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Madison, S. D. 57042  
February 15, 1976

The Right Reverend Walter H. Jones  
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota  
P. O. Box 517  
Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57101

Right Reverend and Dear Sir:

The members of the Madison Grace Church Bishop's Committee and a number of interested men and women of the Church met this morning after the service; there was unanimity on the following matters, and I was asked to report them to you.

We believe that appointment of Douglas Dunn as some kind of official lay reader would be purposeless and probably harmful; to a man, we warmly oppose it. We have several lay readers who are more able than Douglas Dunn, and thus we do not need his services. Moreover, it is quite likely that members of Grace Church will see things differently than a young man with limited education and experience, and they may take offense at being sermonized by an undergraduate. Also, we do not feel that our limited resources ought to be used to support a college student. We are rather recalcitrant about his coming here; we fail to see any advantages to the plan, and we see several disadvantages.

On the other hand, we need a priest. We firmly believe that if we had an active full-time priest, we could grow into a financially self-sufficient parish which would be an asset to the Diocese.

We discussed our future at a parish meeting on October 26, 1975 (which you were unfortunately unable to attend). Given the growth of the community and college and other facts, we were convinced that for growth to self-sufficiency we needed only a resident full-time priest who is a good match with the parish. In addition to new members of the community, there are life-long Episcopalians who need to be called on by a priest and urged to become active members. For many, a church without a resident priest is not a real church, and potential members remain only potential. Thus, we resolved to take the necessary steps to try to obtain a full-time resident priest. We realized that we would need aid from the Diocese (probably about half the priest's salary the first year, then less). Father Campbell assured us that aid would be given and considered a sound investment. We left the meeting feeling optimistic and eager for future growth.

Last week Archdeacon Davis was with us, and he spoke of an area ministry which would include Madison. With due

respect, we have had an area ministry for years, and clearly it doesn't work. (Of course he said that this area ministry would be different. The only important difference we could see was that before we at least had a priest, and if that didn't work, it certainly will not work with a mere college student.

To be frank, we believe we are being cheated. By definition, we are a mission parish because we need aid from the Diocese. Yet, for the last four years we have received no aid from the Diocese, and instead we have aided the Diocese: we have met our quota, overpaid our quota, and increased the quota each year. Now we are asking for aid from the Diocese for a resident priest, and we strongly feel we deserve it.

(When we felt we deserved a full-time resident priest and had the ability to grow into a self-sufficient parish, but were not only not offered a full-time resident priest, but offered only a student who would probably be more harmful than helpful, there was unanimous indignation and anger.)

Father Campbell told us repeatedly that funds exist in the Diocese to help us. Perhaps he was mistaken (although your silence on this matter since October 26 seemed to mean consent). Nevertheless, our experience has taught us that if there is a desire to do something important, the funds can be found. We believe that nothing could be more important to the Diocese than providing a priest for a significant body of people. Indeed, that seems the first duty of the Diocese.

It is sadly ironic that while there is a vast surplus of Episcopal priests, we should seek in vain for a priest.

We believe that we ought to and can be given a full-time resident priest. If the Grace Church Bishop's Committee is allowed to aid in selecting a priest who is a good match for the parish, there is no reason that we cannot soon become self sufficient.

If it is financially impossible for the Diocese to give us sufficient aid to have a full-time resident priest (and it would not take so terribly much aid, after all), perhaps a part-time resident priest who has another job (teaching at Dakota State College seems ideal) could be found.

It may be possible to find a priest who combines the advantages of both. There are a few priests in the Church who could devote their full time in a parish like Madison, but who because of other resources would not need a full-time priest's salary.

In any case, sending Douglas Dunn here as a student lay reader would be worse than nothing, and, as I said, we strongly oppose it, to a man.

May we, the Grace Church Bishop's Committee, meet with you soon? Please, can it be very soon? We can come to Sioux Falls, but, obviously, it would be easier to schedule if you were able to meet with us here. Please let us know. You can contact me, if you wish, but Merrill Hunter or others are perhaps more easily reached.

May we ask that you not invite Douglas Dunn to our meeting with you? We have met with him twice in the last fortnight and understand his point of view. If we are to be frank, as we must, we are bound to offend him and hurt his feelings. We are sure you agree that no purpose would be served in causing him this pain. As he indicated he plans to move to Madison on the first of March, perhaps you will want to ask him to suspend his plans until this matter is resolved.

Faithfully,

Eric Johnson  
for Grace Church  
Madison