



THE LIVING CHURCH

AN INDEPENDENT WEEKLY SERVING EPISCOPALIANS • DECEMBER 19, 2014 • \$2.00

*Snow had fallen,
snow on snow ...
In the bleak midwinter,
long ago.
A stable place
sufficed the Lord God
incarnate Jesus Christ.
(Hymn 112)*

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Volume 229

Number 25

The objective of THE LIVING CHURCH magazine is to build up the body of Christ, by describing how God is moving in his Church; by reporting news of the Church in an unbiased manner; and by presenting diverse points of view.

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St. Matthew's Church, Fairbanks, Alaska

Scott Fisher photo

Solid Oak
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SUNDAY'S READINGS

God's Persistent Love

'Lift up your heads . . . and the King of glory shall come in' (Psalm 24:9)

The Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year A), December 19, 2004

Isaiah 7:10-17; Psalm 24 or 24:1-7; Rom. 1:1-7; Matt. 1:18-25

God consistently seeks to break into our lives — to call us to faithfulness and to strengthen us to do his will. Today's readings demonstrate both the Lord's persistence in pursuing us and our own freedom either to accept or reject his overtures.

Ahaz, king of Judah, is a person of the most self-serving sort — short on faithfulness, and exceptionally long on ego. He regularly sells out the faith of his forebears in efforts to boost his approval rating with the people of the land. He embarks on misguided military adventures in attempts to expand his influence, counting on foreign alliances for his ultimate vindication. But the Lord cannot write him off. Through the prophet Isaiah he asks Ahaz what proof would be acceptable to him as a sign of divine favor and grace. The king declines to name any sign at all. Persistent in love, however, the Lord names his own guarantee. "Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel." Though rejected by Ahaz, this promise of God's love is persistent through many generations.

God's wondrous love moves toward fulfillment in the events surrounding the nativity of Jesus of Nazareth. A young woman is indeed to give birth, and her espoused is assured in a dream: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife ... She will bear a son, and you are to

name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Joseph at first doubts that these things are from God, only to be assured in the same dream that all of this indeed comes from God. Now armed with a vision of what is possible through grace, he joins Mary in saying yes to God. And suddenly the possible becomes real. The promise of the Lord's love breaks into human history with the birth of God in Christ.

In our own day, God still tries constantly to break into the lives of his people everywhere — to pour out upon us his unlimited love. God might, as he did for Ahaz, come to us through the agency of another human being — a family member or a friend, perhaps — to offer us a better way of life than we seem to have right now. He might choose to come to us through dreams, as he did to Joseph and to Martin Luther King, Jr., offering a vision of the unfolding of his will. And he certainly has come to each of us in our baptism, offering us the precious gift of being members of the incarnate body of Christ, the Church.

Each of us is free to reject God's love and favor if we so choose. If we do that, however, the Lord will never cease to pursue us with his persistent love — even to generation after generation. Such is the nature of the One whom the psalmist rightly calls the King of glory.

Look It Up

How does God overcome Paul's initial resistance to accepting his unbounded love? (Acts 9:1-22)

Think About It

In what ways might God be offering his persistent love to members of our Church?

Next Sunday

The First Sunday after Christmas (Year A), December 26, 2004

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147 or 147:13-21; Gal. 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1:1-18

BOOKS

Peace in the Post-Christian Era

By Thomas Merton. Orbis Books. Pp. 165.
\$16. ISBN 1-57075-559-0.

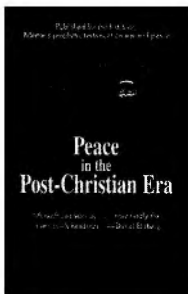
One subject which seemed to preoccupy Merton throughout his relatively short life is the subject of this book: Peace in what he called "the post-Christian Era." The "barrage of articles," as the editor of this book calls them in her excellent Introduction, had been germinating in Merton's mind since long before he became a monk and were only now appearing in print in various publications and for various classes of readers beginning in 1962.

After four such articles had passed the order's censorship or passed around it, a fifth was returned by the censor with the ominous comment that he would not accept any further articles on the subject. The sequel is well explained in the Introduction.

As to "the real heart of the forbidden book," the chapter on Peace in the Post-Christian Era, which became just that in *Seeds of Destruction*, the present reviewer cannot but heave a sigh of relief that he was unwittingly but not at all unwillingly the catalyst in the censorship log jam under a new abbot general.

Peace in the Post-Christian Era deserves to be read and pondered. It would have been timely even before the start of the ABC ("Atomic, Biological, and Chemical") warfare age. It is of continued relevance simply because, in the words of Albert Einstein, "the real problem is in the minds and hearts of men." Thomas Merton, the monk-author and political activist if you will but monk and Christian first, has an ongoing message for all of us as a call to deep inner conversion.

(The Rev.) Laurence Bourget, OCSO
St. Joseph's Abbey
Spencer, Mass.



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Celtic Spirituality for Today A Pre-Lenten Retreat with J. Philip Newell January 30-February 3 at Kanuga



The Isle of Iona

J. Philip Newell is esteemed for helping to recover traditions of Celtic spirituality for the enrichment of Christianity today. Now Writer Theologian at the Cathedral of the Isles, Cumbrae, Scotland, he is the former warden of Iona Abbey. His books include *Listening for the Heartbeat of God* and *Celtic Benediction*. Dr. Newell will speak three times daily at Kanuga's winter interlude for contemplation, worship, creative dialogue and meditation.



Newell

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Taylor

She is an Episcopal priest and professor who has lectured at Yale, Princeton, and Duke universities, spent 15 years in parish ministry, and was listed by Baylor University as among the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. Her 10 books include *When God is Silent*, *Speaking of Sin: The Lost Language of Salvation*, *Mixed Blessings*, *The Preaching Life* and *The Luminous Web: Essays on Science and Religion*.

Conference coordinator: The Rev. **Susan Sloan**

Details, online registration option at www.kanuga.org



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Despite Differences, Bishop Rivera Shows Support for His Daughter

A bishop with one of the most enduring visions for a modern-day, all-male Episcopal Church priesthood will be present for the Jan. 22 consecration and ordination of his daughter, the Rev. Bavi Edna Rivera as Bishop Suffragan of Olympia. When interviewed by *THE LIVING CHURCH* on Nov. 29, discussion was still ongoing about the precise nature of his liturgical participation, but the Rt. Rev. Victor Manuel Rivera, retired Bishop of San Joaquin (1968-88), has already given his daughter the red episcopal cope he wore during his episcopacy.

"I am sure I will feel encased in love," Bishop-elect Rivera said. "My father was a wonderful bishop. Elisha asked for and received a double portion of Elijah's spirit. If I get just half my dad's spirit when I receive his mantle, I will be thrilled and well equipped for my future ministry."

The Diocese of San Joaquin is one of only three in the Episcopal Church where the traditional theological understanding of the apostolic succession is official policy. For a number of years after her own 1976 ordination to the priesthood, however, Bishop-elect Rivera remembers being on the opposite side of the issue of ordination of women from her father, both in family discussions and in the official responsibilities both have fulfilled in separate houses of the bicameral General Convention.

Toward the end of his daughter's 10-year tenure as rector of St. Aidan's Church, San Francisco, Bishop Rivera abruptly asked her whether she was in the search process for the episcopacy anywhere. At the time she was not and said she considered the prospect unlikely. Further signs of



Episcopal Voice photo

Retired Bishop Rivera of San Joaquin with his daughter, who will be consecrated Bishop Suffragan of Olympia Jan. 22.

a change in their theological standoff emerged July 15, her last Sunday as rector at St. Aidan's when Bishop Rivera received communion from his daughter for the first time.

"We haven't really talked yet about what or how he has changed in his position," she said. "He did seem very excited when I subsequently told him I was being considered by Olympia. I've always known that he believed in me. Since his retirement we've talked a lot about the priesthood in the Church in the 21st century. It's been wonderful."

Closings and Mergers Possible in the Diocese of Newark

The Diocese of Newark may follow the lead of its Roman Catholic counterpart and begin a round of parish closings and amalgamations, redeploing diocesan assets in order to minister more effectively to a new generation in the face of declining membership and rising costs.



Bishop Croneberger

Writing in the November/December issue of *The Voice*, the diocesan newspaper, Bishop John Croneberger noted that

while a number of suburban parishes were fiscally healthy, perhaps as many as one-third were "struggling mightily to keep the doors open, keep the deficit as low as possible, and do anything necessary to get through the year in order to turn around and begin all over again."

In June, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark announced it would close 48 of 235 parishes which serve 1.3 million Roman Catholics in northern New Jersey.

Archdiocesan officials say church membership is shifting, with parishioners leaving once-thriving ethnic enclaves for the suburbs.

Shifting population trends have also hurt the Episcopal Church's 114 parishes in northern New Jersey, Bishop Croneberger said. "I believe we can no longer afford the luxury or the apathy of doing business as usual ... blowing smoke up 114 smokestacks and worrying about how to gather the resources to maintain 116 sets of buildings," he wrote.

While not calling for parish closures, Bishop Croneberger observed, "we can be an even stronger diocese with more communicants and fewer plants which would enable us to be better equipped for ministry in this century."

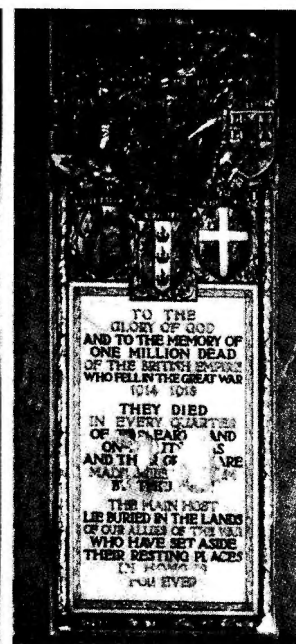
St. George's Chapel in Baghdad on the Rise

Ransacked by looters in the chaos that followed the fall of Saddam Hussein, Baghdad's Anglican chapel is on the mend with two Episcopalians leading restoration efforts. Ryan Carlson, a communicant of St. John's Church, Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C., and Ward Scott of St. Mark's, Ashland, N.H., have initiated a fundraising appeal for St. George's Memorial Chapel.

Established in 1936 as a memorial to the British dead of the Mesopotamia Campaign of World War I, St. George's has been without a resident priest since the first Gulf War. Reopened after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Col. Frank Wismer, an Episcopal U.S. Army chaplain with the Coalition Provisional Authority, initially led services for the Iraqi congregation with the assistance of Canon Andrew White of Coventry Cathedral. The upsurge in violence over the past few months forced the withdrawal of Canon White and Col. Wismer, and an Iraqi lay reader now takes services.

Mr. Carlson, a State Department staffer with the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, and Mr. Scott, a civilian contractor with JTSI, Inc. in Baghdad, became involved with the rebuilding of St. George's after Canon White asked if they could help him find a generator to provide electricity.

"Immediately after the [fall of Bag-



Above: A plaque in the chapel honors WWI British soldiers. Left: St. George's narthex.

St. George's Chapel photos

dad] we held a service of thanksgiving for the liberation of Iraq," said Canon White. "The congregation numbered about 50. It was mainly made up of the British and U.S. diplomats and military" and was the last service where "the congregation was predominantly Western."

Today St. George's has grown to

about 300 members. "The congregation is mainly poor Christians, though we also have Muslims who attend regularly," according to Canon White. More than \$35,000 in aid has been provided by the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf and the British Embassy. St. John's, Lafayette Square, is coordinating U.S. relief efforts.

Staying Together Worth the Costs, Archbishop Says

Seeking to prevent misinterpretation of the Windsor Report in an Advent letter to the primates of the Anglican Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury warned on Nov. 28 that staying together as a Communion is bound to be costly for all Anglicans, but the gift of unity from God is precious and worth the struggle.

"The Windsor document sets out a possible future in which we willingly bind ourselves closer together by some form of covenant. I hope we will see virtue in this," the Most Rev. Rowan Williams wrote. "No one can or will impose this, but it may be a cre-

ative way of expressing a unity that is neither theoretical nor tyrannical."

If the process specified in the Windsor Report is to have a chance of succeeding, then it must be commonly understood that its recommendations specify a process leading to repentance, not merely a recognition that someone else's feelings have been hurt.

"To repent before one another is to see that we have failed in our witness as God's new community, failed to live in the full independence of love — and so to see that we have compromised the way in which God can make him-

self heard and seen among us," he said.

Using the 1998 Lambeth resolution on human sexuality as a point of reference, Archbishop Williams wrote that the need for repentance bridged the theological divide over human sexuality.

"In the heat of this controversy, things have been said about homosexual people that have made many, including those who lead celibate lives, feel that there is no good news for them in the Church," he said ... "Any words that could make it easier for someone to attack or abuse a

(Continued on page 18)

In celebration of All Saints' Day and a new stewardship program, members of All Saints' Church, Princeton, N.J., dined in the nave. Votive candles were placed in the windows of the church and on small ledges ascending the back wall.

Celia Tazelaar photo



National Executive Officer Takes Post at Virginia Theological Seminary

The Rev. Rosemary G. Sullivan, executive officer and secretary of General Convention for the past six years, resigned effective Nov. 15 in order to become director of alumni/ae affairs at Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS).

"The opportunity ... has come at the time in the cycle of our General Convention when I believe the systems and staff are in place to move forward to the 75th General Convention," she said in her resignation letter to Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold and Dean George Werner, president of the House of Deputies. "In our family life it is time to return to Virginia and in my personal journey it is an exciting opportunity to serve another dimension of the life of the Church we love." Ms. Sullivan is a 1985 graduate of VTS.

The appointment of the executive officer of General Convention is a joint decision made by the Presiding Bishop and the president of the House of Deputies. Following election as secretary of the House of Deputies, the

two houses must then concur. In a letter to the members of Executive Council, Bishops Griswold and Dean Werner expressed "mixed feelings" about the announcement. The two also pledged to begin a prompt and thorough search for her successor.

"Rosemary Sullivan, as we can all attest, has done a superb job in re-ordering and rationalizing vast areas of our corporate life and governance," they wrote. "Our sadness is overridden by the deep gratitude we have for her clarity and her tireless efforts to make the legislative and governance structures of the Church revelatory of the gospel."

Prior to her years at the Episcopal Church Center, Ms. Sullivan was associate rector of Grace Church and rector of St. Clement's, both in Alexandria, Va. She has commuted to New York City for the past six years, maintaining her family residence in Alexandria.

Episcopal News Service contributed to this report.

Dissenting Bishops Find Hope in Windsor Report

Approximately half of the 43 diocesan bishops who voted against the confirmation of the Rev. Canon V. Gene Robinson to be Bishop Coadjutor of New Hampshire attended a special meeting convened by the Rt. Rev. Charles E. Jenkins, Bishop of Louisiana and president of the Presiding Bishop's Council of Advice. The purpose of the Nov. 29-30 meeting in Houston was in part to discuss the Windsor Report and its implications for the Episcopal Church.

Guests brought the total attendance closer to 40 and included a number of bishops suffragan, staff from the Episcopal Church Foundation, and the Rt. Rev. F. Clayton Matthews, executive director of pastoral development at the Episcopal Church Center. Discussion was informal and conversation about the special House of Bishops' meeting to be held next month in Salt Lake City occupied a significant amount of time.

"I think the overwhelming consensus among those who were present is that the Windsor Report represents a strong, positive instrument for maintaining a viable Communion," said the Rt. Rev. Peter H. Beckwith, Bishop of Springfield. "There was hope and an expectation that when we meet in Salt Lake City, the House of Bishops will fully embrace and hold itself accountable to all of the report's recommendations," he said.

Toronto Defers Decision

At a special convention Nov. 27, the Diocese of Toronto in the Anglican Church of Canada deferred a decision on same-sex blessings until after a theological commission created by General Synod last summer reports on the issue in 2007. The final tally was 320-296 with seven abstentions.

Toronto is the second Canadian diocese to defer in a close vote a decision on implementation of same-sex blessings. The other is Niagara.



Pubs and Pews



The Church of the Advent on Beacon Hill in Boston has a growing ministry helping younger adults answer questions about faith.

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a series of four weekly articles spotlighting the ministry of Episcopal parishes named in honor of the holy season of Advent.

By John Schuessler

It might be Christmas caroling in the Beacon Hill neighborhood, a trolley tour of the city's historic sites, or just an evening playing darts at a nearby pub. The occasion doesn't seem to matter much. For the Friends at the Advent (FatA), the young adult ministry of Boston's Church of the Advent, what matters most is being together and making new friends.

Business at the pubs is usually slow on Tuesday nights, so the bartenders are glad to have these customers — several dozen young professionals in their 20s and 30s who gather for Advent's "Theology on Tap" series. The events are held at different places each week and offer "good food, good people, good beer and something to stimulate their thoughts," said the Rev. Patrick Gray, who leads the ministry along with the Rev. Benjamin King. Both are curates at Advent.

One night's topic was theology and fashion, the next classical thinking and post-modernism. Popular culture got plenty of attention in the series of lectures titled "The gospel according to..." Included were Harry Potter, The Simpsons, Tolkien, and The Matrix. "We plan on visiting popular culture again in the spring," Fr. Gray said. "We had a good turnout."

Music also gets discussed, including spiritual insights in the art of U2, and the blues: its history and theological connections.

Fr. Gray said this vibrant and growing ministry to young adults is changing the historic church's reputation as "a good place to worship but not to meet people." But don't be misled to think the ministry's purpose ends in friendship. One of its stated goals is "to foster a shared sense of purpose among this demographic, one which is typically under-represented in church communities."

Fr. Gray explained that every human being, and especially those in their 20s and 30s, needs to know he or she is important and "your presence here is important."

Theology on Tap provides an opportunity to engage people who may not come to a church with their questions, but are fighting against being carried away by the culture. "We're here to help you find who you are, who you are supposed to be in the life of God and with other people."

As a result of this intentional ministry, more young adults are getting involved in the life of the church. And some of those who before might have stayed around



Fr. Gray: "We're here to help you find ... who you're supposed to be in the life of God."

only long enough to get married are remaining.

Fr. Gray stressed that peer ministries should not be an end in themselves. It is vitally important for all ages to worship together, he said. "A worship service for the young crowd is a mistake," he said. "When you start to separate young and old, you get dissonance."

The church was established in 1844 with a special concern for the poor and needy. (No compulsory pew rent.) This concern continues today through the church's Tuesday night community dinners, which offer meals and companionship in a safe environment to the homeless and other persons in need. Other ministries include St. Hilda's Fellowship, a ministry to the parish's elders and shut-ins; the Coleridge Lectures on Theology and Society; and an extensive music program.

"An appreciation of the importance of prayer and the ancient traditions of Christian worship inspires all our services, from a quiet weekday Mass in the Lady Chapel to the full splendor of Solemn High Mass on a Sunday morning," wrote the rector, the Rev. Allan B. Warren III, in a welcoming letter posted on the church's website. "We are committed to preaching the Word of God and ministering His Sacraments to all who desire them."

Fr. Gray adds, "There is a deep sense of faith here. An understanding that God inspires all we do, all we're about. We believe strongly that God and faith matter and understand ourselves as agents of God's ministry of reconciliation."

For more information about the church, go to www.theadvent.org and www.friendsattheadvent.org. □



A Son is Given

By Mary Earle

Our Christmas celebration began on August 5 — my older son's 30th birthday. The neurosurgeon emerged from the operating room and announced that he had been able to remove 90 percent of a malignant brain tumor that was roughly the size of a table tennis ball. Bryan had been delivered from impending death. The light began to shine in the darkness at that moment, and we began to sing the angelic chorus, "Glory be to God on high and peace on earth, good will toward all." After six days of knowing that Bryan's life was under assault by this insidious tumor, we came home and feasted on food brought by friends, sang prayers in Hebrew for Bryan's healing (instructed by my Jewish nephew Jack) and celebrated the gift of new life.

The malignancy had revealed its sinister presence on July 31 when Bryan

this tumor was vicious and possibly inoperable, friends sat in quiet prayer a few feet away, as the family circle unanimously decided that Bryan would want for us to authorize the surgical procedure, even though there were grievous risks involved.

After the delicate surgery, we began the next phase of recuperation. Bryan has undergone 31 rounds of radiation, which were completed at the end of September. He receives monthly oral chemotherapy. He is struggling to fully regain his speech; each new word or phrase is greeted with gladness. His strength is returning slowly and he is beginning to receive the promise of new life. A few days ago he and Jen went to the San Antonio zoo with her two children. We are making plans to attend various Christmas celebrations. The beautiful gift of normal daily rhythm and seasonal preparation unfolds gently with every day that passes.

Christmas came to us on August 5 when Bryan was, in a sense, born anew. Through the agency of the neurosurgeon, Bryan was delivered, just as he had been

delivered as an infant 30 years ago at almost the very same hour. He even came out of the general anesthesia hollering and fighting, in much the same manner as he emerged as a baby.

In the long days of Bryan's hospitalization, we discovered a oneness with the other families whose loved ones were in fragile conditions. We prayed for each other, in English and Spanish, and kept watch for one another. Among the many gifts we received during that harrowing time was a sense of the unity of the Trinity, in whose life we live and move and have our being, a unity


expressed through the phenomenal diversity of human faces and conditions, none of whom is exempted from suffering. We were ever in the presence of the Christ "in whom all things hold together," walking with co-sufferers of all sorts and conditions.

A friend of mine remarked that this year we might want to just wrap a big red ribbon around Bryan and put him under the tree. There is much truth in that observation. This lively young man came so perilously close to dying, and the shadow of the cancer remains. Nevertheless, this Christmas, more than ever, we remember what the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord truly celebrates—the gift of divine life, incarnate among us, offering us a human face and human voice in Jesus. In the words of Gregory of Nyssa, "Having become what we were, he through himself again united humanity to God."

That incarnate life enfolded and surrounded us during the hospital vigil through the ministrations of friends, family, physicians, nurses, hospital staff and fellow clergy. That incarnate life continues to catch us off guard as we are privileged to behold the small and tender movements of healing in Bryan's body and soul. Every sharp, tense moment is in Christ. Every glorious upwelling of hope is in Christ. All moments. All.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Savior given. Glory to God in the highest. □

The Rev. Mary Earle is author-in residence of the Center for Faith in the Workplace, a ministry of St. Mark's Church, San Antonio. Her most recent books are Holy Companions: Spiritual Practices from the Celtic Saints and Beginning Again: Benedictine Wisdom for Living with Illness.



**"Having become what we were,
he through himself again
united humanity to God."**

— *Gregory of Nyssa*

suddenly lost his speech. Jen, his intended, took him to an emergency room in San Antonio, where we all live. Within minutes, Bryan endured a seizure of horrific magnitude. My husband, Doug, and I were far away in Digby, Nova Scotia. In our absence, friends and family began a round-the-clock vigil that lasted the full 14 days of Bryan's hospitalization. Not once was he left alone. When we entered his room in the intensive care unit on August 1, Bryan was encircled by friends and family. As we received the dire news from the neurosurgeon that

Grilled to Perfection

No, you haven't seen it all. Not yet. Just when I was beginning to think that the pagan Eucharist [TLC, Nov. 21] might have topped them all, along comes an icon of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus in one hand and a grilled cheese sandwich in the other.

Someone tipped me off that such an icon was available on eBay, so I had to see it for myself. Sure enough, there it was, offered for sale on Nov. 16 and purchased on Nov. 19 for \$16.50. Upon close inspection, it appears as though not only is Our Lady holding a sandwich, she is eating it as well.

The comments from visitors on the site are almost as good as the icon itself. "Can I get this on black velvet to match my Elvis and dogs playing poker?," one wag asked. "Wonder if the sandwich in your icon was made with cheeses of Nazareth and Miracle Whip?" someone else inquired.

The icon is part of the fallout from an even stranger sandwich said to bear an image of the Virgin Mary that also showed up on eBay. This one was a toasted cheese sandwich that a Florida woman made in 1994. Its owner, Diane Duyser, said the sandwich never spoiled since the day she took a bite of it and "then I saw this lady looking back at me," she told the *Chicago Tribune*. "I hollered for him [her husband]. It scared me at first."

On the eBay site, Ms. Duyser states, "I would like all people to know that I do believe that this is the Virgin Mary Mother of God."

The sandwich was purchased by a Canadian internet casino, Goldenpalace.com, for a whopping \$28,000. A casino spokesperson said the sandwich will be taken on tour before it's sold, and the proceeds will be used for charity. "We're the toast of the town," said Drew Black. Of course. What could have been more appropriate?

Nearly 2 million visitors came to the site where the sandwich was presented, eBay reported. And all sorts of other products besides the icon soon showed up. There is a T-shirt that bears the message "I ate the Virgin Mary Grilled Cheese." There are Virgin Mary Grilled Cheese trading cards, coffee mugs,

Christmas ornaments and even thong underwear. There are sandwiches that include the faces of Elvis, the Olsen twins and Joan Collins, an "Ariel Sharon pork chop" and a tortilla that pictures President George W. Bush.

*

Evangelical protestants may have a field day with this story. Reuters reports that scientists at Maastricht (Netherlands) University found that burning candles and incense in church can release dangerous levels of potentially carcinogenic particles.

"After a day of candle burning we found about 20 times as much as by a busy road," said Theo de Kok, the author of the study, which appeared in the *European Respiratory Journal*.

Scientists tried to emulate conditions similar to a Mass at a Maastricht basilica and found that the air inside contained 10 times the European limit of PM 10, a potentially hazardous particle.

"The exposures are worrisome, not so much for the occasional church-goer, but priests, choirs, and other people working in churches may have significant exposure," Mr. de Kok said.

*

Headline in the *Independent Record* of Helena, Mont., on its news article of the re-dedication of St. Peter's Church as the cathedral of the Diocese of Montana:

Helena is now state's Episcopal epicenter.

Cathedral member Joanne Maynard reports the designation is not far off in light of past events in that diocese, recent events in the Episcopal Church, and the fact that "Helena really is an active epicenter, and we had some disastrous earthquakes back in the mid-1930s."

*

Finally, at least two Episcopal churches are advertising calendars on their website that feature nude photographs of female church members who would appear to be in their 60s and 70s and even 80s. St. Peter's, Narragansett, R.I., and St. Thomas', Battle Creek, Mich., offer the calendars for sale in a take-off on the well-known English "Calendar Girls." They're fundraising projects, all in good fun, of course.

One can only guess what the logical progression from these might be.

David Kalvelage, executive editor



Did You Know...

Members of several congregations in the Diocese of Indianapolis are raising service dogs to help people with a variety of tasks.

Quote of the Week

Louie Crew, national Executive Council member, on the Windsor Report: "The Windsor Report is a monstrous interference in the life of the Episcopal Church, choosing sides in our democratic assembly and trying to pit one against another. It has made a crisis where there was no crisis ..."

God Speaks Our Language

A few weeks ago, I took part in a discussion that involved a number of people working with children and young people who suffer from different forms of autism — the kind of disorder that seems to cut people off from ordinary communication and shows itself in strange repetitive behaviors and sometimes in violent outbursts. We watched a video showing the work of one of the most experienced therapists in Britain, and then heard her talking about what she is trying to do with her methods.

The first thing we saw on the video was a young man, severely disturbed, beating his head against a wall, and then walking fast up and down the room, twisting and flicking a piece of string. The therapist's first response was strange: She began to twist and flick a piece of string as well. When the young man made a noise, so did she; when he began to do something different, like banging his hand on a table, she did the same.

The video showed what happened over two days. By the end of the two days, the boy had begun to smile at her and to respond when touched. A relation had been created. And what the therapist said about it was this: Autism arises when the brain senses too much material coming in, too much information. There is a feeling of panic; the mind has to regain control. And the best way of doing this is to close up on yourself and repeat actions that are familiar; do nothing new, and don't acknowledge anything coming from outside. But when the therapist gently echoes the actions and rhythms, the anxious and wounded mind of the autistic person sees that there is after all a link with the outside world that isn't threatening.

Here is someone doing what I do; the world isn't just an unfamiliar place of terror and uncertainty. And when I do this, I can draw out an answer, an echo; I'm not powerless. And so relationship begins.

To see this sort of thing in action is intensely moving. This is real mental and spiritual healing at work. But it gives us a powerful image of what it is we remember at Christmas.

Human beings are wrapped up in themselves. Because of that great primitive betrayal that we call the fall of humanity, we are all afraid of God and the world and our real selves in some degree. We can't cope with the light. As John's gospel says, those who don't want to respond to God fear and run away from the light. But God acts to heal us, to bring us out of our isolation — which is as bizarre and self-destructive as that young man beating his head

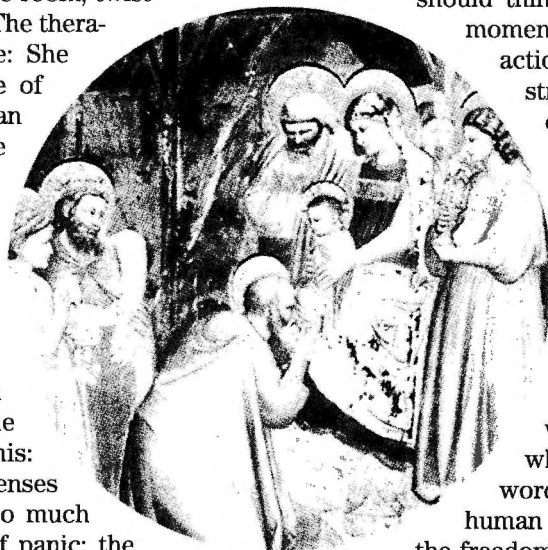
against the wall. And he does this in a way that is just like the therapist in the video. He does what we do; he is born, he grows up, he lives for many years a life that is ordinary and prosaic like ours — he works, he eats, he sleeps. Here is ultimate love, complete holiness, made real in a back street in a small town. And when he begins to do new and shocking things, to proclaim the kingdom, to heal, to forgive, to die and rise again — well, we shouldn't panic and run away because we have learned that we can trust him. We know he speaks our language, he has responded to our actions and our words, he has echoed to us what we are like.

Christ does not save the world just by his death on the cross; we respond to that death because we know that here is love in human flesh, here is the Creator's power and life in a shape like ours. As we read the gospels, we should think of God watching us moment by moment, mirroring back to us our human actions — our fears and our joys and our struggles — until he can at last reach out in the great gestures of the healing ministry and the cross. And at last we let ourselves be touched and changed.

That's what begins at Christmas. Not a doctor coming in with a needle or a surgeon with a knife, but a baby who has to learn how to be human by watching; only this baby is the eternal Word of God, who is watching and learning so that when he speaks God's transforming word we will be able to hear it in our own human language. He is God so that he has the freedom to heal, to be our "therapist." He is human so that he speaks in terms we can understand, in the suffering and delight of a humanity that he shares completely with us. And now we must let him touch us and tell us that there is a world outside our minds — our pride and fear and guilt. It is called the kingdom of God.

May the blessing of Christ our incarnate King be with you all at this season.

*(The Most Rev.) Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury*



The Sober Joy of Christmas

Though we are now exchanging our "Merry Christmas" greetings, and carols fill the air telling us "'tis the season to be jolly," Christmas provides something far greater than merriment, joviality, or an easy joy. Christmas points the way to something sober and enduring. To celebrate Christmas is not simply to recall a past event in a stable which

we see sweetly depicted on Christmas cards. To celebrate Christmas is to open ourselves to what is happening within us: In virtue of our baptism, Jesus continues to be born and grow to maturity in us. Our participation in the Incarnation, therefore, is a profound and all-demanding fact of life to be patiently and courageously lived by each one of us in the varying, and sometimes difficult, circumstances of our lives.

This should not surprise us. After all, the birth itself did not take place under easy circumstances, but in an uncertain season. The first Christmas was not at all what Mary might have hoped for. She found herself far from home, bereft of the human supports that would have been hers in Nazareth. And yet, she heard the angels' song pierce the night. In the midst of it all something broke loose that transformed the moment into an occasion for sober and enduring joy. With Jesus' birth the boundless love and all-embracing compassion of God became real, immediate and concrete as a human life.

Love is, therefore, the heart of the Incarnation. Through God's insistent and enduring love the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Love alone gave Jesus the ability to hope all things and to endure all things, even the pain of the cross. And, through the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation continues to unfold in and through our lives. In us the Word who is Jesus becomes flesh and blood. This is the root and ground of our joy. This is the sober and enduring truth of Christmas.

As we once again celebrate our Savior's birth, may we be bearers of this Christmas truth and embodied signs of God's love to our anxious and divided world. And let us give thanks that Christ, the sun of righteousness, continues to pierce the darkness and bring healing in his wings.

*(The Most Rev.) Frank T. Griswold
Presiding Bishop*

Jesus Among Us

In the post-Christian society in which we live, we don't hear much about Christmas anymore. We have the "holiday season," we go to "holiday parties," there is "holiday shopping," "holiday dinner" and "holiday specials" on television. We may have the "holiday spirit" or even send "holiday cards." In order not to offend the growing number of non-Christians among us, we are slowly removing the word Christmas from our vocabularies. That, of course, is unfortunate, for in our desire to respect the traditions of others, we are losing sight of the Incarnation — the reason for the observance of Christmas. All the celebrations we enjoy so much at this time of the year have a distinct purpose — to rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ came among us as one of us. We hope all our readers experience a blessed and joyous Christmas season, filled with the knowledge of God's love for us.



Two Cheers for Christian Kitsch

Why the Christmas Pageant Deserves Some Praise

By Daniel Muth

"How comes Timmy all the time, all the time gets to be the cow?" ... "Pssst! Shepherds — you're on. Will you guys quit fooling around and get up there?" ... "Again? You think some day we could actually get some boys to play the three kings?" ... "What on earth did that kid just say? There must be something in teenage DNA that causes them to read their lines too fast."

Ahhh, the Christmas pageant, where Norman Rockwell meets St. Matthew. Music to the ears of the values voter, scourge of the biblical purist (imagine actually mixing Matthean and Lucan pericopes and tossing in a little Johanne commentary for good measure — ugh). Where every choral director can get in touch with her *der fuhrer* side and every grandma can let her inner sentimentalist ooze: "Just look at those cute little angels" (the biblical angel may be many things, but he is never, ever cute). Raucous, tedious, smarmy, nauseatingly over-familiar; if you just had a nickel for every foot of videotape your wife made you take of your little darlings in their cutesy-poo pageant get-up. Oh, and then there are the bad — and I mean bad — musical performances.

The Christmas pageant, where every choral director can get in touch with her *der fuhrer* side and every grandma can let her inner sentimentalist ooze.

READER'S VIEWPOINT

Do we really have to go through this again? Well, you probably should. The Christmas pageant may be one of the most important things your parish will do all year. There was a time — brief, not unproblematic — when the Church got some help from our surrounding culture in telling some, at least, of the stories of the faith. There was a time not too awfully long ago when one could safely assume that the story of our Lord's nativity would be told in one form or another throughout our society. For good or ill, these have

— and indeed sacrilegious — it would be to see them re-enacting the stoning of St. Stephen, much less our Lord's passion. One may well wonder about the wisdom of all those sweet little Noah's Ark toys in light of the violent, albeit well-deserved, judgment this scene plays prelude to. But then God doesn't give us a lot of safe stories and that's as it should be.

Shepherds, camels, kings, donkeys, Mary in blue, Joseph in brown, and Baby Jesus. These are all part of the story of God's redemption and, other than the baby himself, they're all pretty safe. And maybe it's not such a bad thing to protect children (and most adults too) from the unutterable terror of meeting a real biblical angel.

Hokey, sentimentalized, biblically unsophisticated — or, hopefully, not — the great American Christmas pageant stands as an important icon of the ancient tradition of telling God's story generation to generation. As with so much of his story, this one is simple, touching, accessible to all ages. Deep calls to deep in the thunder of his cataracts, yes, but also in the song of the angels to the simple shepherds. And

in the crooked halos, garbled King James syntax, missed cues, the baby poo-poo doll standing in for Jesus; and even in those bad musical renditions so beloved of certain choir-masters. So, shepherds — quit fooling around and get up there. □

Daniel Muth is a nuclear engineer who lives in Prince Frederick, Md. He is a member of Christ Church, Port Republic.

The Reader's Viewpoint article does not necessarily represent the editorial opinion of THE LIVING CHURCH or its board of directors.

The Christmas pageant may be one of the most important things your parish will do all year.

dwindled down to the point that the only real opportunity many children — or adults, for that matter — have to hear the complete biblical account of the Lord's Incarnation is via the parish Christmas pageant.

"And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise" (Deut 6:6-7).

In what is known in Hebrew as the Shema, God commands his people to teach their children what we have received as the great commandment, a commandment explicable only in relation to the God who gave it, a God who came to us, pitched his tent among us, in the nativity. In scripture, teaching requires memory, and memory is more than intellectual retention of certain objective facts. The criminal on the cross does not ask our Lord merely to bring him to mind later on. Christ does not command that we "do this in remembrance of me," so that we will think warm thoughts of him upon receiving the host.

For Christians, memory is an essential part of right relationship. In another part of Deuteronomy, God's people are required to bear witness that "A wandering Aramean was my father," and go on to tell the story of God's great deeds. We are to remember not only with our lips, but in our lives the great things our God has done for us, including his Incarnation as one of us. Such witness is borne not only from the pulpit but by a 6-year-old kid in an over-long bathrobe and a fake beard.

Two cheers for Christian kitsch. It certainly has its limitations. On perusing the Precious Moments figurines at the local Christian bookstore, one is struck by how inappropriate

Christmas Snow

Come softly Christmas snow and kiss troubled Earth below.
Blanket hills in downy white, comfort sorrowed Earth tonight.
Caress with crystal flakes of lace, every weary, careworn face.
Sparkle in pale moonshine; reflect the light of Christ Divine.

Burn brightly candle glow and cheer hearts filled with woe.
Radiate your gentle light; illumine this darkened night.
Shine forth on lonely roads, bid pilgrims ease their loads.
Inflame hearts with holy love, sent down from God above.

Ring bells in joyful tones; proclaim salvation to the lone.
Resonate in every ear, "Rejoice, rejoice! Be of good cheer!"
Reverberate from hill to vale. Peal the news! Toll the tale!
Resound in everlasting song, "Alleluia! Messiah's come!"

Nan Chase

Reading Scripture

I read "The Role of Scripture in Anglicanism" [TLC, Nov. 14] after writing a sermon on Luke 20:27-38 about scripture's "role" for Christians. The Sadducees interpreted scripture incorrectly by letting their tradition, reason and experience determine what they would believe about God and his plans for humans. However, God's word trumps such humanistic understanding. Jesus told the Sadducees that to read scripture right, they must read it with eyes to see God's resurrection power, which scripture shows is at work in his people's lives. Anglicans, like Sadducees, must read the scriptures as Jesus teaches if we want to

understand their meaning, authority and relevance for our lives.

God's word trumps such humanistic understanding.

Fr. Nieman claims that since our Reformation roots, Anglicans have read scripture in "a community of relationships that includes tradition and reason." However, his view of scripture's role is quite different from what our Anglican forebears believed. The writings of Richard Hooker and Thomas Cranmer (to name only the most prominent) show that scripture's primacy for Anglicans was upheld staunchly from the time of our Reformation roots. Only recently has that conviction been jettisoned by some – a theological innovation of Western Anglicans. Hooker is often attributed with the notion that Anglicans give scripture, reason, and tradition equal footing; this idea is as prevalent as an urban myth, and just as unfounded.

Even for Anglicans, scripture is accurately read only in light of the resurrection – and God's world-renewing, life-changing resurrection power is still active in the lives of his people. Therefore, everything else that Fr. Nieman states must be considered (such as science and the humanities, experiences of brokenness and God's grace,

our own hearts) must be understood through the lens of scripture — not vice versa.

*Kristi L. Cobb
Durham, N.C.*

I think that a simple word of truth about Fr. Nieman's "The Role of Scripture in Anglicanism" is that it is the same kind of proclamation assuring us of cheap grace that has come out of "815" and the House of Bishops for years, and which has led us into today's agony.

Who would want "to dismiss our brothers and sisters as enemies"? Or who among us would refuse "to respect and love our companions along the way, especially those with whom they differ the most"?

St. Augustine was thoroughly familiar with the enticements of the flesh before his Christian conversion, and I have my doubts that his interpretation of holy scripture would lead him to approve with pleasure the actions of the recent General Convention.

*(The Rev.) C. Edward Sharp
New Bern, N.C.*

Not a Solution

Barkley Thompson's Reader's Viewpoint, "Conciliar Authority" [TLC, Nov. 21] looks, on the surface, like a tidy solution. We'll all just get together and pass some rules and everyone will be bound to keep those rules and all will be well. We hope. On the other hand, this seems to fly in the face of all that is Anglican, removing the ability to disagree and still remain in communion. It looks to be a "slippery slope" that may lead to fracturing the Communion faster than the way we are going.

*(The Rev.) George Stamm
Christ Church
Chippewa Falls, Wis.*

I wish to thank the Rev. Barkley Thompson for showing me where I went wrong in my preparation for the priesthood. I studied theology instead of surveying. My mistake.

*(The Rev.) Robert J. Nagiel
St. Mary's Church
Albuquerque, N.M.*

Different Focus

After reading Douglas LeBlanc's article, "Going Forward' After the Windsor Report" [TLC, Nov. 14], I am not sure we attended the same conference.

I know I saw him there, but we certainly had two very different experiences. Mr. LeBlanc thought the conference spent "considerable time discussing sex," while I experienced most of the discussions to be about everything but sex. I think many of the attendees felt the Church had already

Thoughts On a Cold, Starry Night (from a hillside near Bethlehem)

I'm just a simple shepherd.
What do I know about a Savior come,
A mysterious babe sleeping on straw?

But I believe.
I've known since a child myself
About the prophets,
About God's promise to me, to us.

I believe the angels
Come tonight
To tell us of God's Son,
That babe, asleep on the straw.

I see the star,
And because I believe,
I'll follow that star,
And I'll know
The Son of God.

Lois Oller Nasados

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

spent far too much time talking about sex and we needed to discuss other important topics. I never heard the word sex mentioned as I listened to Diana Butler Bass unfold some of the challenges and opportunities of parish ministry in the 21st century. Sex, Gene Robinson, the Windsor Report — none of these subjects was brought up as I gathered with a diverse group to talk with Robbie McQuiston about building parish communities through small-

group ministry. It was not part of our study of contemplative prayer and it certainly was not part our experience during the deeply evocative Celtic Evensong led by the good people from the Church of the Holy Communion in Memphis.

I think Mr. LeBlanc's article has an unfortunate and undeserved slant. We were there to talk about stewardship, pastoral care, building strong church staffs, Bible study methods, and much

more. Of course, the recent struggles within the Church were lively topics for discussion, but we were there in spite of those struggles trying to find a way forward together. I was proud to be associated with the Going Forward Together Conference. I came away from Dallas believing that we can hold together regardless of our differences because the richness of what we share in common seems to far outweigh the issues that threaten to pull us apart.

*(The Rev.) Randolph Marshall Hollerith
St. James' Church
Richmond, Va.*

Clarification Needed

In the Editor's Column, "Positive in Many Ways" [TLC, Nov. 14], David Kalvelage shares what he likes about the Windsor Report, including the call "to effect a moratorium on the election and consent to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same-gender union." Through his heading on point 9, "Moratorium on election of gay bishops," he wrongly, sadly and astonishingly is suggesting that the Windsor Report concludes that even a gay or lesbian celibate priest cannot serve as bishop. Clearly, that is not the report's outlook, but that seems to be Mr. Kalvelage's. It would be nice, and informative, to have him clarify this point.

*(The Rev.) Timothy Safford
Christ Church
Philadelphia, Pa.*

Unilateral Action

How can the Episcopal Church fault George Bush for "unilateral action" in Iraq while itself taking unilateral action on homosexual activity? I seem to remember an ancient comment on notes and beams.

*(The Rev.) Carey C. Womble
Tucson, Ariz.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Appointments

The Rev. Canon **Mark Clevenger** is canon for congregations and mission in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina, 1115 Marion St., Columbia, SC 29201.

The Rev. **Bert Eaton** is rector of St. Peter's, PO Box 337, Swansboro, NC 28584.

The Rev. **Elizabeth Hilgartner** is rector of St. Barnabas', PO Box 306, Norwich, VT 05055.

The Rev. Canon **Meredith Hunt** is rector of St. John's, 110 S Clay St., Sturgis, MI 49091.

The Rev. **Richard Lawson** is rector of St. John's, PO Box 1806, Decatur, AL 35601.

The Rev. **Garrett Mettler** is rector of St. Timothy's, 15757 St. Timothy Rd., Apple Valley, CA 92307.

The Rev. **Albertine Rouse** is vicar of Holy Communion, 1160 W 141st St., Gardena, CA 90247.

The Rev. **Barbara Sajna** is vicar of St. Luke's, PO Box 559, Sister Bay, WI 54234.

The Rev. **Christine Thompson** is chaplain at Episcopal/Lutheran Chaplaincy, Wayne State University, 687 Student Center Bldg., Detroit, MI 48202.

The Rev. **Robert James Trainor** is rector of Intercession, 1417 Church St., Stevens Point, WI 54481.

The Rev. **Eric Turner** is rector of St. John's, 610 Young St., Melbourne, FL 32935.

The Rev. **Tim Vann** is regional vicar of All Angels', Red Oak; St. John's, Shenandoah; St. John's, Glenwood; and St. Paul's, Council Bluffs, IA; add: 907 5th St., Red Oak, IA 51566-1916.

The Rev. **Deirdre Whitfield** is cathedral pastor at Philadelphia Cathedral, 3723 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

The Rev. **Jean Willis** is associate at St. Paul's Cathedral, 815 High St., Des Moines, IA 50309-2714.

The Rev. **Jack Wilson** is rector of St. Francis', PO Box 7, Salter Path, NC 28575.

Ordinations

Priests

Bethlehem — **Demery Bader-Saye, Donna Larson Trebilox.**

Los Angeles — **Thomas McAlpine, Paul Price.**

New Hampshire — **Susan dePuy Kershaw,** rector, St. John's, PO Box 179, Walpole, NH 03608.

Deacons

Los Angeles — **Frances French Cantella.**

Northern Indiana — **Susan Haynes.**

Pennsylvania — **Judith Sullivan,** cathedral missionary, Philadelphia Cathedral, 3723 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Retirements

The Rev. **Peg Harker**, as rector of Christ the King, Huntington, IN.

The Rev. **Beryl Nyre**, as rector of Holy Communion, Gardena, CA.

The Rev. **John Steed**, as rector of St. Stephen's, Whiting, NJ.

The Rev. **William King Young**, as rector of Advent, Sun City West, AZ; add: 12440 W Firebird Dr., Sun City West, AZ 85375-1972.

Resignations

The Rev. **Michael Bartolomeo**, as rector of St. James', Saint James, NY.

The Rev. **Eric Bergman**, as rector of Good Shepherd, Scranton, PA.

The Rev. **Lauri Kerr**, as rector of St. Paul's, Manheim, PA.

Deaths

The Rev. **John Phelps Glase**, 68, of Longview, WA, died Nov. 13 at the Hospice Care Center in Longview. He had been diagnosed with lung cancer in February.

Fr. Glase was born in Seattle, educated at the University of Puget Sound, and spent his entire ordained ministry in the Diocese of Olympia. He was ordained to the diaconate in 1975 and to the priesthood in 1996. He served at St. Mary's Church, Lakewood, WA, 1975-76; St. Stephen's, Longview, 1976-79 and 1985-98; St. Matthew's, Castle Rock, 1979-85; and was vicar of St. Anne's, Washougal, 1999-2003. On the Sunday before his death, Fr. Glase preached at St. James', Cathlamet. He served on the diocesan council. He is survived by his wife, Diane, and two sons.

The Rev. **Teddy W. Harris**, priest of the Diocese of West Texas, died Nov. 7 in San Antonio. He was 68.

Fr. Harris was born in Lefors, TX. He graduated from McMurry College and the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest before being ordained deacon in 1994 and priest in 1995. He was involved in a wide variety of jobs from teaching to oil field supply work. He participated in the Sandhills Ministry which serves several congregations in West Texas. He is survived by his wife, Emma; two daughters, Alicia and Cassandra Burris; two sons, Wayne and Tom; 12 grandchildren; two great grandchildren, and a brother, Ronnie.

The Rev. **Guy Randolph Usher**, SSC, of Eau Claire, WI, died Oct. 22 at Luther Hospital in Eau Claire. He was 63.

A native of Memphis, TN, Fr. Usher was a graduate of the University of the South and Nashotah House. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1966 and went on to serve congregations in the dioceses of Fort Worth, Quincy and Eau Claire. For the last three years he was an assisting priest at St. Katherine's Church, Owen, WI. He was active in the Diocese of Eau Claire, serving on many committees and commissions, and was a four-time deputy to General Convention. He was editor of the diocesan newspaper, *The Herald*, from 2001 to 2004. Fr. Usher is survived by his wife, Evelyn; a daughter, Lucie McGee, of Eau Claire; and a son, the Rev. Guy R. Usher, Jr., of Withee, WI.

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NEWS

(Archbishop - continued from page 7)

homosexual person are words of which we must repent."

Conversely, "standing upon autonomy to promulgate doctrines foreign to the common life of the Anglican Communion leads to the question whether "we acted in such a way as to suggest that we do not believe we are under the authority of Scripture — that the Church is not the creation of the Word?"

'The Larger Picture'

The Most Rev. Drexel Gomez, primate of the Anglican Province of the West Indies and a member of the 17-member task force which produced the Windsor Report [TLC, Nov. 7], called on the Episcopal Church to respond to the Windsor Report forthrightly. Issues of human sexuality, however, "forms a small part of a large picture" and are merely symptomatic of the larger problems of the 1) "erosion of Christian faith in the Western world," 2) "relativity being applied to doctrine" and 3) "the Church being caught up in a question of its identity." The remarks were made Nov. 12 to delegates from across the Caribbean and Guyana gathered for the annual provincial synod at St. John's Cathedral in Belize.

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