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## The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina

### A Letter from the Diocese of South Carolina Standing Committee to other Diocesan Standing Committees Concerning Consent to the Election of Mark Lawrence

*Please note: a similar but not identical letter has been sent to those Standing Committees who have not yet responded to the request for consent*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write this letter as the head of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina to address concerns expressed by various standing committees regarding consents for the consecration of The Very Rev. Mark Lawrence as our next Diocesan Bishop. This is an official request to those who have withheld consent to reconsider their initial action. We intend this letter to correct some of the misinformation surrounding our Bishop Elect.

**a) Questions have been raised regarding Mark's willingness and that of the diocese of South Carolina, should it be under his leadership, to continue to serve our Lord as faithful members of the Episcopal Church.**

Response: The Diocese of South Carolina has operated faithfully within the canons of the The Episcopal Church (TEC) since 1795 and continues to do so. The Rev. Mark Lawrence signed the oath of conformity at his ordination as priest and has faithfully lived within the canons of the church for 26 years. When asked directly during our election process if he would be able to sign the oath of conformity as a bishop, he responded, "Yes". Present behavior is the best indicator we have of the future. Statistics released at the last General Convention revealed that the Diocese of South Carolina was first in all categories of percentages of growth – average Sunday attendance, financial growth and baptized membership. Recent official church statistics show we are the only diocese that has grown faster than its surrounding population. The tree is known by its fruit.

**b) Questions have been raised about the participation of the Presiding Bishop in the consecration of the new Bishop of South Carolina.**

Response: When the election of the XIVth Bishop of South Carolina was scheduled to be held, (before the Church decided to withhold consent to all consecrations until June 2006) the Bishop of South Carolina XIII had negotiated with the Presiding Bishop's office to find a chief consecrator acceptable to the Diocese of SC. A tentative agreement was reached with the Presiding Bishop's office that this was indeed possible. Our Bishop-elect had nothing to do with this arrangement as this decision was worked out by the ecclesiastical authority of the Diocese of South Carolina before we held our election.

**c) Questions have been raised about Alternative Primatial Relationships (APR), implying negative intentions about our relationship to The Episcopal Church (TEC)**

Response: The Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina, after the General Convention 2006, requested APR, in order to restore peace to the diocese and to prevent happening in the diocese what was being experienced in other diocese within the Church. This was an action of the Standing Committee acting as the ecclesiastical authority of the Diocese prior to our Bishop's election. This question is being answered by the Standing Committee for that reason. Alternative Primatial Relationship has never been defined, as it has never been requested by a diocese in the history of the Anglican Communion. In the context of the Windsor report and the scheduled primates meeting in Tanzania, the Standing Committee's sole intention was to provide space for the conflict raging in TEC and to protect the common life and



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[3 captures](#)

17 Apr 08 - 25 Jul 11

2007

2008

2011

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and other bishops on all sides of the issues. We have consistently sought to deal with these matters within the framework of the Church as a sign of our long-term commitment to the mission of the whole Church. In the past, TEC has created a climate for discussions of these matters for congregations in an imaginative way and this is simply an expansion of that spirit.

In conclusion, neither the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina nor the Bishop-elect have any interest in a consecration that does not follow the canons of this diocese. We hope that you will find this information helpful as you re-consider the position you have taken concerning our Bishop-elect.

In Christ alone,

The Rev. J. Haden McCormick

For the Standing Committee