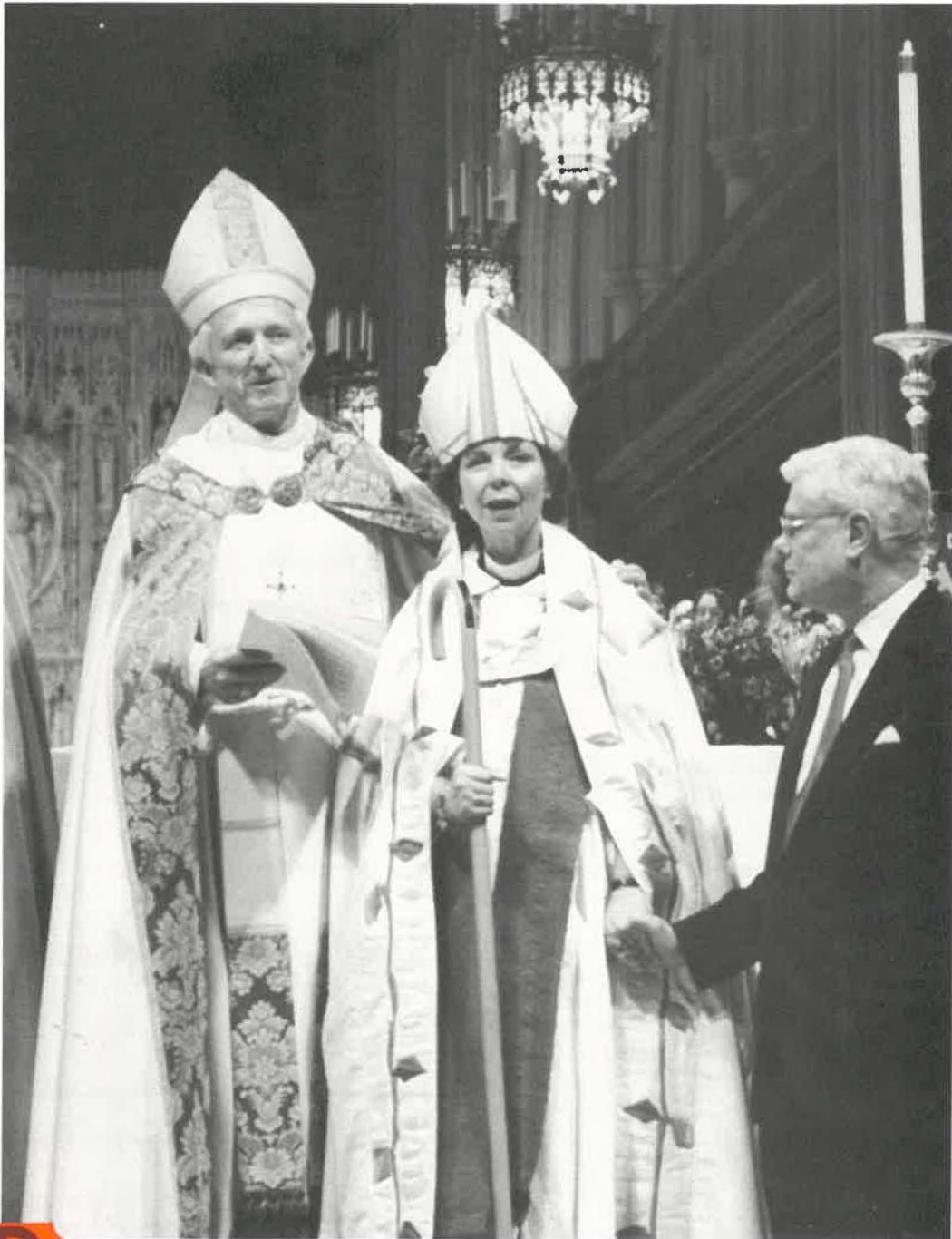


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# IN THIS CORNER

## What Happened to Advent?

Even though the question has gnawed at me for years, I knew just where to turn for an answer. A now-retired priest had responded to the question indirectly in a sermon years ago, and I never forgot it.

"When did Advent die in the Episcopal Church?" I asked, hoping his reply would be the same as I recalled.

"Are you going to identify me?" he shot back in a quick comeback on the telephone. I could almost see the twinkle in his eyes I remembered so well. "I've got my pension to think about, you know."

I agreed that his name would add little to this column.

"It died about 1930," he said, "about the time the secular Christmas took over."

Not having been around in that year, I can't speak to his premise, but I can't argue with him. The interesting variety of parish newsletters and bulletins and diocesan newspapers which crosses my desk has led me to believe that Advent isn't being taken very seriously by many congregations in the Episcopal Church. As examples, I cite the following:

- One parish announces the "hanging of the Christmas greens" for the afternoon of Advent 2, and two others observe this ritual on Advent 3.

- A cathedral presents its children's Christmas pageant during the liturgy on Advent 3.

- Another cathedral presents a program of Christmas music which it bills as a "traditional holiday favorite," on Dec. 6, Advent 2.

- A resource booklet, recently produced at the Episcopal Church Center, states: "While it is important to distinguish between Advent and Christmas in order to maintain the integrity of each season, the distinction need not be absolute."

- At least two Christmas carols and a Christmas anthem are sung in one parish on Sunday, Dec. 20, Advent 4.

- "Christmas Lessons and Carols" is performed at one parish and one cathedral on Advent 3.

- A parish presents its "nativity program" Dec. 4-5-6.

I realize my complaining about such practices will have no more effect than if I told my neighbor I was offended when he put up his Christmas tree and outdoor decorations Nov. 19. And I also understand that Advent observances have changed over the years. Perhaps it's not a "little Lent" as many were taught long ago, but rather a season of joy as we are hearing more frequently. Maybe those stunning blue vestments personify this short season better than violet.

I asked my venerable friend how in the midst of the secular bombardment of Christmas music, the proliferation of holiday decorations from Thanksgiving on, and the onslaught of Chia-Pet and Clapper commercials on TV, one was supposed to observe Advent.

"Ah, you've got Isaiah and John the Baptist and Mary to help you," he said. "If that's not enough, find yourself a good quiet day somewhere."

I hung up, feeling only slightly better about Advent.

DAVID KALVELAGE, editor

# CONTENTS

December 13, 1992

Advent 3

## FEATURES

### 10 True God from True God

by Boyd Wright

The little "i" and the mystery of Advent

## DEPARTMENTS

### 3 Letters

### 6 News

- Missionary Diocese of the Americas declares its independence

### 11 Editorials

### 13 People and Places

## ON THE COVER

The Rt. Rev. Jane Dixon, newly-consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Washington, holds the hand of her husband, David, while the Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Edmond Browning is behind her [p. 6].

ENS photo by James Solheim

# LETTERS

## Strong Parallel

Could it be that the church is being called to emphasize the study of the spiritual life in the place of its continued, further and prolonged study of sexuality?

As all of us are well aware, we are living in an age rightfully alarmed by the increasing damage being done to our fragile planet. We know that the rarified, pure atmosphere surrounding mountains, seashore and countryside is frequently overpowered by the noxious fumes of a processing plant or an oil refinery. Furthermore, everyone who comes into close contact with these dispensers of the aroma is saturated with it and becomes transmitters of the same.

There is today a strong parallel to the impaired ecosystem of nature in the erosion which is nibbling away at the life of the church and the individuals within it.

If Christians can return to the rewarding and fulfilling pursuit of the Christian life as outlined in holy scripture, church tradition and the examples of holy souls whose victories are recorded or merely known, we might begin to understand what Henri Nouwen meant when he said "Celibacy is the new frontier of sexuality."

As God's highest creation, men and women are called to fulfill their potential destiny by developing along the cutting edge of the spiritual growth line and refusing to be overwhelmed by the current of the times. When we are inundated by the climate of this present age, our interior lives of devotion and commitment are compelled to become increasingly operative or our spiritual lives perish and we are left with chaos, darkness and death.

Sr. VIRGINIA of All Saints  
All Saints' Convent

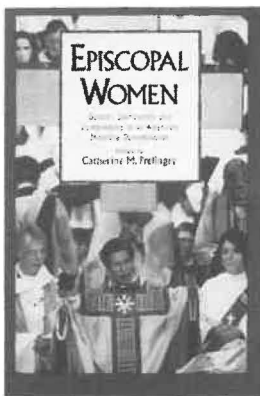
Catonsville, Md.

## Double Standards

The recent flurry of articles dealing with sexual indiscrepancies and escapades prompts me to write. No need, I think, to repeat the names of the "criminals" again. Everybody knows them by now. These observations extend also to the fundamentalists and Roman Catholics, who, despite their denials, are just like the rest of us.

First, I wonder if the actions and  
(Continued on next page)

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**EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES**  
816 E. Juneau Ave., Milwaukee, Wis. 53202  
TELEPHONE 414-276-5420  
FAX 414-276-7483

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editor and general manager  
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**LETTERS**

*(Continued from previous page)*

motives of the so-called victims should  
be subject to at least as much scrutiny  
as those of the "guilty"? It would seem  
that unless the perpetrator had a gun  
or a knife, or the victim was mentally  
incompetent, there must have been  
consent freely given.

Second, one seldom reads of the  
other, and according to our Lord,  
more serious "sins and offenses" —  
pride, envy, greed, sloth, jealousy, etc.  
They must not be as juicy in the telling  
and retelling, over and over again.  
What about the lazy and unimaginative  
clergy or indifferent laity in our  
church? Is sex the only good reading?

I suspect God often regrets provid-  
ing for human procreation by means  
of sexual activity. Or making it as  
much fun? None of this excuses, of  
course, the childish attitude held by  
many, or the double standards or hy-  
pocrisy, or above all, the self-righteous  
finger-pointing that inevitably follows  
in the wake of "misconduct."

ROBERTA DEVEREAUX  
New York, N.Y.

**Much the Same**

The heat generated by recent corre-  
spondence on the relationship between  
alcoholism and homosexuality suggests  
there may be more to that idea than  
we had thought.

Denial that homosexuality is a dis-  
ease has been rife in liberal intellectual  
circles since the American Psychiatric  
Association led the way decades ago by  
substituting political pressure for sci-  
entific inquiry. Homosexuality and  
substance abuse often go together, as is  
affirmed by no less an authority than  
Robert Williams, erstwhile priest and  
friend of the Bishop of Newark.

Mr. Williams writes, "We are  
deeply spiritual people by nature," by  
whom he means homosexuals. But  
there is a "wide-spread epidemic of  
substance abuse in our community."  
He remarks on "the astounding num-  
bers of our people who sometimes ex-  
press an almost frantic tendency to  
climb on the Twelve-Step band-  
wagon."

His book, *Just As I Am*, should be  
on every parish and diocesan reading  
list now that our imperious General  
Convention has decreed that we must  
(again!) study "human sexuality." Fr.  
Williams writes very well, and his

book is worth its modest price if only for his insider comments on Bishops Swing and Spong.

(The Rev.) Canon WILLIAM E. CRAIG  
St. James' Church  
Sonora, Calif.

### Do We Understand?

Critics of Bishop Browning's address to the annual convention of Integrity [TLC, Aug. 16] fail to realize that we honestly do not understand what homosexuality is.

Some recent research suggests that a genetic element may be involved in producing homosexuality in some persons. Should this be proved, then we will have to view homosexuality in the same context as alcoholism, a condition to be understood, not condemned [TLC, July 12].

Most homosexuals I meet are kind and caring people. The Old Testament and St. Paul condemn aberrant heterosexual behavior, just as much as aberrant homosexual acts. Blessed with a marriage complete in every aspect, I cannot personally comprehend homosexuality, and I believe the church is correct in proceeding slowly in this area. Meanwhile, we might follow Jesus' advice, "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8).

STUART S. BAMFORTH  
New Orleans, La.

### Rare Companion

The Rev. Harry Cook makes the good point that the church should not be directed by the comfort zones of the members [TLC, Oct. 18]. He also runs into danger when he assumes God's blessing on a liberal agenda for the church — as evidenced by past success and predicted decline for that agenda and its supporters.

The traditional Christianity he disparages is hardly a comfortable religion. If we are faithful to a Founder who insists on the "narrow way," who declares that one looking back from the plow is an unfit disciple, and who declines to repeal one jot or tittle of the law then comfort will be a rare companion. The reality is that Amos, Elijah and Jeremiah had little to fear from Gallup polls. The masses (as opposed to the governing classes) supported their work in principle; the rub came when it was time to support them in deed.

As members of our church's govern-

ing class, Bishops Pike, Moore and Spong should never be included among the prophets. Prophets always call us back to our origins — in the covenants struck at Golgatha and Sinai — while these men (children of God though they are) call us to a revelation without scriptural precedent. If God is calling us back to the faith once delivered, and the majority welcomed that, then God be praised.

(The Rev.) JAMES WILSON  
St. Stephen's Church  
Gilroy, Calif.

### Protection

Referring to Elaine Stone's article, "Viva el Papa" [TLC, Nov. 8], isn't something terribly wrong when a "beloved pope, spiritual leader of 800 million souls," has to travel around in a cage, or have soldiers with guns all over the place to protect him?

ROBERT O. DORUM  
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

### Inclusive Lord

In the claims of "exclusivity" versus "inclusivity," many of your correspondents fail to mention the Lord who is definitely inclusive in his welcome to all human beings to the fellowship of the church. One problem is that some do not want to hear his "Go and sin no more." We are all sinners and we all fail miserably, but, in the fellowship of the Redeemer, it is impossible for him to do much with us if our perception is that he said, "Go and sin some more."

The church's doors must always be wide to all sinners, but if she does not give healing for our sins, and teaches there is no sin, the gates of hell shall prevail against such an apostate organization.

(The Very Rev.) LEWIS A. PAYNE  
St. Andrew's Church  
Carbondale, Ill.

### And Amen!

Re: "The Best of Liberalism" [TLC, Nov. 8] and the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr., Amen, I say, Amen!

MARY M. KELLEY  
Lacey, Wash.

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## We're Independent, Group Declares

The Missionary Diocese of the Americas (MDA), a non-geographic entity formed by the Episcopal Synod of America, has declared its independence and has become the Episcopal Missionary Church (EMC). The action took place Nov. 18-20 in the missionary diocese's convention in suburban Houston.

By creating a new church, the group officially severed ties with the Episcopal Church in reaction to what its founders regard as the "increasing liberalism and secularism of the faith."

The Rt. Rev. A. Donald Davis, who had been president of the missionary diocese, was elected unanimously to lead the new church by the 50 delegates at the convention. Bishop Davies, formerly Bishop of Dallas, Fort Worth and the American Churches in Europe, said he would resign from the Episcopal House of Bishops.

"The implications of our actions are very great indeed, but the freedom to proclaim the gospel is essential," Bishop Davies said. "That freedom is now ours. It has proved impossible to

live with the errors of ecclesiastical liberalism combined with the dramatic shift that has now occurred in England's mother church of Anglicanism."

The Episcopal Synod's president, the Rt. Rev. Clarence Pope, Bishop of Fort Worth, called the formation of the EMC "a supreme expression of frustration with the institutional church." He said the decision in England has forced traditionalists worldwide to question their positions, and the EMC "is one example of such reassessment, as they no longer regard communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury as a priority issue."

As for the ESA, "We remain resolute in attempting to secure our life, witness and future within the Episcopal Church," he said.

Four men were nominated by the convention as candidates for bishops in the new church, and Bishop Davies ordained three men as deacons. The Rev. Jon Lindenauer, public relations officer for the EMC, said the names of the four were not being made public

yet, but that those names would be sent to each of the EMC's churches and voting would be done through the mail by orders. It is hoped the bishops would be consecrated in late January.

"The separation (from the synod) was very amicable," Fr. Lindenauer said. "I'm sure we'll continue to have a close and cordial relationship with them."

Fr. Lindenauer said more than 30 churches will be members of the EMC, but he wasn't sure how many members there were. Reunion with the "continuing" churches, which separated from the Episcopal Church during the 1970s and '80s, will be pursued, he added.

The three deacons ordained were the Rev. Robert L. Wise and the Rev. Fletcher J. Ownbey, both of Oklahoma City, and the Rev. Frederick G. Erb, III of St. Luke's Church, Richmond, Va., which left the Episcopal Church to join MDA.

The EMC will have its headquarters in Aiken, S.C.

## Bishop Dixon Consecrated in Washington

The second woman bishop in the Episcopal Church, third in the Anglican Communion, has begun her new ministry in the Diocese of Washington. The Rt. Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon was consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Washington Nov. 19 in Washington National Cathedral in the midst of a congregation of more than 2,000.

The other two Anglican women bishops joined in the service. The Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris, Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts, first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion, and the Rt. Rev. Penelope Jamieson, Bishop of Dunedin, New Zealand, the second, were co-consecrators with the Rt. Rev. Ronald Haines, Bishop of Washington. The Most Rev. Edmond Browning, Presiding Bishop, was chief consecrator.

Two persons made public objections to the consecration when Bishop Browning invited such statements. "The completion of this service will be a divisive act," said Victoria Ebell. "This is a theological matter, not a case of rights."



Bishop Dixon

ENS

Bishop Dixon's statement last May that she would ordain open homosexuals to the priesthood was challenged by Charles Quigley. "By supporting the blessing of same-sex unions and by ordaining non-repentant homosexuals and lesbians, you would go against your priestly vows . . . and go against God's law," he said.

When Bishop Browning said he understood the objections, but would proceed with the consecration, he was

applauded, and about two dozen objectors walked out of the cathedral.

About 20 bishops laid hands on Bishop Dixon, who then was presented to the congregation by Bishop Browning to sustained applause.

Lay theologian Verna Dozier of Washington was the preacher. "For the first time in its history, the Episcopal Church in the United States is on the verge of schism between those who see the faith as absolutely once delivered and those who see God as always doing a new thing," she said.

Maria Walker, widow of the late Bishop John T. Walker of Washington, read the epistle in English and Spanish, and Rabbi Mordechai Liebling read the Old Testament lesson in English and Hebrew.

Bishop Dixon, 55, has been rector of St. Philip's Church, Laurel, Md., for the past six years, and was the second woman rector in the Diocese of Washington. She also served parishes in Washington and Burke, Va., following her ordination to the priesthood in 1982.

## Bishop Leonard Seeks Way to 'Preserve Anglican Identity'

While the Episcopal Church wrestled with various issues following approval of the ordination of women in 1976, the Rt. Rev. Graham Leonard spoke out for traditionalists who opposed such ordinations. Now that women's ordination to the priesthood has been approved by the Church of England [TLC, Dec. 6], the retired Bishop of London seems headed for some kind of allegiance with the Roman Catholic Church.

In an article for the *Catholic Herald*, an English Roman Catholic publication, Bishop Leonard urged creation of an Anglican enclave within Roman Catholicism and said a "high-placed member of the Catholic Church" told him "it would not receive the cold shoulder from the Vatican."

Bishop Leonard's plan was the first move of an expected exodus by Anglicans upset by the Church of England Synod's vote to approve the ordination of women. His article stated it was not clear how the Roman Catholic Church might provide space for Anglicans, but he said traditionalists like himself would approach Rome "as suplicants and without presumption, asking if a way could be found for us somehow to preserve our Anglican identity . . ."

The proposal would involve Anglicans retaining their own liturgical practices and bishops, but operating under the jurisdiction of Rome.

England's Roman Catholic bishops issued a statement which said discussions had been held about links with traditionalist Anglicans, but decided "such a matter demands time for reflection and prayer on all sides."

"I don't think that there's any wish on our part to aggravate any possible schism in the Church of England," said Cardinal Basil Hume, on BBC radio.

The Most Rev. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, responded to the article with a plea to Anglicans to avoid hasty decisions and to continue discussions.

Bishop Leonard is no stranger to controversy. In 1986, while he was Bishop of London, he administered confirmation in Broken Bow, Okla., in a congregation whose priest had been deposed by the Bishop of Oklahoma.

## First Love

### Priorities Stressed at Renewal Conference

An estimated 600 Episcopalians gathered at Ridgecrest Conference Center in western North Carolina to worship and hear messages concerning renewal, ministry and evangelism, under the theme, "Lord, I want to be a Christian." Thirty workshops, music led by the Community of Celebration, small groups, Bible study and a healing service were part of the Nov. 11-15 conference, billed as "Ridgecrest '92."

Among six keynote speakers was the Rev. John Guest, an Episcopal evangelist. Preaching at the opening Eucharist, he made a call to a life of evangelism and drew a distinction between "branches of the vine" of Christ and those branches that simply have ornaments of religiosity on them. Dr. Guest reiterated that people truly cannot be evangelists unless they believe Jesus is the way to God.

Author Joy Dawson gave guidelines to Christian growth at the first plenary meeting. The highway to holiness, she said, "leads to excitement and fulfillment and ruins you for the ordinary."

Two bishops, the Rt. Rev. John Howe of Central Florida and the Rt. Rev. Roger White of Milwaukee, gave addresses.

Bishop Howe referred to the letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. Jesus is to be our first love, he said, and warned against allowing even good things to interfere with that priority. He quoted the J.B. Phillips translation of Romans 12:2: "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." Bishop Howe concluded, "If you were to write a letter to the church in the closing years of the 20th century, what would you say?"

Bishop White spoke of how to live out a Christian commitment in word and deed. In the past, he said, Episcopalians have assumed that their children were being brought up in a Christian culture and only needed a confirmation class to round out their spiritual formation. "Yet, statistically we lose half the people we confirm in two years," he said.

He spoke of *Living Our Baptismal Covenant*, a method used in the Diocese of Milwaukee that takes people through a process of Christian commitment leading to baptism, confir-



Dr. Guest

mation or reaffirmation. They have remained loyal members of the church afterwards, he said.

Former astronaut Charles Duke spoke of his conversion to faith in Christ. When he walked on the moon 20 years ago, all he wanted of God was an hour on Sunday mornings, he said, but later found that "money, power and fame are not enough to bring a fulfilling life; you always want more and more doesn't satisfy either."

The Rev. John H. Rodgers, director of the Stanway Institute at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambbridge, Pa., outlined seven reasons to follow Jesus in mission. He quoted theologian Emil Brunner's statement that the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.

At the closing Eucharist, Dr. Guest challenged his listeners to "go for it." Preaching from Hebrews 12:1-3, he likened the Christian life to an athlete in a race. Christians often run with hobnail boots on their feet and knapsacks on their backs, he said, instead of throwing off their excess baggage through repentance and getting on with the race set before them.

The conference was sponsored by PEWSACTION, a group of 28 voluntary organizations that serve the Episcopal Church in the areas of prayer, evangelism, worship, study and action. A similar conference is being planned for 1995. Peter Bird of Brownsville, Wis., was re-elected president of PEWSACTION at the group's recent board meeting.

## CONVENTIONS

Having yet to consider 47 resolutions, delegates at the Nov. 6-7 convention of the **Diocese of Massachusetts** in Boston voted to recess and reconvene Dec. 19.

The subjects of the resolutions range from handicapped access for diocesan meetings to the blessing of "covenanted lifelong and monogamous gay and lesbian relationships" to the language used to refer to the divinity, most having been put forward by members of Episcopalians United, the Episcopal Synod of America and the National Organization of Episcopalians for Life (NOEL).

In business that was finished, the convention agreed to the election of a bishop coadjutor, which was called for by the Rt. Rev. David E. Johnson, Bishop of Massachusetts. The election would take place in March of 1994, with the consecration in the fall.

"It is evident to me that time has come to begin thinking of new leadership for this diocese," Bishop Johnson told the 500 lay and clerical delegates in his address. "I recognize as well that 10 to 12 years in this role as bishop is sufficient."

After considerable debate, a major change in financing the diocesan budget was approved, instituting a single mandatory assessment from every parish for the fiscal years 1994-96, the amount to be determined by the size of the parish. Previously, each parish was assessed a mandatory amount for diocesan operations, but was asked to pledge a second amount for the "mission" work of the diocese. Further, the plan stipulates at least "50 percent of the total diocesan budget should be allocated for mission" and establishes a mission support committee to advise diocesan council on preparation of the budget. Much budget discussion focused on the needs of urban and minority parishes.

Also after much debate, convention approved an educational program in the diocese to examine the appropriateness of having national flags in spaces used for worship.

A budget of \$4.22 million was approved, an increase of 3.2 percent over 1992.

In other action, delegates:

- approved a plan to stagger the terms of lay members of diocesan

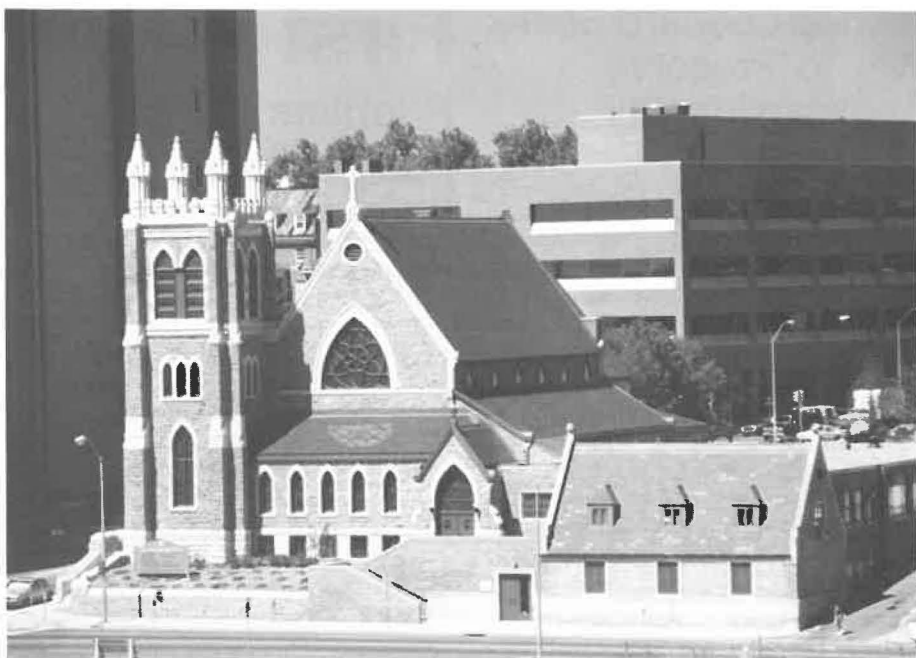


Photo © Ann M. Moore

St. Paul's, Des Moines, provides a closer place for the bishop to preside.

## New Cathedral Named in Iowa

St. Paul's Church, Des Moines, was designated the cathedral and liturgical center of the Diocese of Iowa by action of the diocesan convention Nov. 7.

"In the Diocese of Iowa, Trinity Cathedral in Davenport has served for many years as the historic site for bishops and for this diocese," said the Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting, Bishop of Iowa.

As the most populous part of Iowa, Davenport was the logical site of the cathedral when the diocese was established in 1854, the same year St. Paul's was founded.

"When the state was fully missionized, it made practical sense for the

bishop to live and work out of Des Moines, for geographical reasons if nothing else," Bishop Epting said.

The bishop's office was moved to Des Moines after World War II. "This resulted in an anomaly where the bishop was separated by nearly 200 miles and several hours from 'the bishop's church,'" Bishop Epting said.

Trinity Cathedral, one of the oldest cathedrals in the Episcopal Church, will retain its title and is expected to be a mission center for eastern Iowa.

Previous to the convention action, the proposal, made by Bishop Epting, was agreed upon by the vestries of St. Paul's and Trinity.

council over a three-year period;

- passed by voice vote a resolution urging the United States to comply with United Nations protocol relating to refugees, "particularly in the case of Haiti";

- set up a cooperative effort with Episcopal City Mission to establish a fund for community justice "to honor the work and memory of the Rev. Joseph Pelham."

JAY CORMIER

• • •

Announcing a new long-range mission goal to "double the size of this diocese in this decade," the bishop and

leaders of the **Diocese of Idaho** unveiled plans for at least three new congregations at the Nov. 6-8 convention in Pocatello.

A delegation was present from a new congregation in Challis, which had been proposed in 1980 but not acted upon until this year. A second congregation, planned for the Teton Valley, was represented by two lay-missioner couples. A third new fellowship was reported to be meeting in homes in southeast Boise.

In his convention charge, the Rt. Rev. John Thornton, Bishop of Idaho, stressed the "equal" part of his being "first among equals" and led delegates



to memorize two lines of the Creed of Athanasius: "And in this Trinity none is afore or after other; none is greater, or less than another."

At the end of the convention, the bishop moved to table a resolution from diocesan staff proposing to transfer endowment funds from aided congregations to diocesan management. The Rev. Craig Beverly, a cluster missionary, advanced an argument against the change, that the measure was "hierarchical and controlling." In his motion to table, the bishop stated the diocese was "just not ready to decide" the issue.

The disputed resolution was part of a presentation by Rich Toney, diocesan treasurer, who proposed a planned-giving program. Advantages of planned giving were explained by the Rev. William Crews, executive director of the Colorado Episcopal Foundation, who temporarily is assisting Idaho. Fr. Crews reported that the Colorado program had raised \$20 million in endowment funds in 10 years. Meanwhile, the church in Idaho is working to become independent of annual grants in and from the national church.

Other reports included personal sharing by two persons who are HIV positive, representing the AIDS community in Pocatello; achievements of five church-sponsored homeless ministries across the diocese; youth plans; and plans for parish dialogue by Idaho's human sexuality commission. A report by the Rev. Canon Renee Miller on the diocesan School of Faith and Ministry presented details of programs helping local parishes develop locally-trained permanent deacons and lay ministers. A 1993 budget of \$577,910 was approved.

(The Rev.) PETER MICHAELSON

The Rt. Rev. Daniel L. Swenson, Bishop of Vermont, presided at his last diocesan convention Oct. 23-24 in Burlington. Bishop and Mrs. Swenson were honored and he was "roasted" at the convention banquet as he approaches his retirement date of Feb. 2, 1993.

The episcopal search committee presented to convention its rough draft of the diocesan profile, receiving feedback from delegates for the final version. The search committee will receive nominations for bishop from

Nov. 29-Jan. 15. The convention to elect a bishop is to take place June 5, 1993, at St. Paul's Cathedral, Burlington.

The Rt. Rev. Harold Hopkins, director of the Office for Pastoral Development, preached at the convention Eucharist and focused on pastoral ways to handle the transition, reminding delegates that they are not the only ones to be in such transition.

The Rev. James Wilson, executive director of the Church Deployment Office and Vermont's linkage person to the Episcopal Church Center, also spoke.

Bishop Swenson admitted a new mission, St. Dunstan's, Waitfield. The congregation began as an outreach ministry several years ago from Christ Church, Montpelier.

(The Rev. Canon) MICHAEL H. DUGAN

• • •

A short slate of issues did not make for a short day for the convention of the Diocese of Chicago Oct. 24 at the Cathedral of St. James. Though only seven resolutions were submitted — half that of 1991 — delegates devoted nearly half their time to a vigorous debate on issues ranging from capital punishment to a congressional "Peace Tax Fund Bill" for conscientious objectors.

During the noon Eucharist, the delegates were reminded by the Rt. Rev. William Wiedrich, Suffragan Bishop of Chicago, that the way of the Christian is a long, perilous journey "from traditional patterns of security to a new life in Christ . . ." In the absence of the Rt. Rev. Frank Griswold, Bishop of Chicago, who is away on a three-month sabbatical, Bishop Wiedrich was the convention's presiding officer and celebrant at the Eucharist.

In his sermon, Bishop Wiedrich urged delegates to transcend their differences and work together as a servant community.

"We must eagerly come forward holding up one another, to be put back together, to be re-membered," he said. "We must never squander such graciousness or fail to act on such generosity. Come forward together to be fed. God has much for us to do."

The delegates followed his advice on two measures — one honoring the 500-year-old survival of Native Americans since the landing of Columbus and an-

other ceding Woodford County in the diocese's southwestern corner to the Diocese of Quincy — approving both measures overwhelmingly with no debate. The session affects only one parish: St. Andrew's, El Paso.

But the delegates chose to contest five other resolutions, adopting two of the five: a measure opposing legislation that would permit land-based casino gambling in Illinois, and a measure endorsing and calling for a diocesan-wide study of Executive Council and Indian Ministries Task Force resolutions on the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage. Defeated were the resolution supporting a peace tax fund for conscientious objectors and one backing written contracts for lay employees in the diocese.

On the financial side, delegates unanimously approved a budget of \$3,775,933 and a three percent cost of living raise for clergy. They also received discouraging news from treasurer Lesslie Keller on parish requests for apportionment reductions. During the first nine months of this year, 30 parishes requested reductions in their apportionments to the diocese, a three-fold increase over 1991. The requests total \$177,396.

In her state of the church address, standing committee president Mary Crist described how the committee has assumed more of an advisory role with the bishops, a relationship she characterized as both "fruitful and difficult." The committee has also become more involved with the commission on ministry on ordinations, she said, and in talking with various diocesan constituencies.

DAVID SKIDMORE

## BRIEFLY

The Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church held its annual conference Oct. 15-18 in Clayton, Mo., at the Church of St. Michael and St. George. The church's vicar, the Rev. C. Frederick Barbee, who is also editor of *The Anglican Digest*, and the Rev. John G.B. Andrew, rector of St. Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue, New York City, gave presentations. Thirty-one vergers from throughout the country took part in workshops, training sessions and worship. The verger serves as master of ceremonies in many parishes and might be the building manager or sexton.

# True God from True God

## The little 'i' and the mystery of Advent

By BOYD WRIGHT

Ever get tired of an argument and declare the whole matter doesn't make an iota of difference anyway? That word "iota" stands for the Greek letter "i," the smallest symbol in the alphabet, and so has come to mean tiny or insignificant. But there was a time when the little "i" stood as a giant in the development of Christianity. The very core of our faith, the concept of Christ's identity, hinged on that one skinny letter.

Advent, when we await the coming of Jesus into our lives, is a time to prepare ourselves and to ponder the mystery of just who is this God who became man. The "i" carries us back 1,700 years and gives us a clue.

Take two Greek words, *homoousios* and *homoiousios*. Note they're the same except for that *i* between the double *o*'s. Early Christians used both words to describe the relationship of Jesus to God. The first word means identical in substance; the second means similar in substance.

In the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Constantine brought tolerance to the persecuted Christians. It was an era of theological flowering when devout and learned minds began to dispute the weighty problems that would eventually be thrashed out in the great church councils. At that moment some scholars fought tooth and nail to get rid of the little "i" while others battled just as hard to preserve it.

Those determined to throw out the "i" demanded a creed that stated unequivocally that Christ was of exactly the same substance or essence as God. Those bent on keeping the "i" were convinced that the Father preceded the Son and that the Son was like him but not precisely the same.

Both sides appealed to scripture. The first party cited the opening of John's gospel (1:2) where Christ is de-

clared to have been "in the beginning with God." The other faction could point with equal authority to Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (1:15), where Christ is termed "the first-born of all creation" and so must himself have been created.

The driving force behind this latter theory was Arius (c. 260-336), a priest from Alexandria destined to be famous forever as the founder of the Arian



heresy. Deeply devout, ascetic, a genuine fanatic and powerful speaker, he has been described as tall, thin and melancholy.

For decades Arius bombarded anyone who would listen with sermons, letters and pamphlets. His burning conviction was that Christ was not one with the Creator, but was rather the Logos, first and mightiest of all created beings. Since the Son was begotten by the Father, Arius argued, this action must have taken place in time and therefore the Son could not be co-eternal with the Father.

Others disagreed violently. If Christ was not fully God, they contended, redemption was put in question and Christianity itself in peril. Let a dangerous, heretical crack appear in the structure of faith and the whole might collapse. They turned on Arius with vigor and with less than Christian charity.

So savage became the struggle that Eusebius, a contemporary chronicler, reports that "tumult and disorder" tore the church apart. Emperor Constantine didn't care about the theological niceties, he just wanted order in his

empire. In a letter to both parties he complained, "The cause seems to be quite trifling and unworthy of such fierce contests . . . These are silly actions worthy of inexperienced children and not of priests or reasonable men."

The quarrel had gone too far. Both sides ignored the emperor, so in 325, to restore peace, he called a meeting at Nicaea, the first ecumenical, or universal, council of the church. Some 300 bishops came, attended by a host of lesser clergy, most of them ready to fight.

Constantine himself presided and opened with a plea for unity. Nobody paid much attention. Arius, now in his 60s, or his followers rose to state their arguments for a created Christ similar but not identical to God. They demanded a creed that kept the "i" in *homoiousios*.

Then from across the hall the other side brought forth its champion. Athanasius (c. 295-373) also came from Alexandria and he sat at the council only as a secretary to his bishop, but at age 30 he had already become the soul and conscience of the anti-"i" party.

Arius and Athanasius stood in vivid contrast. The older man was gaunt, weary, a veteran of many battles, the younger fresh, energetic, a new voice. Athanasius was short, slight and as tenacious as a terrier. Friends called him unworldly and at heart a monk; others, less kindly, branded him "a man who exalted himself above his calling" and "tried to pry into matters outside his province."

In any case Athanasius apparently held the council spellbound. He must have presented a compelling brief for God and Christ being identical in essence. Once when asked, "How is the Son equal to the Father?" Athanasius shot back, "Like the sight of two eyes."

The bishops at Nicaea voted with Athanasius, and the phrase "being of one substance with the Father" came

(Continued on page 14)

Boyd Wright resides in Mendham, N.J., and is a frequent contributor to THE LIVING CHURCH.

## Playing with Words

Officials of the Diocese of Michigan have considered the issue of blessing, or affirming, same-sex relationships so important that nearly all 16 pages of the November issue of *The Record*, the diocesan newspaper, were devoted to the topic. The emphasis is understandable. In recent months, services of affirmation for same-sex couples have taken place in two Michigan parishes [TLC, Nov. 1], causing an uproar in many places.

The services have led to the organization of a group calling itself Concerned Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Michigan. The group has presented the Bishop of Michigan, the Rt. Rev. R. Stewart Wood, with a petition bearing the names of more than 1,000 Episcopalians, letting the bishop know they oppose church approval of same-sex unions.

The problem goes deeper than the recent services in Christ Church, Detroit, and All Saints', East Lansing. The heart of the matter is the fact that Bishop Wood encouraged the couples to have their relationships affirmed by the church. In both instances, the priests who performed the ceremonies were careful not to call the actions "blessings," but it should be noted that the services

included an exchange of rings and vows.

In 1990, Bishop Wood said the blessing of same-sex unions in the diocese could not be held, at least until the diocese completes a study on human sexuality. Like many dioceses, the Diocese of Michigan has not completed its study. But the bishop has permitted the services of affirmation to take place as long as they don't include a blessing by the officiating priest.

It seems to us that what we have here is a problem of semantics. There is a fine line between a blessing and an affirmation. In either case, a couple is making a commitment to each other, in the presence of God, and a member of the clergy is officiating. A bishop is permitting such rites to take place in his diocese.

This is not an attempt to comment on whether the Episcopal Church should permit same-sex blessings, or affirmations. We have addressed that subject several times in these pages. The issue here is the fact that services which are not allowed are taking place in the Episcopal Church (at least four in one Michigan parish). We applaud those persons who have asked Bishop Wood "to return to the biblical foundations" upon which the historic teachings of the church rest. It is just the latest instance of the "anything goes" mentality which has gripped this church.

## VIEWPOINT

# Recipe for Moral Failure

By STEPHEN B. SMITH

When we ordain a priest, we ask, "Will you do your best to pattern your life (and that of your family, or household, or community) in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to your people?" And the new priest always answers, "I will."

Rumors and gossip fly throughout parishes and dioceses, however, when priests aren't wholesome examples to their people. We have heard stories of scandal, embezzlement, sexual misconduct and other kinds of actions. These are serious allegations. After all, when our leaders pledge to be examples to us, and then fail, it damages our ability to trust our leadership. And when a leader represents the commu-

nity in which we seek God, the result may even be damage to our trust in God.

Some have questioned if the moral character of our clergy is deteriorating, saying "Our priests have promised to be examples to us, and they have failed. Can't we expect more from our clergy?"

Of course we can. But first we must expect more from ourselves.

If we expect more from our clergy than we ourselves are willing to do, then clergy have ceased to be an example to us. It is the very nature of an example that we try to follow it. When we want to learn something, like riding a bicycle, those who already do it become examples for us. When we want to figure out a new computer program, those who know how to use it, or those who wrote the book, become examples for us. If we want clergy to be examples for us, then we must be willing to expect the same moral behavior from them that we expect from ourselves. After all, while

clergy have promised to pattern their lives after the teachings of Christ, all baptized Christians have promised to follow and obey Christ. There is not a substantial degree of difference between those two promises.

The closeness of the baptismal and ordination promises is reflected in the idea of Christian character. Christian character, the characteristics of being Christian, is what we can expect from our clergy. And there is more to Christian character than simply avoiding embezzlement, avoiding sexual abuse of people, and avoiding corruption or scandal.

Christian character entails the habits and attitudes which show that a person professes the Christian faith and claims Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Such habits of character may include regular prayer, both public and private, trust in God, an open and caring attitude toward others, the willingness to extend oneself for the sake of an-

*(Continued on next page)*

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*The Rev. Stephen B. Smith is rector of the Church of the Redeemer, Lorain, Ohio. He felt it necessary to reach the conclusions herein before considering the ordained ministry.*



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## VIEWPOINT

(Continued from previous page)

other's well being and growth, involvement in the local community's well being, and a willingness to grow in the faith and to use all tools available to do so. Any priest adhering to his or her ordination vows would exhibit such habits. But so also would any Christian taking seriously his or her baptismal vows.

If we strive to live a life which reflects the characteristics of being Christian, then we can expect our clergy to be examples for us. We can expect from them that which we want most in ourselves. Separating the two leads us to create one set of standards for clergy and a different set for lay people.

Not only does this destroy the potential for clergy to be examples to us, but it also sets up future clergy for failure. Here's how it works: Clergy come from the ranks of lay persons. As lay people, they may have grown into one understanding of moral character that is different from what people expect of their priests. This particular moral character may have been nurtured over time. Yet it may only be the best that people expect from laity and not the "higher" standard expected from clergy.

After training and seminary, lay people are ordained. At that point they will be expected to behave differently, conforming to the different and "higher" standard. Unless they have made radical changes in their lives during their seminary training, they may fail to meet the expectations being placed on them. Separating the moral character of clergy and laity can then be a recipe for moral failure in our ordination process.

Yet, even if the moral character of clergy and lay people are best understood as being closely linked, there is still one major difference. A priest is a public person. He or she has agreed to be an open and highly visible example to others. Hence, his or her character is held up to public view. When clergy fail to live up to expectations, many people know about it, far more than when a lay person fails. Sure, lay people may be the victims of rumors and gossip, but nowhere near as much as when a public person errs. Politicians, teachers, civic leaders and clergy have contact with so many people that their failures almost always become public knowledge.

On the other side, their successes are just as public. Perhaps what we need to say about the moral character of clergy is that it is Christian character made public, held up for all to see. And since everyone fails to exhibit the characteristics of the Christian life 100 percent of the time, clergy will fail also.

What matters, then, is not just the failure, but what the priest does with it. Because another aspect of Christian character is how we handle failure. According to our baptismal vows, we are to "repent and return to the Lord." Certainly clergy have the right to do this as much as anyone else.

Of course, repentance and forgiveness do not take away the consequences of behavior. A priest may have to leave his or her parish when a failure breaks trust, or even leave the priesthood for a time, in order to pull a life back together, or to renew one's skills. And in extreme cases, perhaps a priest will be deposed. But the failing priest is certainly within the graces of God as much as any other failing Christian.

Repentance and forgiveness can help renew the failing priest's relationship with God and the church, and reaffirm his or her worth as a person, something all of us need when we fail. By repenting and returning to the Lord, even a failing priest can serve as an example to us.

## Advent III

My heart is so heavy  
with the burden of my sin,  
I cannot lift my head.  
My life is so dreary,  
so contained within myself —  
my heart so full of darkness.

Somewhere, in the darkness,  
I feel the sweetness of a breeze —  
I feel the coolness of a hand  
lifting up my head —  
A kiss upon my forehead.

He is there with a candle  
to lighten the way  
out of the darkness  
into Himself —

So filled with Love.

Linda Ruth Owen

# PEOPLE and PLACES

## Appointments

The Rev. **Frank P. Seignious, III**, is rector of Christ Church, P.O. Box 267, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464.

The Rev. **Aaron Usher** is supply priest of St. Paul's, Portsmouth, RI; add: 1245 Hope St., Bristol, RI 02809.

The Rev. **Robert G. Whirl** is vicar of Polk Memorial, P.O. Box 1546, Leesville, LA 71496.

## Resignation

The Rev. **Gary Lemery**, as rector of St. Mark's, Riverside, RI.

## Restoration

The Rev. **John Bernard Pahls, Jr.**, renewed his priestly ordination vows and was readmitted to the ministry of the Episcopal Church as a priest by the Rt. Rev. **William Louis Stevens**, Bishop of Fond du Lac, in St. Paul's Cathedral, Fond du Lac, WI.

## Changes of Address

The Rev. **Barbara Fry**, deacon assistant of St. Mary's, Lake Orion, MI, reports a new address of 114 Clarence St., Holly, MI 48442.

The Rev. **Gerald Lonergan** may be reached at 6114 E. Evergreen Blvd., Vancouver, WA 98661.

## Other Changes

The Rev. **Eugenia Wood Kinney** has been transferred from the Diocese of Colorado to the Diocese of California; add: 3445 Pierce St., #101, San Francisco, CA 94123.

## Seminaries

The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest awarded **Lucy Collins Nazro**, director of St. Andrew's School, Austin, TX, the Hal Perry Distinguished Alumni/ae Award during the seminary's reunion-convocation in October.

## Deaths

The Rev. Canon **Alfred W. Price** died Oct. 14 in St. Petersburg, FL at the age of 92.

A native of Scranton, PA, Fr. Price was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Episcopal Divinity School and also studied at Oxford and the New York School of Social Work. He served parishes in Sea View, MA, East Orange, NJ, and Brooklyn, NY, before being called to St. Stephen's, Philadelphia, where he was rector for 30 years. Much of his work was for the International Order of St. Luke the Physician, which has chapters in 86 countries through his efforts. He wrote several books and pamphlets on spiritual healing. He is survived by his wife Barbara, two sons, two daughters, 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The Rev. Canon **John D. Vincer** died in Falls Church, VA on Sept. 22 at the age of 78.

After serving parishes in Paw Paw, Mount

Pleasant and Grand Rapids, MI, Fr. Vincer became a U.S. Navy chaplain, retiring in 1972 as a captain. His last assignment was as Chief of Chaplains at Bethesda Naval Hospital. From 1973 to 1976, when he retired, he was vicar of St. Christopher's, Northport, and St. Peter's, Leland, MI. He had lived in Falls Church since 1991. He was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Rev. **William M. Weber**, retired priest of the Diocese of Connecticut, died in Hartford, CT on Oct. 25 at the age of 82.

Fr. Weber received degrees from St. Stephen's College and General Theological Seminary. He served parishes in North Dakota, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Connecticut and was active in urban ministry before retiring in 1974. He is survived by his daughter Mary Weber Hall.

Sister **Mary Hugh**, CSM, died at St. Mary's Convent, Peekskill, NY at the age of 91 on Oct. 25.

Born in England, she was life professed in the Community of St. Mary in 1939 and served as superior of the House of the Redeemer, New York City, from 1957 to 1976.

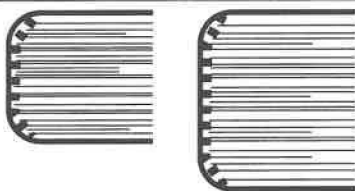
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## TRUE GOD

(Continued from page 10)

to be written into the Nicene Creed. Yet the dispute refused to die. Theologians who held Jesus to be similar to, but not the same as, God kept on requiring that the Father be perceived in a hierarchy above the Son. They insisted that the "i" be put back in, that the vital word be *homoiousios*, not *homoousios*.

No wonder the historian Edward Gibbon ridiculed the squabble as a war over a diphthong. Imagine what non-Christians of the day thought of this interminable wrangle over a single letter, and that the smallest in the alphabet. Surely sophisticates everywhere, especially in intellectual centers like Antioch and Athens and Rome, enjoyed a good laugh. Eusebius assures us that among the pagans the scandal stirred "profane merriment . . . even in their theaters."

### Feud Continued

Fighting over an iota! Those Christians, supposed to be holy and charitable, brawling like street urchins over a silly word. If they couldn't make up their minds about their own God, how could they expect the rest of the world to believe?

The feud raged on for 60 more years. Arius, banished by Constantine after Nicaea, won a pardon only to die on the day it was decreed. Athanasius became patriarch of Alexandria, never wavered in his beliefs and, buffeted by Arian opposition and imperial politics, endured exile five times before going to his grave.

Finally in 381, Emperor Theodosius I convened another council, in Constantinople. Here it was agreed that God and Jesus were of the same substance and that the "i" would stay out of *homoousios*.

Words, of course, are what you make them, and churches East and West differ about such issues to this day. But the basic formulas for defining Christ and his relationship to God were hammered out in those early contentious times. When we say the creed today, the absence of the humble letter "i" lets us proclaim with pride that Jesus is indeed "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father."

It matters infinitely more than an iota. It means that the Christ we await this Advent is truly and fully God.

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**KEY** — Light face type denotes AM, black face PM; add, address; anno, announced; A-C, Ante-Communion; appt, appointment; B, Benediction; C, Confessions; Cho, Choral; Ch S, Church School; c, curate; d, deacon, d.r.e., director of religious education; EP, Evening Prayer; Eu, Eucharist; Ev, Evensong; ex, except; 1S, 1st Sunday; hol, holiday, HC, Holy Communion; HD, Holy Days; HS, Healing Service, HU, Holy Unction; Instr, Instructions; Int, Intercessions; LOH, Laying On of Hands; Lit, Litany; Mat, Matins; MP, Morning Prayer; P, Penance; r, rector; r-em, rector emeritus; Ser, Sermon; Sol, Solemn; Sta, Stations; V, Vespers; v, vicar; YPF, Young People's Fellowship. A/C, air-conditioned; H/C, handicapped accessible

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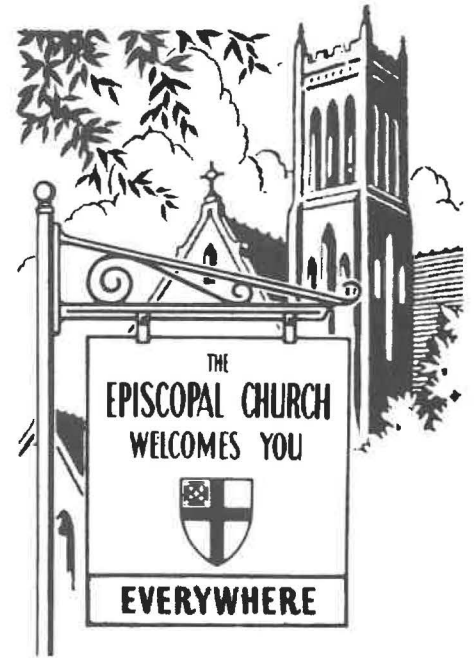
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