

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

The Rt. Rev. W. Andrew Waldo

*“For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven.” – Ecclesiastes 3:1*

6 June 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Throughout the seasons of history, a great cloud of witnesses is filled with faithful women, men, and children who have met times similar to our own with steadfastness and persistence. St. Paul knew his own biggest challenge to bring the good news of God in Christ Jesus to the nations would take several lifetimes. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth,” he wrote to the church in Corinth. Our work as disciples is constantly one of “some planting and others tending,” as we put to use our many gifts in the one Spirit for the good of all.

Early in 2019, I began discussions with my family, some of my bishop colleagues, and the Presiding Bishop about a horizon for me to request the support of the Standing Committee to call for the election of the Ninth Bishop of Upper South Carolina.

This day, I have asked for and received the Standing Committee’s consent to call for the election of the ninth Bishop of Upper South Carolina at a special Convention on Saturday, 25 September, 2021. My resignation as your Bishop will take effect on 31 December 2021, about 19 months from now. This date was set late last fall in consultation with the Presiding Bishop’s office, and the decision to announce at today’s Diocesan Executive Committee meeting was made this past February, in consultation with the Rev. Stephen Rhoades, President of the Standing Committee.

In this season of my own family’s life, I am called to make time for my children and grandchildren in ways we have not previously been able, and while my health is excellent. Later this month, I will celebrate 32 years of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church, which followed nine years in a vocation as a performing musician and teacher. The next season in my family’s life is approaching. Following the timeline established by the Standing Committee, the Nominating Committee for the Ninth Bishop of Upper South Carolina, once called, will have the task of discerning whom God is persuading to serve his Church in this capacity, in this place, for the next season of your common life—who will lead you in following God’s call.

In the coming months, we will have ample opportunity to reflect on the important work we have done together in God’s gracious hands. We have learned much about how to be in deeper dialogue on difficult issues, like same-sex blessings/marriage and racial reconciliation. We have built relationships to support public education through parish-school partnerships and advocacy. We have worked to create and live into norms of transparency and mature discipleship across the Diocese. We have changed the face of the college of clergy within the Diocese, now having one of the highest percentages of women in charge of congregations in the Episcopal Church.

We have learned much about being the Church during this pandemic, and yet we are just getting started in understanding—and are just now planting seeds for—a Church that will emerge energized, newly skilled in technology, freshly longing for in-person relationships, and even more deeply centered in and grounded upon the love of God in Christ Jesus.

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We are continuing to work on strengthening youth and campus/young adult ministry and leadership development, and to create a stronger, more flexible and higher capacity camping and retreat ministry at Gravatt Camp and Conference Center.

Most of you have heard me speak or preach or tell stories about events and people who shaped my passion and understanding around issues of race and reconciliation—stories from my childhood in Alabama and ever since. Today's conflicts around racial justice are urgent signs of the critical work we still have to do—addressing injustice, economic inequality, education inequity, and discrimination. Polarized politics and pandemic have only accentuated the importance and difficulty of this work to which God calls us, and yet we have much more work in learning how to grow in Christian maturity during a time of conflict and alienation. Indeed, disciples of Jesus—across time—have strived to embrace and live Jesus' words, "Love one another, as I have loved you."

Our *Centennial Campaign: From Generation to Generation in the Church*, with its goals to renew the Episcopal Church Home at York Place, Gravatt Camp & Conference Center, and Canterbury Campus Ministries is still underway, even though we recognize it will take longer than planned. Each goal will play an important healing and restorative role in the life of this Diocese for many years to come.

In other words, we *remain* a Church focused on making, equipping and sending mature disciples. This is and continues to be our vocation, our call from God.

We have plenty of time in the months ahead to engage this work, and for the whole diocesan community to imagine who you will be, and where you will go when you turn the next episcopal bend in the river. In the meantime, I intend to remain fully engaged, excited about our shared work as fellow travelers and laborers in God's mission.

In 2009, when I was still a nominee for Bishop, I traveled here from Minnesota for the November "walkabouts"—the all-day Q&A sessions in Columbia and Greenville with people from across the Diocese—with an uncertain heart about my call to be here. I had heard that, even in the midst of theological turmoil in the Church, this was a Diocese that simply wanted to stay together. At the walkabouts, many of you articulated that deep desire over and over again, in one way or another. Your love and care for one another, your commitment to the good news of God in Christ, and your passion for ministry was palpable. By this point, I was listening. Awakened. Persuaded that, should I be elected, we could—for a season—serve God together in gladness and devotion. And we have. These continue to be some of the most inspiring, fruitfully challenging, and spiritually rich years of my life.

In gratitude, love and hope, I remain faithfully yours,



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