a challenge, the Bishop Diocesan shall appoint in like manner a replacement Board Member of the same order who shall serve only for proceedings for which the elected Board Member is not serving as a result of the challenge. The Bishop Diocesan may remove a Board Member whenever in the judgment of the Bishop the best interests of the Diocese would be served thereby. This action shall be taken with ratification by the Executive Board or the Diocesan Council.

(e). Transitional Provisions. At the Council at which this canon is adopted, the Bishop Diocesan shall nominate and the Council shall elect five priests or deacons and four lay persons to be Members of the Board effective July 1st, 2011. The Bishop shall state the length of term of each person nominated.

(f). President. Not later than two months after the Diocesan Council at which Board Members are elected, the Board shall elect, by a majority vote of all the Members, a Member of the Board as President to serve for one year. In the absence of an elected President or if the elected President is disqualified in a particular case, the Member of the Board with the longest period of continuous service who is not disqualified shall serve as President *pro tempore*.

(g.) Communications. The Board may confer by telephonic or other electronic means to elect the President of the Board and for other purely administrative matters as the President deems necessary. This method shall not be used when evidence may be taken or examined.

(h) Disqualification. In addition to the provisions for disqualification in Title IV, if any Member of a Conference Panel or Hearing Panel shall become aware of a conflict of interest or undue bias in a proceeding under Title IV, the Member shall immediately notify the President of the Board and request a replacement member of the Panel for the particular case in which the perceived conflict of interest or undue bias applies.

(i) Challenges. Respondent and the Church Attorney shall have the right to challenge any Member of a Panel for conflict of interest or undue bias by motion to the Panel for disqualification of the challenged Member. The Members of the Panel not the subjects of the challenge shall promptly consider the motion and determine whether the challenged Panel Member shall be disqualified in that proceeding. If a challenge of the entire Board is made, it shall be resolved by the Standing Committee.

Section 3. Officers. Officers shall be selected and shall perform the duties assigned them by Title IV, to include these appointed in accordance with this canon.

(a). Advisor. The Bishop Diocesan shall make provision for an Advisor for the complaining party and an Advisor for the Respondent. Advisors shall hold no other appointed or elected position provided by Title IV, and shall not include any person likely to be called as a witness in the proceeding.

(b). Church Attorney. The Bishop Diocesan, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, shall annually appoint one or more attorneys to serve as Church Attorney(s) who shall serve for one year. The appointment may be renewed. Vacancies shall be filled in like manner. The duties and eligibility for appointment of Church Attorneys are set forth in Title IV. The Church Attorney shall hold no other office listed in Title IV. The Bishop Diocesan may remove a Church Attorney from office, acting with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee.

(c). Intake Officer. The Bishop Diocesan shall appoint an Intake Officer or Officers from time to time who shall serve at the pleasure of the Bishop. The Bishop shall publish the name(s) and contact information of the Intake Officer(s) throughout the Diocese.

Section 4. Records. The Bishop Diocesan shall make provision for the permanent storage of all proceedings under Title IV at the Diocesan Office and the Archives of The Episcopal Church as prescribed in Title IV.

The Council voted on the recommendation.

**Recommendation adopted
Resolution C10-1a adopted**

Richard Perry, Esq., Chair, recommended adoption of Resolution C10-2, noting that it involves amending the Diocesan Constitution and therefore must be adopted at the next succeeding Council to become effective. He said the Diocesan Commission on Higher Education recommends adoption of this Constitution change.

Amend Article 2 of Constitution

Resolved, that The Constitution of the Diocese of Atlanta, Article 2, section 2, paragraph (d), be amended to read as follows:

(d) Also, in addition to the foregoing, each of the campus ministries of the Diocese of Atlanta certified to the Secretary by the Commission on Ministry in Higher Education *as having an organized and recognized ministry among students* ~~as receiving financial support from the Diocese~~ shall be represented at Diocesan Council by one *student Lay* Delegate with seat, voice, and vote.

The Council voted on the recommendation.

**Recommendation adopted
Resolution C10-2 adopted**

Alms at Eucharist: The Bishop reported the alms at the preceding evening's Eucharist were \$2,101.55. They will go to the Episcopal Relief and Development Foundation

Special Policy and Benefits Committee: The Rev. Robert Certain, Chair, presented Resolution R10-1 without recommendation from the Committee. He noted that the task force that designed the resolution had received no substantial response to its efforts to explain the resolution. The Task Force urges adoption of the resolution.

R10-1

Health Insurance Coverage

Resolved, in accordance with Resolution A177 adopted by the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church and with Title I, Canon 8 of the Episcopal Church, and no later than January 1, 2013

- The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta and all of its congregations shall participate in health insurance coverage administered by the Church Pension Group for all qualified employees not otherwise covered (those employed to work 1500 hours or more per year).
- Employees may opt out of Diocese of Atlanta medical coverage if they have health-care benefits through other approved sources (i.e. coverage under spouse's or domestic partner's insurance, former employer, Tricare, Medicare, etc.)
- As a minimum, qualified clergy and lay employees, on an equal basis, must be provided single medical coverage and access to expanded (i.e. household members, including domestic partners, dental insurance) coverage provided through the Diocese of Atlanta health plan. Cost sharing for insurance coverage must be the same percentage for all qualified employees.
- Schools, day care facilities and other congregational and diocesan institutions, whether or not they operate under a separate tax ID from the sponsoring institution, *are encouraged to* participate in the diocesan plan of the Church Medical Trust on the same basis as congregations, and *must* request a bid for services from the Church Medical Trust every time medical coverage is renewed; and be it further

Resolved, that the Bishop of Atlanta shall appoint a permanent committee to advise and assist congregations with understanding and achieving parity in medical coverage for their qualified employees.

The Council debated the resolution.

The Rev. David Probst moved to table the resolution until next year.

Motion to table defeated

Debate on R10-1 suspended

The Bishop announced that Dr. Bonnie Anderson must leave to catch a plane flight. He presented her with a Diocese of Atlanta blanket and a copy of the Centennial Book of the Diocese of Atlanta. Before leaving, Dr. Anderson expressed her thanks for the opportunity to meet with the Diocese and for its hospitality.

Debate on R10-1 resumed

The Rev. Greg Tallant, speaking for the required number of proponents, called for a vote by orders. A vote by show of cards by the Lay Delegates was inconclusive. The tellers polled the Lay Delegates. The yeas were 170, and the nays were 72. The resolution was adopted in the lay order. A vote by show of cards by the Clergy Members clearly showed the resolution was adopted in the clerical order.

Resolution R10-1 adopted

Sex Trafficking Task Force: The Committee recommended adoption of Resolution R10-2 as amended in committee to read as follows:

R10-2a

Extend Task Force on Sex Trafficking

Resolved, that the Taskforce on Sex Trafficking be extended for another year to continue developing educational programs, prayers and litanies for use in parishes and worshipping communities: and be it further

Resolved, that parishes and worshipping communities help educate their parishioners about this issue and discern ways to respond; and be it further

Resolved, that a Sunday in January 2011 be designated Respecting the Dignity of Every Human Being Sunday; and be it further

Resolved, that each parish and worshipping community be encouraged to support the Atlanta Urban Intern Program (AUIP) of the Diocese of Atlanta *and any other diocesan program aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation of ~~children~~ boys and girls* by giving a special offering in January 2011 to this ministry; and be it further

Resolved, that each parish and worshipping community, as called for at the 2009 Annual Council, continue to pray for AUIP and all those working against sexual trafficking.

The Rev. Margaret Harney, Chair of the Diocesan Task Force on Sex Trafficking noted that the wording adopted in the committee meeting was not “children” but “boys and girls”. This correction was accepted and placed in the text. The Council voted on the recommendation as corrected.

Recommendation adopted

Resolution R10-2a adopted with amendment

Committee on Education: The Rev. Don Tate, Chair, recommended adoption of Resolution R10-4 as amended in committee by substitution to read as follows:

R10-4s

Expand Anti-Racism Training

~~*Resolved*, that the current Diocesan Anti-Racial Dialogue training, Resolution R03-1 (2003), shall be expanded to include dialogue on all prejudices, and be it further~~

~~*Resolved*, that the dialogue shall include discussion of prejudices against those of different race, sex, age, sexual orientation, and those who experience physical or mental challenges.~~

Resolved, that the 104th Council of the Diocese of Atlanta establish a task force to explore educational programs that increase awareness of the differences that separate us, teach respect for the dignity of every human being, and promote inclusivity and reconciliation in parishes, the diocese and larger society; and to report its progress to the 105th Council.

The Council voted on the recommendation.

Recommendation adopted
Resolution R10-4s adopted with substitute amendment

Special Policy and Benefits Committee: The Rev. Robert Certain, Chair, recommended adoption of Resolution R10-5.

R10-5

Research Parental Leave Policies

Resolved, that a study group be appointed by the Bishop to research a diocesan parental leave and post-leave workplace policy to be proposed at the 105th Council in 2011.

The Council voted on the recommendation.

Recommendation adopted
Resolution R10-5 adopted

Other reports

Mikell Camp and Conference Center: The Rev. Kenneth Struble reported on the year's activities.

Work in Tanzania: Ms. Magi Griffin of Rome, a missionary appointed by The Episcopal Church, reported on her work in Tanzania. She welcomed the Rev. Dr. Sandra McCann of Columbus, who serves at Msalato Theological College in Tanzania. The Council viewed a video presentation on their work in Tanzania.

Kids 4 Peace: The Rev. Sharon Hiers introduced a group from the Kids 4 Peace, who spoke about the program. One former Kids4 Peace participant is a Lay Delegate to this Council.

Committee on the Bishop's Address: The Rev. Patricia Grace, Chair, reported:

Right Reverend, Sirs; brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Atlanta, honored guests and cherished friends: I am pleased to give the report of the Committee to Respond to the Bishop's Address. Earlier this week, five members of this body received a surprising phone call. It was Muriel Diguette (bishops' secretary) with this message: You have been appointed to the Committee to Respond to the Bishop's Address at Council.

I will admit my first reaction was a vague sense of unease and mild dyspepsia. Within minutes of that first call Benno Pattison left me a voice mail, pondering, first, how it had come to pass that the two of us had been appointed to the same committee at the same time – some would suggest that ours is an unwise combination. Then, he further pondered if his placement on the committee was the result of some Machiavellian plot conjured by me. But I knew better, even then – this was more likely an example of the strange work of the Holy Spirit and/or Alicia Schuster Weltner.

As we met up at Council yesterday, the other members of the committee, Ann Canipe, W.C. Wyatt and Mary Erikson, shared similar reactions, summarized by Mary as feeling just the teensiest bit intimidated – while, at the same time feeling greatly humbled by being chosen for the task.

It is a fearsome thing to fall into the hands of the living God, says St. Paul, and if he had ever attended a Diocesan Convention – he might have added, and to be asked to comment on your Bishop's keynote address!

But, Bishop, I am happy to say, that after listening carefully and thoughtfully to your words – which were offered carefully and thoughtfully – we all felt reassured and excited. We were emboldened by your acknowledgement of your feelings of profound humility, and your candor in sharing your own vulnerability and sinfulness.

So, recognizing that we do not have the vantage point of the head of this body – we come more from the perspective of the hands and feet and wobbly knees – we have gladly taken up this task of formulating a faithful response to your faithful message

We noted, as you yourself, have pointed out, that this address is different from those you have offered in past years. "...more of a homily than a state of the union address" as you mentioned to me earlier in the day. We commend your choice to break the mold, and to do something new, as it were. We also noted that this is your tenth address to this Council – and considered that it was no coincidence that nearly a decade of episcopal ministry among us, prompted a more pastoral than business approach. One of our committee members commented that this address, in particular, sounded like the commentary of both a leader of this Diocese and a shepherd of this flock. We heard you Bishop – and it was what we needed to hear.

We appreciate many things that you said; in particular, your comments about the persistence of racism in our practices and perspectives. We especially appreciate your honest acknowledgement of your own struggle with racism, and the vulnerability you modeled in making that admission.

Your comments on the lack of civility in public discourse seemed to touch the whole body – by our count, those words generated at least two ovations. We were both chastened and humbled – and rightly so – by your reminder that destructive conflict, real threats to the unity of the body, are not just out there – but are occurring within our own congregations. These have been exacerbated by email memo wars and cheap shots in cyberspace. We understand that the ministry of reconciliation starts at home – in our own vestries and parking lots – in the way we act out that vocation of reconciliation as we both love and fight with each other.

We hear your exhortation to make the eradication of racism a renewed and top priority. We understand that racist beliefs and practices, as well as violence in word and action, cause broken relationships and a seemingly unbreachable distance between and among God's people. We understand that this is the opposite path to the vocation of reconciliation we are called to live, as ambassadors for Christ and new creations in Him.

We deeply appreciate your frankness in calling out the issues of teen violence and suicide, focusing our eyes and ears on two subjects that are often denied or minimized in our parishes and communities.

We agree, of course, Bishop, with the pragmatism of your comments about dollars and ministry. But we are more excited to hear your testimony about the many ministries of reconciliation you have observed springing up and flourishing around the Diocese, in abundance, as you said, even in these hard economic times. We heard you say that this Diocese is the place where, money or not, we do good and creative ministry. And we say, "Right on, Bishop – and thanks be to God!"

Your words reminded us that the ministry of reconciliation is a ministry of the heart. You reminded us that it's outrage and passion and courage; it's the willingness to sacrifice, to fall in love with God, again and again, and to give of our whole lives, in whatever way we can – that is what initiates and energizes and sustains ministries of reconciliation in the long and difficult haul.

Now, we admit, Right Reverend, Sir, that we did entertain the fleeting notion of trying to determine just where on the scale between crazy and rational your oration did fall...but we resisted the temptation. We focused, instead, on our sense of wonder and delight, that we have a Bishop who is willing to say out loud, that he will consider moving closer to being crazy for God and doing things differently than in the past.

Your words got us thinking – got us imagining, some of the crazy things we might do together for God: that we might take a chance, for example, on developing a new church plant in the area south of I-20 – when the rational dictates of demographics and annual household income statistics, might suggest that other locations would be more prudent. We got to thinking that we might get so crazy, that we could, Diocese-wide – respond to your comments by making youth and young adult ministry – so often the last thing to be funded and the first thing to be cut – our top priority ... so that maybe, just maybe, the Seth Walshes, Jeheem Herraras and the kids who stomped young Brad Tillman to death, might seek and find an alternative to the powers and principalities that are destroying us and them... that those kids might find in us a place to really come to know that we don't have to live that way, because Christ lives in them as well as in us.

Although you mentioned to us, that unlike many of your previous addresses, this one did not contain a specific challenge to Council. Nevertheless, we heard one. We heard that saying yes to a

vocation of reconciliation calls us to live incarnationally. To borrow from St. Paul again, we heard that this vocation calls us to live face-to-face, not in distortion, as through a glass darkly, and not settling for just a virtual life with Christ or with each other.

We heard you call us to live in real relationship that is embodied; to allow God to draw us in closer and closer, to each other, to our neighbors, and to those who might look or act differently than we do. You reminded us that more than anything else, this vocation of reconciliation is a ministry of real presence and real action – of taking risks and finding creative solutions and new ways of solving our problems. You told us that the vocation of reconciliation is not about peace and harmony, not about making nice or about just getting along – but is all about outrage and passion and courage and frustration – about working together, even in all our sinfulness, about stepping on toes, and “lookout!” – about being open to new ways of being and doing.

Yes, Bishop, we heard you and you said what we needed to hear. Today we give thanks for your words, and for your ministry among us and on behalf of us – and we echo your prayer: that through each and every one of us, and in all that we do, to God alone be the glory.

Respectfully submitted, The Rev. Patricia M. Grace, Ms. Ann Canipe, The Rev. Benno Pattison, Mr. W. C. Wyatt, The Rev. Mary Erikson

Assistant Bishop: Bishop Whitmore spoke about his ministry throughout the Diocese.

Annual Council Committee, concerning 105th Annual Council: The Rev. Janice Bracken Wright, Dean of the Northwest Georgia Convocation, and Mrs. Janet Patterson, Chair, invited the 105th Annual Council to meet in Rome, Georgia on Friday and Saturday, November 4th and 5th, 2011.

Mrs. Patterson addressed the Council on administrative matters, including lunch.

Memorials and Courtesy Committee: The Rev. John Bolton, Chair, moved the following resolutions, seriatim. Each was adopted by the Council on presentation:

Be it Resolved, that this 104th Council of the Diocese of Atlanta extend greetings to the Rt. Rev. Frank Allan and Mrs. Allan; to Mrs. Mary Page Sims, widow of Bishop Bennett J. Sims; to The Rt. Rev. Milton Wood, retired Bishop Suffragan of Atlanta, praying for his recovery from illness; to The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church; to The Rt. Rev. Mdimi Mohologo, Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika, our companion diocese; to The Rt. Rev. Filadelo Olivera, Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of Rio de Janeiro, our companion diocese; and to the Rt. Rev. Luis Ruiz, Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of Ecuador Central, our companion diocese; and

Let it be further Resolved, that we send appreciation and prayers of support to Martin and Sandy McCann and Magi Griffin in their ministry in Central Tanganyika; and

Let it be further Resolved, that we express our gratitude to the Dean, Canons and people of the Cathedral of St. Philip for hosting Annual Council again this year along with expression of gratitude to Chancellor and Officers of Annual Council

Let it be Resolved, that we express a warm welcome to Bishop Don Wimberly and his wife, Wendy, as they take up residence amongst us.

Let it be further Resolved, the Diocese of Atlanta, gathered in its 104th Annual Council, November 12th and 13th, 2010, offer an assurance of prayer and continued support to:

Bishop Barry L. Beisner and people of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California who suffered the loss by fire of the diocesan offices and the River City Food Bank; and

The Dean, faculty, students and alumnae/i of the Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, which suffered the loss by fire of the seminary chapel.

Be it further Resolved, that the Bishop of Atlanta shall direct the Secretary of Annual Council to convey this resolution, with our warm regards, to these institutions.

We also remember with prayerful gratitude for their life and witness those who have died in the past year:

Priests: Herbert J. Beadle Jr., Emmett Jarrett, Ralph O. Marsh, Martha J. Mercure, and Thomas E. Moody; *Lay Delegates:* R.P.M. Bowden and George Beal; and those who have given their lives in service of their country. The Bishop led prayers for the departed persons.

The Bishop adjourned the Council *sine die* at 12:31 p.m., November 13, 2010.

The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander
Presiding Officer

The Rev. Herschel R. Atkinson
Secretary

*The Bishop's Address follows on the next page.

Bishop's Address to the 104th Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

Grace to you and peace in Jesus Christ Our Lord!

It is with enormous affection and profound humility that I stand before you this afternoon to report to you on the progress of God's mission among us as I observe it from the vantage point of being the bishop of this great diocese. Rabbi Edwin Friedman once quipped that "a large part of being the head is to hold the eyes and to see things on behalf of the whole body." Surely a most imperfect metaphor for episcopal leadership, particularly as our church has received it, but it is a reminder to me, at least, that part of being the bishop is to see things from a vantage point that no one else shares, and to speak as clearly as possible to the church about what I am privileged to see. What I see, of course, is from only one point in the spectrum; mine is a narrowly conceived vantage point in some respects, and it comes with its own unique set of blinders. That's why it requires all of us – bishops, laypersons, presbyters, and deacons – to work God's mission together. That's why seeing is to be accompanied by listening, and why listening is to be accompanied by thoughtful speaking.

This afternoon I am going to frame my observations – what I see – on the basis of what I take to be the core teaching found in Chapter 5 of Saint Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. The core of Chapter 5 is perhaps Saint Paul's strongest exhortation on the ministry of reconciliation. And, as Saint Paul sees it, reconciliation is the primary vocation of those who walk by faith; and, the faith of which Saint Paul speaks is not simply the capacity to believe in the unseen, but more specifically to have faith in the transforming power of the resurrection of Jesus. Reconciliation is possible only because in the resurrection of Jesus a new world order comes into being that, in the spirit of last Sunday's gospel, means that we can love our enemies, we can do good to those who hate us, we can bless those who curse us, and we can pray for those who abuse us. I believe that Saint Paul's point – and it is certainly a theme that runs through the New Testament – is that reconciliation is impossible as long as your view of the matter is that peace and harmony – cheap reconciliation – is only a matter of being nice and getting along. The old way of seeing things, Saint Paul believes, simply cannot be sustained. Reconciliation comes only by way of a new vision of reality that comes only by faith in the reorientation of all things that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I want to reflect with you, then, on three short verses from Chapter 5 of Second Corinthians. The first is this: For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

I read these verses as one more relentless reminder that those of us who are in Christ are called to live a vocation of reconciliation based upon the paschal pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The love of Christ that is urged upon us, is life, for us and for all, that springs forth from the death of Jesus so that, because he is raised, we are no longer captive to death, no longer bound by the old order, but are made free in Christ to live no longer for ourselves.

Why, friends, does this seem so important from my vantage point as your bishop? Think about what we have lived through in recent months, and here I don't mean the exigencies of the economy; we'll get to that. What breaks my heart is the fact that we're losing the battle against the powers and principalities when a bright, young Bobby Tillman, whose single mother seems to

have done a fine job raising a good young man, finds himself, without provocation and through no fault of his own, getting kicked and stomped to death while something like 80 of our teenagers stood around and watched. We're losing the battle with the powers and principalities when 12-year-old Jeheem Herrera and 13-year-old Seth Walsh choose to hang themselves after school one afternoon because they could no longer take the allegedly anti-gay bullying that was a constant terror in their young lives — both precious young teenagers who were probably a long, long way from figuring out their sexuality with any certainty. We're losing the battle with the powers and principalities when the teenage suicide rate for all causes among teenagers of all races and socio-economic positions is at an all-time high. We're losing the battle when the four-year graduation rate in Georgia high schools is estimated in one recent study to be as low as 56 percent.

The love of Christ urges us on so that we might no longer live for ourselves. There are no quick fixes to these problems; there is not a program or a new ministry that's going to instantly turn around the deep sickness that lies beneath these social ills. While I am sure that much of what we do makes a modest contribution toward ameliorating these problems, and I know that any faithful Episcopalian upon hearing such news will shake their head or shed a tear, dear friends, where is our outrage? Where is our passion? Where is our unrelenting desire for justice for all of our children? What is the visible evidence that we have, in fact, been urged on by the love of Christ to live no longer for ourselves?

The second verse of Saint Paul's teaching I want to highlight is this: All of these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

Saint Paul's point, I believe, is that God entrusts the ministry of reconciliation to the very ones whose sins are the premier model of separation from God, who because of the cross of Jesus and his resurrection have themselves received the divine gift of reconciliation. Having received that gift with humility and with joy, God assigns us sinners to be ministers of reconciliation in God's name, for the sake of our souls and for the life of the world.

By not counting my sins against me, God has made me a minister of reconciliation. There are so many arenas of my life to which this applies, but today I want to speak of only one, the sin of racism. There are other sins, of course — gender-based sexism, ageism, heterosexism, and classism — to name only a few, but it is racism and working toward its eradication, I believe, that cries out to be claimed as a new and renewed priority.

If God, in Christ, has made us ministers of reconciliation then we must be keenly aware of the sin of racism in all its forms: personal, relational, corporate, and institutional. We must be sensitive, especially those of us burdened by white privilege, to how easily we rationalize away the more difficult transactions of daily life when they involve persons of other races; and, how easy it is for persons of color to slip all-too-easily into their own stereotyping of each other and of the rest of us.

None of us is without sin, none, when it comes to matters dealing with race. I grew up in a fairly typical Southern family during the most difficult years of the civil rights movement. Many of the stories of those years that my children read about in school, I lived through, as did many of you. While my family was a "southern white family" in nearly every respect, looking back on it now, I do believe that my parents were measurably more aware of civil rights issues than most of our neighbors and much of our extended family. They were not radicals, for sure, hardly progressive, but they did make it possible for my brothers and me to discover that the world we

inhabited was not a closed system for white people only, but that there were other folks in this world who were both different from me and very much like me and that we were all in this world together.

Context is everything. “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight” reverberated in our souls a bit differently in 1964 than it does in 2010, but its truth is no less urgent today. I am grateful to my parents for helping me glimpse a different view of the world I was growing up in, even if it was, in the end, only a glimpse. But that glimpse, as grateful as I am for it, never saved me from the sin of racism. I did have black friends growing up, several of whom I loved deeply, but that did not erase from my heart the sin of racism. My parents were uncommonly kind and cared genuinely for our black nannies, and housekeepers, and gardeners, and lest you think I grew up in a family of means, we were at best in the lower half of the working middle class, but in those days the economic disparity between the races was such that even working folks like my parents could afford domestic help without too much of a problem. It was a proud family moment for my brothers and me when my mother asked a black man to be among the pallbearers at my father’s funeral, an action that outraged many of our parishioners, friends and neighbors and even some members of our family. But none of these things, as positively as I view them now, ever removed from me the blinders I had inherited that kept me from confronting my own racist sinfulness.

Not counting our sins against us, God has made us ministers of reconciliation. When I talk with people about racism, one of the first comments I get in response is this: “But we’ve come a long way in the last 40, 50 or 60 years.” Of course we have, and let us rejoice in every mile of the journey thus far. But, dear people, we’re not home yet. We are a long way from the vision of the reign of Christ on this one; we have many miles of the stony path still to trod, still to walk, together.

Bishop Whitmore and I attended a meeting some months ago at which one of the reports we heard was an update on how dioceses across the church are working to sensitize our people to the continuing sin of racism in its many manifestations. And what we got to hear was that the Diocese of Atlanta is as far along in that work as any other diocese in our church and significantly deeper into that work than most others. But as good as that felt at one level, it was hard, at moments, to receive the accolades on your behalf because we knew that as far as we have come, we still have a long way to go. I am proud of the energy and commitment of our people. The Commission on Anti-Racism is providing good leadership for us, but they know as well as any of us that we have only just begun.

I beg your indulgence for a few sentences about a related topic: civility and public discourse. While I have never for one nano-second been embarrassed to be an American – I love my country, I must confess to you that I am mortified and distressed to the core by the lack of civility in our public discourse and behavior. So far as I can see, no one is without sin; neither side of the political divide, and all of the lesser variations, is innocent; all are guilty. Perhaps you saw the interview a couple of days before the recent election when a news reporter confronted a political candidate and questioned her about some of the “facts” she was touting about issues facing our country. And her response to the challenge was breathtaking: “This is my truth,” she said. “I am not concerned with the facts.” That response gave me a whole new appreciation of the edgy prophecy of former President Bush when he responded irritably to a reporter at a news conference, by saying, “You have a right to your own opinion, but you do not have a right to your own facts!”

The seeming ease with which we destroy each other's character, invent things about others, their lives, and make up stories about them and their positions they hold that have no basis in fact or reality, and the total loss of anything that begins to look like kindness and charity toward one's opponents, makes for deeply troubling times through which to live. And let me hasten to say, that such problems are not in the public and political spheres alone; they are alive and well in the church.

In the last year alone, Bishop Whitmore, Canon Callaway and I, and those who work with us, have spent more time helping parishes, vestries, wardens, and clergy through conflict than in any other time of my episcopate. And while there are number of important variables, what is common to every single case is that the problem was either invented or made significantly worse by the lack of appropriate boundaries and civility in communication, especially on e-mail and social media by those engaged in leadership. Memos that should stay within the vestry get freely forwarded to everyone we think might be "one our side," including messages that are "accidentally forwarded" to folks who are then devastated by the contents. Such memos are often filled with rumors and unverified information, impressions rather than reality, opinions rather than fact; at times it appears as pure meanness. Then mix in a few responses from folks who have had a tension-filled day at work, and one too many glasses of wine by night, and they start firing off caustic and impatient responses to everyone on the list in reaction to what turns out never to have been the truth. But by this time, feelings are hurt, character is damaged, relationships are broken, truth is unrecoverable, and the possibility of reconciliation is next to zero. And most of what got said would never have passed the lips of civilized Christian people sitting face-to-face in a room together faithfully working out their differences.

When I was a young priest, the challenge was to have conversations at vestry meetings, not in the parking lot afterwards. Today the challenge is to have vestry meetings in each other's presence and not on the internet. (The parking lot would be an improvement!) Frankly, dear ones, the lack of civility and this disinterest in making sure we have our facts correct before pouncing on someone else, is not only rocking the foundations of our country, it's killing our parishes and in some measure it's destroying our church. Not counting your sins against you, God has entrusted to you the ministry of reconciliation.

Yet another word from Saint Paul: So we are ambassadors of Christ, because God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God! Saint Paul's appeal here is rather simple: those who have been reconciled to God in Christ, are, like Paul himself, to be ambassadors of Christ, entrusted with God's appeal to the world that all might be reconciled in Christ. That's a tall order, of course, and one that is easy to embrace, but oh so difficult to accomplish. But the call to being an ambassador for Christ is an irresistible one to those who know in their own lives the power of Christ and of his resurrection, that is, the only means toward reconciliation.

The good news, dear ones, is that there is abundant evidence in the Diocese of Atlanta that we are seeking to be ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ engaged in the holy vocation of reconciling the world to each other and with God. Allow me one brief reflection.

While reconciliation is a matter of the heart, the ministry of reconciliation is often a matter of money. That's true simply because dollars mean ministry. And we all know that for much of the last two-and-half years, money has been tight for all of us: personally, in our workplaces, in our homes, and certainly in the church. We have among us those who have lost their jobs or had their incomes significantly reduced. We have among us those who are on fixed incomes and the

resources that generate those incomes, however small or great, have moved down and up with an erratic market. Our endowments, often the source of outreach and mission funds beyond our operating budgets, have suffered severe losses during this time.

But, dear friends, it is not all bad news! From the smallest of our parishes to our largest, we have creatively figured out how to do more with less. We have redefined what is essential and kept our resources and our spirits moving toward the greatest needs. Several of our parishes have added feeding programs for the needy during these times – Covington and Morrow, to mention only two – and the parishes of the Macon Convocation have been working together to re-envision a powerful new coalition for shared outreach and social justice ministry to those in need in their region of the diocese. And there are many other such stories all across our territory.

At the diocesan level, with a flat budget for the last two years and a significantly reduced budget anticipated for 2011, we've been able to see a way to deploy a part-time urban evangelist to minister to the day laborers at various sites around metro Atlanta. We've begun the work of organizing a new Hispanic congregation on the west side of the diocese and have started the consultation for additional Hispanic work in the northeast. It became clear that we needed a homeless ministry-street immersion as a component of the discernment process. With a little creativity on the part of the staff and support from the Church of the Common Ground, we got it done. These are but a few of the tales to be told. Every Monday morning when Bishop Whitmore and I sit together and talk about our weekend activities, we are often sharing stories of the faithfulness of our people and their parishes to keep ministry moving forward even in these economically challenging times.

Against this backdrop, it is important to say that in spite of the challenges our people have been enormously generous. I have been deeply moved by the stories I've been told, sometimes by the clergy, sometimes by the people themselves, of what they have sacrificed in order to continue their faithfulness to the church's mission. There's one particular story I want to share with you.

One Sunday, just after the first of the year, I was visiting a parish south of Atlanta. During the reception after the last service a wonderful gentleman that I remembered well from his days on the vestry asked if he could speak to me privately. We arranged to meet a few minutes later in a space more private than the parish hall, and when I got there he was waiting for me alongside his wife. They simply wanted to tell me how much they loved their parish and how difficult it had been for them when he lost his job in the financial industry. But they also wanted me to know the deep joy they had discovered when they figured out that since their kids were grown, educated, and on their own, with a little sacrifice they could make ends meet on his wife's salary as a teacher. The only thing they could not afford was to keep up their pledge to the parish. For a few months, he filled his days with job applications, interviews, and whatever else he could do to secure employment. But looking for a job did not pay well, so he continued to spend a portion of every day on the job hunt, while soon finding a part-time job at little more than minimum wage stocking shelves in a warehouse store nearby. After a couple of weeks he received his first paycheck and after taxes it was almost exactly the amount he and his wife had pledged to the church before he lost his job. When he brought the money home, it was clear to them that his part-time job was going to be the way they continued their support of the church because keeping that commitment was important to them. "Our parish means everything to us," they told me. I am pleased to say that, in the meantime, he has found new work in his profession and life is getting back to normal.

Many of the stories we have heard are not that dramatic, but are nonetheless the stories of real

people who care deeply for their church and its ministry and have made powerful sacrifices during hard times. Once again the people of God have demonstrated that if you give them half a chance they will come through every time. Such stories are about people whose lives have been transformed by the reconciling power of Christ, people who have not only heard the call of God to be reconcilers, but who put their time, their passions, and their resources on the line in response to the reconciling love of Christ they have known in their own lives.

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For those of you who have been to Annual Council before, you have no doubt figured out that this is a different sort of episcopal address than the standard fare you have come to expect from me. As Saint Paul says in verse 13, If I am crazy, it is for God's sake. If I am rational, it is for your sake. Whether this particular oration was crazy or rational, I don't know. I suspect there are all sorts of reasons for me to be stuck between the crazy and rational these days, some of which you might guess, others of which I don't suspect even I am aware of. But what I can tell you is that for some time now, I keep finding myself wallowing around in Chapter 5 of Second Corinthians because it contains the apostolic declaration that I need most clearly to embrace these days in my own life. Stuck here in the middle of Saint Paul's teaching, on the ministry of reconciliation that flows from the cross and resurrection of Jesus, is that apostolic word on which many a heart clings for dear life: So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of God's new creation. The old things have gone away, and lookout, new things have arrived!

Is there any better news than that? Is there another promise more life-giving? Is there other encouragement elsewhere that even begins to compare with it? Is there another word that overflows with any more generosity and grace? I don't think so.

Being in Christ. Being ministers of reconciliation. Being a part of God's new creation. Friends, this is God drawing the world in closer. This is God making manifest through us the power of resurrection. This is God – deep in our hearts and relentlessly on our lips – reminding the world that because Christ lives, the way things have always been need not be the way they always will be!

To God alone be the glory!

The Right Reverend J. Neil Alexander, ThD, DD

Bishop of Atlanta

November 12, 2010