

**A Statement from the Vestry Wardens and Rector of
St. Michael's of the Valley Episcopal Church
Ligonier, Pennsylvania**

We write as the vestry of St. Michael's of the Valley Episcopal Church. We rejoice in who we are as a congregation who loves our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and who wishes to make him known to the world.

We are committed to Jesus Christ and also to The Episcopal Church and we rejoice in its rich historic, authentic tradition of worship, outreach, and evangelistic mission while also seeking to be a place where all are welcome to worship the Lord and grow in grace.

However, recent actions in some portions of the church have raised great concerns for us. Specifically the actions of the 76th General Convention in resolutions D025 and C056 which we believe do not serve the Church well, especially in the wider context of our relationship to The Anglican Communion. While we understand that we represent a congregation with varying opinions on issues of sexuality, we also believe these resolutions open the door to innovations, which are not in concert with the majority of the Church and certainly The Communion. We are concerned that the passing of these resolutions will continue to strain our international relationships and we believe that they encourage an ethical stance, which is contrary to scripture. For these reasons we reject them.

We are also concerned with opening remarks made by The Presiding Bishop at the General Convention. We find her statement that the "great western heresy (is that) we can be saved as individuals, that any of us alone can be right with God" extremely troubling. We have read the full text of her speech and while we appreciate her emphasis on exercising our faith in right relationship, we believe her statement about individual salvation to be wrong, and we reject it.

We also wish to recognize that much good came out of the General Convention and regret that the above incidents have dominated the coverage in the press. We believe the new liturgies for reproductive loss, the development of 'evangelism toolkits' for parishes, a call for parishes to increase support for missionaries, and church wide health coverage are all positive developments.

We are encouraged by the communion's commitment to a common covenant and commit ourselves to studying this document. We will be making recommendations to the parish, diocese, and wider church about this in the future.

Last year we, as a vestry, needed to make a difficult decision regarding our continued relationship with The Episcopal Church. After much discussion, thought, and prayer we decided to remain. This was not easy and has been costly to all of us in many ways. We did this with the intention of remaining a faithful witness from within the church and this statement is a part of that witness.

Our larger witness will continue to be how we live our lives in concert with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, making an eternal difference in the world.

Passed Unanimously
September 14, 2009
Feast of the Holy Cross