

CR-4 Courtesy Resolution Honoring the Memory and Ministry of the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee

The Committee recommends **adoption** of CR-4.

Whereas, Peter James Lee was born May 11, 1938, in Greenville, Mississippi, and earned his bachelor's degree in history from Washington and Lee University in 1960; and

Whereas, after an initial career in journalism, that included the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*; serving in U.S. Army Intelligence, 1961-1962; and completing a year of study at the Duke University School of Law, he heeded the call to the ordained ministry, graduating from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1967, followed by ordination to the diaconate June 29, 1967, and to the priesthood May 8, 1968; and

Whereas, he ministered as Deacon at St. John's Cathedral, Jacksonville, Florida, 1967-1968; Assistant Rector, St. John's, Lafayette Square, Washington, DC, 1968-1970; and Rector, Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1971-1984; and

Whereas, from a field of six nominees, he was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Virginia, February 22, 1984, at a Special Meeting of the Council of the Diocese, at St. George's, Fredericksburg; was consecrated at the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, Washington, DC, on May 18, 1984; and succeeded the Rt. Rev. Robert Bruce Hall as Bishop Diocesan following Hall's sudden death May 27, 1985; and

Whereas, through the course of his 25-year episcopate, the second longest in the Diocese of Virginia, he led us with humane decisiveness, emphasizing unity, love, and witness to the Gospel, communicating clearly, quickly, and responsively to clergy and lay people alike, demonstrating nuanced and welcome appreciation for viewpoints different than his, acting speedily and effectively to support our clergy in their times of personal crisis, while exercising his ministry with energetic intelligence, formidable preparation, fluent writing, and a consistent excellence over a generation that made the administration of our complicated diocese and our robust people, congregations, and differences look easy; and

Whereas, during his episcopate, he ordained more than 200 men and women to the priesthood, while steadily encouraging and assisting in the recruiting, training, and formation of a generation of lay leaders; and

Whereas, he oversaw major capital improvements to the two diocesan conference centers, Roslyn, Richmond, and Shrine Mont, Orkney Springs and helped strengthen the system of Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia; and

Whereas, he helped promote mission, both foreign and domestic, by our people, congregations, and diocese. He did so by, among many such efforts:

- Working with Council to establish a program to financially support newly confirmed diocesan youth to undertake mission trips;
- Developing the partnership relationship with the Diocese of Christ the King, South Africa, efforts coupled with advocacy to dismantle apartheid;
- Helping establish the Triangle of Hope between the dioceses of Virginia, Liverpool, England, and Kumasi, Ghana, to transform the shared history of slavery through repentance, reconciliation, and healing;
- Strongly supporting many diocesan efforts and partnerships with dioceses, churches, schools, and hospitals in the Episcopal Church of Sudan and South Sudan, in dangerous times of warfare and persecution there, including his own mission trip there in 2008; and

Whereas, he earned the trust of his Episcopal colleagues and the wider church as a wise, influential, and thoughtful voice in the House of Bishops and at General Convention, both in his comments and by establishing *Center Aisle*, a daily news and opinion publication at General Convention by the Diocese of Virginia to provide broad, middle ground discussion of critical issues and elections before the Conventions in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009; and

Whereas, he provided leadership to bodies throughout the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion including President of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief (now Episcopal Relief and Development), 1987-1993; Founding President of the American Friends of the Diocese of Jerusalem, 1989-1996; Chair of the Board of Trustees of Virginia Theological Seminary, 1993-2009; Chaplain of the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, Washington, DC (1994-2000), Trustee(1998-2012) and President (2009-2012) of the Church Pension Fund, and Chairman of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the United States (2003-2018); and

Whereas, at the 2003 General Convention, in his words, he "chose hope" for LGBTQ+ people, by voting to approve the ordination of the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson, a partnered gay man, as Bishop of New Hampshire, and by voting to support General Convention's authorization of dioceses to allow same sex blessings, actions heartening to many in the church while enraging many others, triggering extraordinarily painful divisions within The Episcopal Church and within our Diocese; and

Whereas, those decisions subjected him and his family to tremendous vilification, and threats, which he met with quiet but steely bravery, consistent gracious responses, and a steadfast refusal to respond in kind; and

Whereas, beginning in 2006, he led our diocese through much of the painful and difficult time following the departure of multiple congregations in our diocese from The Episcopal Church, including complex, costly, and highly contentious litigation over the

efforts by nine congregations to leave the Episcopal Church while retaining the property belonging to the Diocese, litigation ultimately resolved in 2014 in favor of the diocesan claims; and

Whereas, after his resignation as Bishop of the Diocese of Virginia in 2009, he continued to minister in other locales, serving as Interim Dean of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, California, 2009-2010; Interim Dean of General Theological Seminary, New York, New York, 2010-2011; Interim Dean of the American Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Paris, France, 2012-2013; Provisional Bishop of the Diocese of East Carolina, 2013-2014; Interim Rector, Christ Church, Georgetown, Washington, DC, 2014-2015; Assisting Bishop, Diocese of North Carolina, 2015-2017; and Bishop-in-Residence, Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill, North Carolina;

Now therefore be it

Resolved, that the 228th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia records its profound sense of loss at the passing of the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee on July 2, 2022, an extraordinarily gifted servant of the Lord, who gave every fiber of his being to the faithful ministry he exercised with and among us, to our benefit and the Gospel's; and be it further

Resolved, that we give deep thanks to God for the joy of having walked with him as shepherd of this diocese, the legacy of his long and faithful leadership of it, his steadfast Christian faith, and his ministry in the wider church and the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, that the 228th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia directs the Secretary to send a presentation copy of this resolution to his beloved wife of nearly 57 years, Kristina "Kristy" Knapp Lee and their daughter, Stewart, and son, James.