It was with significant prayer and reflection that the Bishop of South Carolina, the Rt. Rev. Mark J. Lawrence, and the South Carolina deputation to the 77th General Convention took steps to differentiate themselves from actions taken by the convention which, in the words of Bishop Lawrence “mark a departure from the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as this Church has received them.”

On the morning of July 11, 2012, five of South Carolina’s seven deputies did not return to the house floor. Bishop Lawrence, after addressing the House of Bishops in a private session, also left the convention.

The full deputation released a statement, July 10, 2012, which said:

“Due to the actions of General Convention, the South Carolina Deputation has concluded that we cannot continue with business as usual. We all agree that we cannot and will not remain on the floor of the House and act as if all is normal. John Burwell and Lonnie Hamilton have agreed to remain at Convention to monitor further developments and by their presence demonstrate that our action is not to be construed as a departure from the Episcopal Church. Please pray for those of us who will be traveling early and for those who remain.”

Those who did not return to the house of deputies were the Rev. Canon Jim Lewis, the Very Rev. David Thurlow, Elizabeth “Boo” Pennewill, Lydia Evans, and Reid Boylston.

Bishop Lawrence stated that the departure of the deputies should not be understood as a departure from the Episcopal Church. “Frankly, a deputation to General Convention has no authority to make such a decision.”

Bishop Lawrence, in a private session of the House of Bishops on July 11, requested and received a point of personal privilege. During this time he expressed things for which he was grateful during this convention, the “intentional engagement in honesty and collegiality with fellow bishops.” He also expressed his “grievous concern” with changes to the canons through resolutions D002 and D019, which have to do with transgender identity and expression, as well as with resolution A049, which authorized a provisional rite for the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions.

“These resolutions in my opinion,” said Lawrence, “are disconcerting changes to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church--to which every bishop, priest and deacon is asked to conform. More importantly they mark a departure from the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as this Church has received them, therein making it necessary for me to strongly differentiate myself from such actions.“

At the conclusion of this private session Lawrence told the House of Bishops that he would not be continuing in the remainder of the Convention.

“I concur with the assessment of our canon theologian, the Rev. Dr. Kendall Harmon, when he described the actions of this General Convention as ‘unbiblical, unchristian, unanglican and

unseemly,'" said Lawrence.

Bishop Lawrence will be sending a statement to diocesan clergy, which is to be read in parishes on Sunday, July 15, 2012.

"Our deputation and I appreciate the prayers of so many in the Diocese of South Carolina," said Lawrence. "I know that some did not think we should attend the 77th General Convention, but I believe our presence and witness was important and even respected by many on both sides of the theological divide. As St. Paul states regarding his ministry, '…we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.'" (2 Corinthians 4:2)