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The Diocese of Virginia

A News Release from the Communications Office of the Diocese of Virginia

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Mission Congregation Dissolves Without Notice

On Sunday, October 15, the congregation and leadership of Christ our Lord, Lake Ridge, Virginia, a parochial mission of All Saints', Dale City since 1992, voted to dissolve itself and reform under the aegis of the Diocese of North Kigezi in the Anglican Church of Uganda. The Rev. George Beaven had been vicar of the congregation.

Formal notice of the action was received by the Bishop's Office on Thursday, October 19 in a letter from All Saints' rector the Rev. John Guernsey. As the rector of the mission's Founding Church, Mr. Guernsey has authority to appoint the vicar of the mission with the concurrence of the Bishop.

"I am saddened by this departure and by the mission's apparent failure to thrive," said Bishop Lee. "I am also disappointed to not have heard of plans for this action directly from the leadership of the congregation prior to their taking this action," he added, noting that as of this release he had heard nothing from Mr. Beaven.

The church structure on Omisol Road in Lake Ridge, title to which is held by the Diocese, was abandoned following the Sunday decision. Though the building was abandoned, the note securing the property has a balance due of \$420,000 and is five months in arrears.

The property was purchased in 1997 with a \$500,000 loan from the Diocesan Missionary Society. The note was co-signed by the Bishop of Virginia and by Mr. Beaven acting as vicar. However, All Saints', the mission's founding congregation, could ultimately be held accountable for the debt under the Canons of the Diocese.

Also not clear is the status of the former vicar, who appears to have abandoned not only the real property but also the Church in which he was ordained by Bishop Lee in 1992. The Bishop has asked the Standing Committee to determine his status.

Though the real estate was abandoned to the Diocese, other property -- computer equipment, sound equipment, intellectual property, the parish register and bank accounts -- were not turned over to the Diocese.

On Thursday, Oct. 19, Bishop Suffragan David Colin Jones visited the property and secured a number of documents and other items and has taken possession of the keys to the property. Arrangements are being made by the Diocese to provide continuity of utility service which had been scheduled by the Vestry Committee to be terminated on Friday, Oct. 20 despite the fact that the property is also under lease to a Hispanic Christian congregation. The Diocese will restore an Episcopal presence in the church on Sunday, Oct. 29.