

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH

December 11, 2012

To my Sisters and Brothers in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina:

“Let us praise the grace and risk of fire,” wrote the Irish teacher and poet John O’Donohue.

Your experience as faithful Episcopalians in the Diocese of South Carolina must feel, at times, like trial by fire. You are brave, and I admire you for the risks that I know you are taking for your faith. God has asked you to be leaders of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina at a critical time. Thank you for saying yes.

As you prepare to meet in convention in January, I hope that the Baptismal Covenant will be your guide. In that foundational expression of our Episcopal identity, we affirm the ancient Apostles’ Creed and declare our intent, with God’s help, to be teachers and prophets, advocates for justice, and faithful Christian disciples. You are ministers of the gospel by virtue of your baptism. Even in the mist of fire, remember that its grace is yours.

Take heart especially in our baptismal promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. There are times ahead when that will be a hard promise to keep—when it may seem as if the great breadth of conviction, experience and practice among Episcopalians threatens to overwhelm your longing for unity and clarity. I believe, rather, that our comprehensiveness is our particular gift from God. The Anglican middle way guides us between extremes; it has room for people from all walks of life. Although the middle way is seldom the easiest path, I believe that it is the most fruitful. We will walk it together.

As you reorganize your diocese and continue your ministry and mission, my fellow deputies and I pledge to be your companions, supporters and advocates. I have already been in touch with Deputy Lonnie Hamilton and told him that I will help in any way I can. I look forward to welcoming the new deputies whom you will soon elect and assisting them in assuming their places in the governance of The Episcopal Church.

O’Donohue ends his poem “In Praise of Fire” with a petition that I offer for all of you:

May courage
Cause our lives to flame,
In the name of the Fire,
And the Flame,
And the Light.

Your sister in Christ,



The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings
President, House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church

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