May 9, 2012

Dear People of the Diocese of East Carolina,

As you may know, the Bishops Diocesan of the three dioceses of The Episcopal Church in North Carolina recently wrote a letter describing the reasons for our opposition to the proposed addition to the North Carolina Constitution contained in Amendment 1. The referendum was held yesterday and the majority of those voting favored adopting the amendment. We are blessed to live in a nation that honors and values the right of each person to give voice to her or his beliefs peaceably through voting so that the will of the people might be known. I remind us all that being part of a majority also carries with it a responsibility. One author put it this way: "The test of courage comes when we are in the minority. The test of tolerance comes when we are in the majority." ¹

Today, Bishop Marray and I write to tell you of our disappointment as Christians, bishops and citizens that the Amendment has passed. The as yet unforeseen consequences of its adoption will, we fear, bring unintended difficulties and pain to many law-abiding citizens of our State, both heterosexual and homosexual who are also faithful Christians, and to their children and families who may be denied health insurance, visitation rights, or legal protections from domestic violence, among other things.

Whether you voted for or against the amendment yesterday, we your bishops remind us all as followers of Jesus Christ, to whom we owe our first allegiance, that all people are loved equally by God as if there were only one to love. We remind us all that every person is created in the image of God and therefore worthy of respect. We remind us all that all people, regardless of race, sexual orientation, national origin or native language are welcome in The Episcopal Church and that in the name of Christ, we are called to offer hospitality to all. We remind us all that every person has an equal claim to the sacraments and pastoral care of this Church.

Every bishop at her or his consecration pledges to "...be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper."² God being our helper, we intend to continue to strive to fulfill that promise we made years ago.

We pledge as your bishops to continue to pray, witness and work for the eradication of injustice and hatred toward others in all its forms, to strive to protect the dignity of every person, as we promise individually and as a community each time we renew our Baptismal Vows,³ and to call all members of this diocese to work for justice and reconciliation.

We remain,

Faithfully yours,

Clifton Daniel
Bishop Diocesan, Diocese of East Carolina

Santosh K. Marray
Bishop Assisting, Diocese of East Carolina

¹ R.W. Sockman
² The Book of Common Prayer, page 518
³ The Book of Common Prayer, pages 304-305