

Statement by The Bishop of Atlanta

June 4th, 1963

Since the middle of March there has been widespread concern over The Lovett School and its admissions policy in regard to race. At the time of the first publicity about this matter, The Bishop of Atlanta had never met with the Board of Trustees of The Lovett School, knew relatively few of the Trustees, knew nothing of its procedures regarding admissions and had never seen a copy of the Charter. However, both privately to a delegation of Trustees when the present school was organized and publicly to the press in January, the Bishop of Atlanta had established that the Lovett School could claim no connections with the Episcopal Church if any form of segregation on the basis of race was practiced.

Therefore, since the middle of March, The Bishop of Atlanta has withheld public comment about the Lovett School until facts about the Charter, attitudes of the Trustees and all other relevant information could be obtained, and also until full negotiations could be conducted with the Trustees about their policy regarding admissions according to race. The full facts are now known to the Bishop of Atlanta, and all negotiations have been completed by him as of last week. Therefore, this statement to the public is now in order.

First, a word should be said about the history of The Lovett School, which prior to 1959 for several years was named the Lovett Episcopal School. For many years The Lovett School was a small private school, which upon the retirement of its founder was deeded to the Cathedral of St. Philip. For several years thereafter, it was an adjunct of the Cathedral of St. Philip and was known as The Lovett Episcopal School. In 1959 the school was deeded to an independent Board of Trustees and again became known by its Charter as The Lovett School. Certain connections to the Episcopal Church were incorporated into the Charter by the Board of Trustees and these connections have been maintained by the choice and will of the Board of Trustees: namely, the use of The Book of Common Prayer in Chapel Services, the teachings of the principles of the Episcopal Church in certain classes in religion, the Dean of The Cathedral of St. Philip as Chairman of the Board which fulfilled a personal request of the school's founder, and the selection by the Board of Trustees of two-thirds of its members who are to be members of the Episcopal Church with one-half of these Episcopal members being approved by the Chapter of The Cathedral of St. Philip. Also, the Board of Trustees currently employs a priest of the Episcopal Church as headmaster of the school.

According to the best legal advice obtainable, including the Chancellor of the Diocese of Atlanta, The Lovett School is now an independent, autonomous corporation, subject to no ecclesiastical control by the Bishop or Diocese of Atlanta, by the Cathedral of St. Philip, or by any other group in The Episcopal Church. However, while this is true and prevents any official action by the Bishop or any Church body such as has been done with fully Episcopal institutions to require compliance with the principles of our Church, and while the connections of The Lovett School with the Episcopal Church are according to the Charter of the school entirely at the will of the Board of Trustees, nevertheless the Bishop of Atlanta certainly and hopefully has some moral persuasion and influence with even such an autonomous Board, two-thirds of whose members are members of the Episcopal Church. Therefore, over the past two and a half months the Bishop of Atlanta has conducted quietly and intensively negotiations and conversations with many members of the Board of Trustees, both Episcopal and otherwise.

In spite of some unfavorable publicity, the Trustees have been deeply concerned with their responsibility toward the principles of the Episcopal Church, with which they have connections by their own choice. Some weeks ago for the first time they adopted a definite policy in which they acknowledged their allegiance to the prin-

ciples for which the Episcopal Church stands, specifically that segregation on the sole basis of race is inconsistent with the Christian religion, and stated their intention to implement this policy in conformity with the principles and practice of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta and reserved judgement, in the best interest of the school and its pupils, as to the date of implementation. As a first step, this was agreeable to the Bishop of Atlanta.

Since the adoption of this policy statement and commitment by the Trustees to the principles held by the Episcopal Church, the Trustees have been concerned with the implementation of this policy. However, even as discussions were taking place on such implementation, two inquiries for application and academic testing were received by The Lovett School, inquiries from two Episcopal families, both Negro, one from St. Paul's Church and the other from The Church of the Nativity in Atlanta.

The parents of the two children in these families were told by The Lovett School Administrative Staff to report on April 20th for the two children to be tested academically, which is the normal procedure before admissions. The father of one of the children came to the Archdeacon of the Bishop of Atlanta, in the Archdeacon's capacity as pastor of The Church of the Nativity, for advice and help from the Church to be sure the testing of his child would be accomplished without difficulty on the date given him for testing.

After consultation with a Lovett Trustee, it was ascertained that the headmaster had no authority to test the two Negro children since the entire Board had not completed plans for implementing their policy on admission. However, the Bishop informed the father, who had come to the Church, that if he decided to appear for the academic testing for his own child and that of the other child, the date for which was two days away, the Bishop would go with him and request in the name of the Episcopal Church that the children be tested as they had been instructed.

On April 20th, the Bishop's representative, The Canon to the Ordinary, was at Lovett School in case either of the two children appeared as instructed for academic testing. If they had appeared, the Bishop would then and there have issued a public statement against the actions of The Lovett School. These parents knew from the Bishop and Archdeacon that this would be done and the Church would be forced immediately to sever implied connections with the school and thereby end all possible hope of influencing the Trustees to implement their policy.

The father wrote a letter on April 20th in which he informed the Trustees that he was not appearing for the testing of the children but was not withdrawing his application. The parent of the other child sent a telegram with the same thought. Instead the parents indicated they would wait a reasonable time for the Board of Trustees to implement their policy with deliberate speed, pending the setting of another testing date by the Trustees for the academic year of '63-'64, because this would give the Bishop more time for the completion of negotiations before any complete dissociation of the Church from the school.

After this decision on the part of the parents of the two children who sought the advice and help of the Church, the Bishop again began a series of meetings with various Trustees in an effort to hasten the implementation of their policy and expedite the academic testing prior to possible admission of these two children.

The Trustees of The Lovett School understand what the public must understand; namely that, if The Lovett School remains in effect a segregated school, it can no longer be considered in any way related to the Episcopal Church, regardless of what references it may have in its Charter to the Episcopal Church. While no one but the Trustees may change the Charter of The Lovett School under the law, nevertheless

the only remaining alternative is for the Church to consider the school a private secular school.

However, the Bishop of Atlanta has hope and confidence that the Trustees of The Lovett School, being men of integrity and conscience, will very shortly implement their previously stated policy and will show Christian leadership for all the other Church-related institutions, whether such relation is to The Episcopal Church or to other Christian Churches both in the South and in the North. The Trustees at the request of the Bishop have indicated that their meeting and final plans will be forthcoming shortly.

It is the hope of the Bishop of Atlanta that an acceptable implementation of the policy of the Episcopal Church against discriminatory segregation, and now the policy also of the Lovett School, will be forthcoming from the Board of Trustees before the implied moral support of The Episcopal Church must be completely withdrawn and the school declared a private secular school from the point of view of The Episcopal Church.