

M E M O

October 5, 1994

From: Katherine Kringen, Senior Warden
Grace Episcopal Church
1009 Twin Oaks Drive
Madison, SD 57042

To: Senior Wardens, Episcopal Churches at DeSmet, Flandreau,
Milbank, and Webster.

Re: Bishop Robertson's decision to withdraw permission for
deacons to distribute the sacraments except in "emergencies".

The enclosed letter to Bishop Robertson conveys our concerns regarding the Bishop's decision to withdraw permission for deacons to distribute the sacraments except in "emergencies".

If you feel as we do, we suggest you join us by either adding your signature to the enclosed, or by writing your own letter to the Bishop. As Senior Warden at Grace Episcopal in Madison, our congregation has asked me to also meet with the Bishop. If you agree with our position on his decision, we suggest that the Senior Warden from each of the churches listed above join me in making an appointment to meet personally with the Bishop to discuss his decision.

Please advise me of your decision as soon as possible. My home phone is 605-256-4998, and my address is: 1009 Twin Oaks Dr. Madison, SD 57042.

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Katherine Kringen, Sr.Warden
Grace Episcopal Church
1009 Twin Oaks Drive
Madison, SD 57042

October 5, 1994

The Right Reverend Creighton L. Robertson
Diocese of South Dakota
500 S. Main Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57102

Dear Bishop Robertson:

The members of Grace Episcopal Church in Madison would like to present the following reactions, dilemmas, and possible solutions stemming from your recent decision that the distribution of the sacraments by a deacon, except in "emergencies, is inappropriate. The situation at Grace is this. We are a self-supporting mission church, and while able to tithe to the Diocese and pay a stipend to visiting clergy, we do not have the funds to pay a full-time priest. We have been dependent for many years upon part-time ministry by priests. Up until this summer, we have been fortunate to have Fr. Allen Lewis at least twice a month. Even though arrangements had been made to continue coverage by a priest twice a month during the summer, that coverage failed to materialize. On the other two Sundays of the month, Deacon Bridget Moore from Brookings ministers to us. If permission for distributing the sacraments is taken from her, our opportunity to receive the sacraments will greatly diminish.

In the Episcopal Church the Eucharist is the center of the Sunday Service of Worship. We recognize that South Dakota does not have enough priests to serve the flock as it should be served. This means that the Diocese must do its best to make this hardship fall as lightly as possible upon the sheep. We, respectfully, urge you to remember that for many churches in South Dakota, due to lack of funds, no clergy is available. To deny the Body of Christ to the faithful because they cannot afford a full-time priest sits ill, and bodes ill, for and upon the Episcopal Church in South Dakota. Frankly, we believe that Our Lord would prefer His flock to be fed than for His flock to starve while the "rules" were observed with pharisaical vigor.

Should you determine that this decision must stand, we then need to know the definition of an "emergency." How long must we go without the Eucharist before we are allowed to turn to the services of a deacon?

While we recognize that you, as the Bishop of this Diocese, have the right to make what theological determinations you deem appropriate, we also, respectfully, remind you that you are

responsible for the spiritual health of all your flock, regardless of size or financial circumstances. We need your help. We need our Bishop to provide us with the sacraments, not deny them to us, nor put further hindrances in the way of our receiving them than our poverty already places.

Believe it or not, priests are not lining up to serve us, or other churches like us. We are fortunate to have some priestly coverage, and we recognize that. It has made us even more appreciative of those deacons who have been our steady bulwark in a time when other fully ordained shepherds seem to be unavailable. It is wearying, wearing, and a perplexity to our spirit to have to fight our own church to receive the sacraments on a regular basis. As it says in the prayer book, "Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten; nor the hope of the poor be taken away."

Sincerely,

Katherine Kringen

Grace Episcopal Church
Katherine Kringen, Sr. Warden

cc: Senior Warden, Mr. Lyal Larson, DeSmet
Senior Warden, Mr. Leonard Eller, Flandreau
Senior Warden, Mr. Frances Comstock, Milbank
Senior Warden, Mr. Monte Rougemont, Webster
Father Allen Lewis.

Dear Bishop:

The members of Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, South Dakota, would like to present the following reactions, dilemmas, and possible solutions stemming from your recent decision that the administration of the Sacrament by a deacon, except in "emergencies," is theologically unsound:

First of all, the situation at Grace Episcopal Church is this: We are a self-supporting mission church which, while able to tithe to the Diocese and pay a stipend to visiting priests, does not have the funds to pay a full-time minister. We have been dependent for many years upon part-time ministry by priests for the administration of the sacrament. In the last year, we have had itinerant priests, with an attendance rating -- if we were lucky -- of once a month. In the last two months, i.e., eight Sundays, we have had a priest for one of them. Deacon Bridgid of Brookings ministers to us twice a month. If the administration of the Eucharist is taken from her we shall, frankly, be starving to death.

We do not say "starving" lightly. In the Episcopal church, the Eucharist is the center of the Sunday services, and so it should be. It is the Bread of Heaven, the Body of Christ. We recognize that South Dakota does not have enough priests to serve the flock as the flock should be served: but this means that the Diocese must do its best to make this hardship fall as lightly as possible upon the sheep. We respectfully urge you to remember that, for many churches in South Dakota, a deacon is the only ordained minister available, due to simple lack of funds. To deny the Body of Christ to the faithful because they cannot afford a full-time minister sits ill, and bodes ill, for and upon the Episcopal Church in South Dakota. Frankly, we feel that our Lord would prefer His flock to be fed than for His flock to starve while the "rules" were observed with pharisaical rigor.

It is our understanding that the chief reason this decision was handed down was because some deacons were abusing their authority by using the full Eucharistic form of worship in the prayer book, as opposed to the Morning Prayer service with the passage for Deacons. We respectfully, but desperately, urge that you consider disciplining the offending deacons instead of punishing those of us who are dependent upon the services of a deacon to receive the sacraments.

Secondly, should you determine that this decision must stand, then we demand to know the definition of an "emergency." How long must we go without the Body of Christ before we are allowed to turn to the services of a deacon?

Thirdly, while we recognize that you as the Bishop of this Diocese have the right to make what theological determinations you see fit, we also respectfully, but firmly, remind you that

you are responsible for the spiritual health of your flock, i.e., ALL of the members of the Episcopal church in South Dakota, whether rich or poor, in a cathedral or mission church. We need your help. Not only do we need it, but we demand, as our right, that our bishop provide us with the sacraments, not deny them to us, nor put further hindrances in the way of our receiving them than our poverty already places.

Believe it or not, priests are not lining up to serve us, or other churches like us. We are fortunate to receive our one priest every six to eight weeks, and we recognize that. It has made us even more appreciative of those deacons who have been our steady bulwark in a time when more fully ordained shepherds seem to be nonexistent. But it is wearying, wearing, and a perplexity to our spirit to have to fight our own church to receive the sacraments on a regular basis. As it says in the prayer book, "Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten; Nor the hope of the poor be taken away."

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Grace + F

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distribution

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mission for

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coverage

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