

**A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP
CONCERNING
ST. CHRISTOPHER'S, SPARTANBURG**

Beloved:

In a Sunday (5/4) meeting of the Vestry of St. Christopher's, Spartanburg, a majority of that leadership body resigned their offices. Additionally, the Rector also announced his intention to resign his position. These facts and others (such as the parish not having met its financial obligations to the Diocese for many years) make it clear to me that St. Christopher's cannot meet the obligations it assumed when it became a parish of this diocese in 1964. For that reason, I am calling a special meeting of the Diocesan Executive Council, which exercises the authority of our Diocesan Convention between conventions, to ask them to grant their approval for me as your bishop to return St. Christopher's to mission status on a temporary basis while its leadership and program are restructured. If this permission is granted, I will appoint a mission committee composed of five respected and long-standing members of that congregation to serve while the restructuring takes place.

Father George Gray and I spoke this afternoon by telephone. Our conversation affirmed what I had read in letters he sent to members of his Vestry and others. My judgment as his bishop is that he no longer is able to exercise his ministry under the authority of this church. I offered him the choice between either voluntary renunciation of his orders or suspension for voluntarily abandoning the Communion of this church. He chose the latter with my blessing.

Consequently, I am asking the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Executive Council to authorize me to inhibit Fr. Gray for abandonment of the Communion.

Clearly, I realize that these are matters of individual conscience. Fr. Gray and those who choose to follow him go with my prayers for every success in their future efforts. I will continue to pray for him, and he assures me that he will do the same for me.

In the interim, I have appointed my Canon to the Ordinary, the Rev. Michael Bullock, to act as "priest-in-charge."

Fr. Bullock will go to the St. Christopher's Wednesday (5/7) to meet with staff and members of the new leadership team and to begin the process of reorganization. Please keep him in your prayers.

I will be present on Sunday to preside at Eucharist and to be available to answer questions and address concerns that members of St. Christopher's may want to bring to me. I would invite Episcopalians from throughout the Diocese to join with me and the people of St. Christopher's on Pentecost Sunday to celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the gift of new birth.