

# THE FALLS CHURCH

*Making Christ King in Our Lives and in the Lives of Others*

June 5, 2006

The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee  
Bishop  
The Diocese of Virginia  
110 W. Franklin Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23220

Dear Bishop Lee:

In anticipation of the upcoming General Convention, we affirm again our hope and desire, expressed in our letter of last October and in our meeting last November, that you reconsider, and then publicly withdraw, your endorsement of and your role in the consecration of a person to the episcopate whose lifestyle is in direct disobedience to scriptural teaching. We also ask that you publicly correct your message on that subject to the people of the diocese of Virginia.

The General Convention will indeed be an important moment in this crisis in the Episcopal Church, and it will present an opportunity for you and your fellow bishops to make right what has been wrong. What is needed from the bishops is not a mere expression of regret (or even "repentance") for hurt feelings or strained relations or breaches in the bonds of affection, but rather genuine repentance for contradicting the will of God as revealed in His Word. We emphasize this because we have seen the April 7 report of the Special Commission, which proposes resolutions that include the word "repent" but that do not at all reflect a spirit of authentic repentance for the wrongs actually at issue. For example,

- Proposed Resolution A160 would express "our own deep regret *for the pain* that others have experienced with respect to our actions at the General Convention of 2003 and we offer our sincerest apology and *repentance for having breached the bonds of affection* in the Anglican Communion by *any failure to consult adequately* with our Anglican partners before taking these actions."

This fails to repent of the real error and wrong that occurred--*i.e.*, the consecration of an unrepentant sexual sinner to be a Bishop of the Church.

- Proposed Resolution A161 would urge Church officials "to exercise *very considerable caution* in the nomination, election, consent to, and consecration of bishops whose *manner of life presents a challenge* to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion."

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This circumlocution fails to halt improper consecrations and to commit the Church to Biblical, orthodox consecrations in the future.

- Proposed Resolution A162 would "affirm the need to maintain a breadth of *private* responses to situations-of individual pastoral care for gay and lesbian Christians in this Church"; would "not proceed[]" to authorize *public* Rites of Blessing for same-sex unions, *until* some broader consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges"; and would recommend that bishops who *have* authorized public rites for same-sex blessings should" express regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached by such authorization".

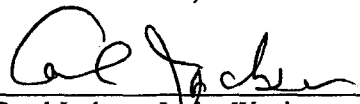
This implies at least the possibility that *private* blessing of same-sex unions would thus be allowed; the moral issues are presented as depending on "consensus"; and those who have gone so far as to create public rituals patterned after the service of holy matrimony in a same-sex context are not encouraged to repent of any error but are told simply to express "regret" for hurting others' feelings.

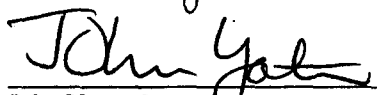
These proposals fail utterly to reflect genuine repentance for leading astray the people of God on the important subject of sexual morality. Our prayer book teaches us to join "true repentance" with "amendment of life", but these proposed resolutions use the vocabulary of "repentance" while making no pretense about "amendment." It even appears that the bishops who are contemplating these proposals know that the resolutions do not reflect authentic repentance. On the contrary, the Bishop of Arizona publicly and in writing explained that "this represents a 'go slow' approach for our church," which could be undertaken "[w]ithout backing away from decisions we have made ...." The very essence of repentance, however, is indeed to "back away" from what one has done, and, rather than merely "going slow", to turn around instead and go in the opposite direction.

Your Episcopal brethren in the Anglican Communion have called on you to repent of your own role in this matter. We your people call on you to repent as well.

Sincerely yours on behalf of The Falls Church vestry and clergy,

  
Thomas E. Wilson, Senior Warden

  
Carol Jackson, Junior Warden

  
John Yates, Rector