

Wednesday after Trinity Sunday
21 May 2008

Sisters and brothers, dearly Beloved:

As you may well imagine, the last two weeks have been intense and challenging in the life of our Diocese. The resignation of the rector and most of the Vestry of St. Christopher's, Spartanburg, and the subsequent events, have had the capacity to be all-consuming in many respects. The people of St. Christopher's and the entire Diocesan family have suffered a wound, and there has been great sadness and concern among us.

Nonetheless, as is often the case, the emotional passion that inevitably arises from events such as these tends to create more smoke than illumination, and, as your Bishop, my concern is that, you, my sisters and brothers, be wholly informed about this situation.

I continue to ask for your prayers: prayers for those who have left; prayers for those who remain at St. Christopher's; and prayers for the entire Church, as we move into this long "green season," where we (by God's grace) study the mission and ministry of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, even as we live into it more faithfully.

I want you to know that, emerging from one of the most painful parts of my episcopacy, I have great hope for the future of St. Christopher's. On Pentecost, it was my privilege to celebrate Holy Eucharist and to preach at both of St. Christopher's liturgies. The spirit of the day shone brightly, and the seeds of new life were already apparent to me. This was the case for many reasons, among them the presence of many clergy and lay people from around the Diocese, especially from the Piedmont Convocation. I extend to you my heartfelt thanks for this show of support and faith.

I am also encouraged by the fact that the people of St. Christopher's have quickly rallied from their hardships to refocus their life and ministry. As you know, I have appointed my Canon to the Ordinary, Michael Bullock, as their priest-in-charge. Over an eight-day period, he visited on site for three of those days. Of course, there are pressing logistical issues that immediately face the community, but summer plans are already being laid to enter into a visioning process, followed by several strategic planning sessions, with the expectation that St. Christopher's will be ready to respond to a new program year this fall. In the meantime, Canon Bullock will be in Spartanburg each Wednesday and Sunday, until such time as more permanent clergy leadership can be provided.

I am grateful to Bishop Rogers Harris for his collegial assistance. I was scheduled to make my visitation to Christ Church, Greenville, on Pentecost, but, because of the emergency situation, Bishop Harris graciously took my stead there, allowing me to be present at St. Christopher's. On Trinity Sunday, Bishop Harris led the mission community at St. Christopher's in worship, and he will be joined by Canon Bullock on the succeeding two Sundays. Yes, it is true: We are not left comfortless.

In closing, I reiterate my request for your continuing prayers, asking God to bless our efforts and intentions, knowing that what God will not bless, the Holy One will redeem.

With thanksgiving to God for you and your many ministries, I remain,

Faithfully yours in our Lord,

The Rt. Rev'd Dorsey F. Henderson
Upper South Carolina VII