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St.. Luke's Day – October 18, 2004

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My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As President of the House of Deputies and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, it was my great privilege to testify before the Lambeth Commission. I am deeply grateful to these sisters and brothers in Christ who have accepted such a difficult and even daunting challenge. How shall the Anglican Communion continue? How shall 80 million of us, from more than 160 nations, continue to join hands in witness and mission in the midst of our differences?

"We being many are one in Christ". We many are called, not just to a people and a place, but to a challenging moment in God's history. The differences which divide us are serious and important. Yet our discipleship requires that we not abandon the Great Commission, nor the New Commandment to love one another. We must not forget Jesus' orders to Peter, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs."

As I write this, I have not yet seen the Commission's report. I pledge, however, that I will use the office I occupy to do my utmost to help our Church prayerfully listen to the report and its recommendations. I trust the work of the Commission as I left with deep respect for Archbishop Eames and his colleagues. It is clear to me this is more than a family struggle; it is an opportunity for each of us to grow in Christ.

We live in an age of dread and enmity. Civil discourse is too often giving way to impugning motives and assassinating character. None of these is a Gospel value. I call on all parties for Godly restraint. May we all lower our voices and listen for the bidding of the Holy Spirit. May we converse with one another, especially with those with whom we disagree. May we especially remember that our God is the God of all truth, and not just the part of the truth we may prefer. And it is the fullness of God's truth that makes us free.

As we are reminded in Colossians: "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."