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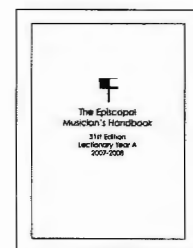
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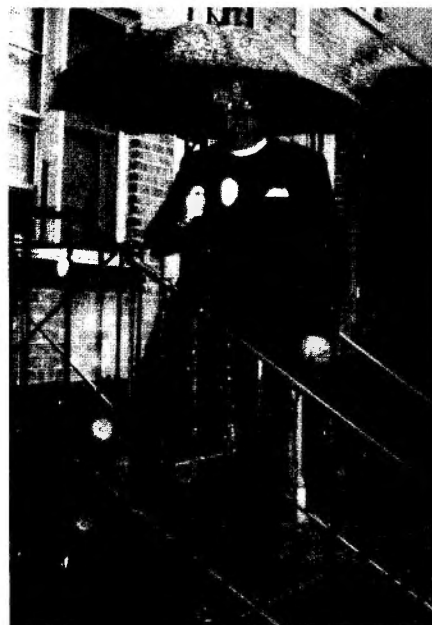
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SUNDAY'S READINGS

Baptized as our Priest

'Now I understand that God shows no partiality'

(Acts 10:34)

The First Sunday After the Epiphany (Year A), Jan. 13, 2008

BCP: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 89:1-29 or 89:20-29; Acts 10:34-38; Matt. 3:13-17

RCL: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matt. 3:13-17

We are accustomed to the scheme of the Epiphany lectionary. The gospel readings give us revelations of the Messiah, each presenting a different facet of the uniqueness of Jesus the Christ of God. As we absorb these insights, we see more of the universality of the gospel mission. One goes with the other. Each revelation shows new dimensions, further extensions, and wider boundaries for God's kingdom. Then comes the application, the church's response to the sinners intended for the embrace of God's grace.

This week brings us the baptism of our Lord in the River Jordan. The clear background of this comes in the first of the Servant Songs of Isaiah. The Spirit, the call, the name of God, the mission to the Gentiles – all are foretold in these verses. Then we read Luke's account of Peter preaching the good news to the unclean and the impure, the household of the gentile Cornelius.

One theme of the baptism which goes with these lessons is our Lord's priestly role. John was right – there was no need for him to receive baptism. But there was something Jesus needed to do at this inaugural point of his ministry. If he were going to represent the

people he came to save to the Father, he would need to identify with us. This step fulfilled the symbolism of that radical standing with us on our behalf.

From Isaiah's passage we learn more about him and his ministry. He comes as the suffering servant, full of gentleness and compassion, but also with the cross ahead of him at the end. The cross brings the judgment of God to the nations. Israel, yes, but the gentiles, the coastlands, the islands, Lebanon and Kadesh as well. And that judgment – the term is a judicial one – is God's pronouncement of mercy through the cross.

Peter's sermon indicates his acceptance of this view, though God had to break through his considerable prejudices. The Jews used two technical terms for gentiles – impure and profane. Only a priest could reverse these standings. These were the very terms Peter used about the animals lowered in his presence, just before the servants of Cornelius arrived. As God declared the animals pure and sacred, Peter got the message. "Now I perceive that the priestly act of purifying and sanctifying the nations has taken place. Now I understand that God shows no partiality. Now I know that Christ died for all, even gentiles."

Look It Up

The second Servant Song will be read next week. The themes are the same as the fourth song – Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Think About It

Do we show partiality? Are there people, slices of our culture, age groups, groups defined by dress or language whom we neglect? We may not say that they are impure or profane, but we can act like they are.

Next Sunday

The Second Sunday After the Epiphany (Year A), Jan. 20, 2008

BCP: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-10; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-41

RCL: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-12; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Traditionalists Plan June Event in Holy Land

A group of traditionalist Anglican primates and other bishops have announced an eight-day event to be held in the Holy Land next summer that will be structured as “a pilgrimage back to the roots of the Church’s faith.”

The Global Anglican Future conference will “outline the mission imperatives for the next 25 years for orthodox Anglicans,” according to the Dec. 24 announcement. Conference details were completed at a meeting of primates and others in Kenya.

According to a press release, bishops and their wives, senior clergy and laity from every province and from “both the Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic wings” of the Communion will be invited to participate in the event, which is scheduled to be held June 15-22. Those dates put the conference less than a month before the start of the Lambeth Conference of bishops.

“While this conference is not a specific challenge to the Lambeth Conference, it will provide opportunities for fellowship and care for those who have decided not to

attend Lambeth,” said the Rev. Canon Chris Sugden, executive secretary of the advocacy group Anglican Mainstream, who attended the Nairobi gathering. “There was no other place to meet at this critical time for the future of the Church than in the Holy Land.”

“Our pastoral responsibility to the people that we lead is now to provide the opportunity to come together around the central and unchanging tenets of the central and unchanging historic Anglican faith,” said the Most Rev. Gregory Venables, Presiding Bishop of the Province of the Southern Cone. “Rather than being subject to the continued chaos and compromise that have dramatically impeded Anglican mission, [the conference] will seek to clarify God’s call at this time and build a network of cooperation for global mission.”

Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi of Kenya said conference organizers hope to inform and inspire invited leaders “to seek transformation in our own lives and help impact communities and societies through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Church Lawyer Who Deleted Child Porn Spared Prison

A lawyer was spared prison time for his role in an attempted cover-up after pornographic images were discovered on a laptop computer used by the former organist and choir director at Christ Church, Greenwich, Conn.

U.S. District Judge Alan H. Nevas sentenced Philip Russell on Dec. 17 to six months of home confinement, a \$25,000 fine, and 240 hours of community service after Mr. Russell pled guilty in September to one count of failure to report a felony. He had been charged with obstructing an FBI investigation that led to the conviction of Robert Tate for child pornography. Mr. Tate is scheduled to be sentenced this month.

Mr. Russell acknowledged

destroying the laptop computer, but said he did not expect an investigation. Judge Nevas said during the sentencing hearing that Mr. Tate took child prostitutes from New York to the church, as reported by the Associated Press. Prosecutor Peter Jongbloed said Mr. Tate sexually abused children in New York, the Philippines and Thailand. Mr. Russell provided Mr. Tate with the name of a criminal defense lawyer. Mr. Tate was later arrested in Los Angeles.

The sentencing of Mr. Tate will complete a difficult period for the historic parish where President George H. W. Bush worshiped as a young boy. The Rev. Jeffrey Walker resigned as rector during the year-and-a-half long investigation.

P.B. Appoints Three to Address Bishop Robinson and Lambeth

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has appointed three bishops to “consult” with the Archbishop of Canterbury about extending an invitation for Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire to attend the Lambeth Conference in the summer in England.

The Rt. Rev. Edward S. Little II, Bishop of Northern Indiana, one of the three appointed by Bishop Jefferts Schori, said the e-mail message was sent to all members of the House of Bishops on Dec. 19.

“I’ve been asked to be part of a private conversation, and before that conversation even begins, I think it is best not to discuss details in the media,” Bishop Little said. He added that he personally remains committed to the Windsor Report and its recommendations.

The others who will consult with Archbishop Rowan Williams — the Rt. Rev. Thomas C. Ely, Bishop of Vermont, and the Rt. Rev. Bruce Caldwell, Bishop of Wyoming — recently attended an organizational meeting of the Chicago Consultation at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary [TLC, Jan. 6]. Part of the new group’s agenda includes ensuring there is a significant, visible presence of gay and lesbian Anglicans in England during the Lambeth Conference. The group has received a \$60,000 grant in part to help with travel and expenses.

In her e-mail message, Bishop Jefferts Schori said the three bishops “hope to have a response to share with the House at our meeting in March.”

Steve Waring



Bishop Ely



Bishop Caldwell



Bishop Little

Central Florida Approves Departure Protocol

Voting 20-4 with one abstention, the diocesan board of Central Florida approved a protocol Dec. 13 for congregations and clergy who wish to leave The Episcopal Church.

Under terms of the plan, departing congregations have the option of purchasing the church property if those members who wish to remain with The Episcopal Church agree to the terms of the sale.

"The protocol does not guarantee success," Bishop John W. Howe of Central Florida said in a recent letter to diocesan clergy. "If the leaders of some congregations offer unreasonable proposals and we cannot possibly accept them, and if I and the board offer counter proposals that these leaders cannot accept ... there is no guarantee whatsoever that somebody may not do something that the other side will find litigious. I believe nobody wants to go there. But we may not be able to avoid it."

The vote of a rector and vestry can-



Bishop Howe

not control whether or not a congregation disaffiliates under terms of the approved protocol. However, if at least a two-thirds majority of the vestry and rector believe "that a substantial majority of the congregation is determined to disaffiliate from the diocese at some point in the future, they shall immediately notify the bishop of that fact."

After notifying the bishop, the leadership is relieved of its responsibilities over the Episcopal congregation and the diocese assumes control for guiding the congregation through a discernment process. While the plan favors those who wish to remain with The Episcopal Church, it does include a provision to allow for the property to be purchased by the breakaway group, an option Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has opposed.

P.B. Questions Military Aid to the Philippines

Future U.S. military aid to the Philippines should be capped and tied to compliance with human rights, according to Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and nearly 300 other church and human rights leaders who signed a letter sent Dec. 3 to members of Congress.

"Human rights groups in the Philippines continue to report being wrongly targeted for human rights violations by the Philippine military and paramilitary forces working with the military with impunity carried out openly and without fear of prosecu-

tion by the government," the letter said. "The government of the Philippines continues to deny the military's involvement in the killings."

In addition to Bishop Jefferts Schori, the letter was also signed by Bishop Christopher Epting, the Presiding Bishop's deputy for ecumenical and interfaith relations, and the Rev. Canon Brian Grieves, director of Peace and Justice Ministries of The Episcopal Church.

Episcopal News Service contributed to this report.

West Indies Synod Maintains Stance on Human Sexuality

Discussion of human sexuality and an epidemic of crime in the Caribbean region figured in the provincial synod of the Anglican Church of the West Indies, which met Nov. 24-29 in Antigua.

The synod reaffirmed its support for the official position of the Angli-

can Communion concerning homosexuality and homosexual relationships. Representatives to the triennial synod also approved a resolution calling on the standing committee to commission a teaching manual on human sexuality for use in each of the province's 12 dioceses.

Common Cause Elects Officers

Delegates to the first Common Cause council meeting elected officers and appointed members to committees among other steps toward "building a federation of orthodox Anglicans in North America" Dec. 17-18 in Orlando, Fla.

"Each Common Cause Partner will continue to live out its unique role, maintaining its distinctive ministry and character," stated a communiqué released afterward. "In the months and years ahead we anticipate a growing number of joint mission initiatives that will strengthen our witness as united and faithful Anglicans in North America."

Bishop Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh presided during the council meeting and was elected moderator of Common Cause.

Common Cause is comprised of 10 church organizations. Three of those organizations — American Anglican Council (AAC), the Anglican Communion Network and Forward in Faith North America (FIFNA) — contain members who belong to The Episcopal Church.

New Primate for Bangladesh

The Rt. Rev. Paul Sishir Sarkar, Bishop of Kushtia in the Anglican Church of Bangladesh, was elected primate of the province during a meeting of the United Church's General Synod last month.

Bishop Sarkar will succeed the Rt. Rev. Michael Baroi, Bishop of Dhaka and moderator. The Church of Bangladesh is one of the United Churches, formed by a union of Anglicans with Christians of other traditions.

Cyclone Sidr was the primary topic of discussion during the General Synod meeting, according to the *Church of England Newspaper*. More than 8 million people were displaced by the category 4 storm.

Louisiana Bishop Keeps Spotlight on Housing Ministry

Despite a confrontational city council meeting on Dec. 20, the Rt. Rev. Charles E. Jenkins, Bishop of Louisiana, said he and his diocese remain committed to the ministry of housing in New Orleans.

"The violence and unrest in and in front of City Hall today was an unnecessary and most regrettable situation," Bishop Jenkins said in a statement published on an internet blog he maintains. "I was not part of that and disassociate myself from it."

While the diocese continues to clean and rebuild houses, the New Orleans City Council recently approved plans by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to proceed with demolition of another 4,600 units of abandoned public housing damaged by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. HUD has announced plans to demolish more than 30,000 public housing units deemed substandard.

Critical Shortage

The demolition of abandoned units, many of which contain squatters, will contribute to a critical housing shortage beginning in April, when the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) said it intends to complete removal of temporary trailer housing for another 30,000 Katrina evacuees. Bishop Jenkins believes FEMA officials are encouraging the low-income trailer residents to relocate away from New Orleans.

At a hastily called meeting of religious and relief agency leaders on Dec. 19, FEMA announced plans to construct 6,000 low-income housing units, but construction has not begun. Bishop Jenkins and other religious and relief agency leaders believe that some of the public housing should be repaired and made available to the evicted trailer residents temporarily until new public housing is available.

Although he was unsuccessful in his attempt to petition the city council to halt the public housing demolition,



Kenn Elder photo

Bishop Charles Jenkins stands outside one of the housing units scheduled for demolition.

Bishop Jenkins had better success when he wrote to the speaker of the House and to the majority leader of the Senate earlier in the week. They have asked President George W. Bush to impose a 60-day moratorium on New Orleans public-housing demolitions while Congress investigates some of the facts in dispute.

Bishop Jenkins told THE LIVING CHURCH the decision to continue with the trailer evictions greatly increases the chances that the vast majority of the New Orleans' diaspora, largely black and often poor, will not return to the city.

Bishop Jenkins responded on his blog to those who have questioned his decision to bring the office of bishop

into the public arena as an advocate for public housing and others who believe he is trying to rally support for failed, big-government policies of the past.

"The issue before us is not buildings, but people," Bishop Jenkins said. "As the Christ Child had no place but a manger to lay his head, so it is that many children in New Orleans and of the New Orleans diaspora have no place to call home."

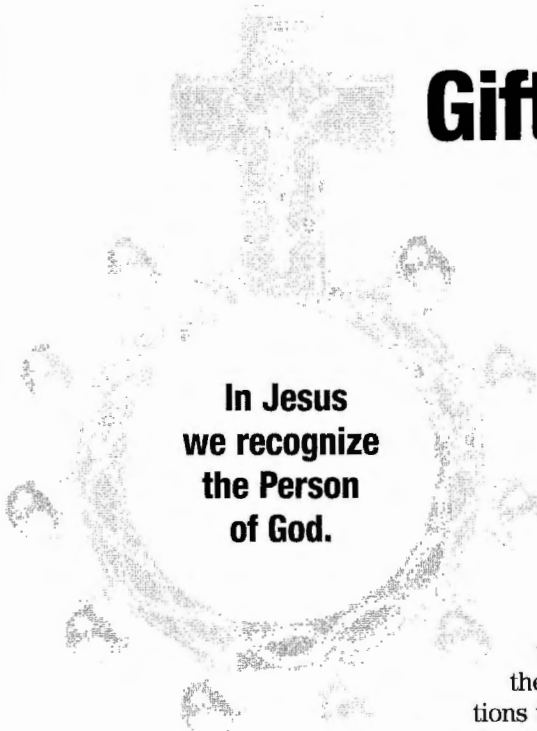
Bishop Jenkins' own home was destroyed by the storm. Once a disaster region moves beyond the immediate relief stage, Bishop Jenkins said, only the church will continue to stand for the dignity and value of all people.

Steve Waring

Gift to Humanity

"The glory of God is a living person and the life of each living person is the vision of God."

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c.202)



**In Jesus
we recognize
the Person
of God.**

Did You Know...

The provincial synod of the Episcopal Church of Rwanda voted unanimously to change its name to the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda.

Quote of the Week

Cardinal Walter Kasper of the Roman Catholic Church on ecumenical talks with Anglicans: "What we held to be our common heritage has begun to melt here and there like the glaciers in the Alps."

Human beings seem to have an innate desire and need not only to seek God's presence, but also to hear from God clearly. In all the cultures of the Near East, both biblical and extra-biblical sources reveal that in ancient times people relied primarily on charismatic authorities to hear what God desired from them and their world and to know what direc-

tions they needed to go. Into the early period of Israel's history the Canaanite prophets were active and vocal when the wandering Hebrews entered the Promised Land. They would fall dramatically into ecstatic trances and utter oracles in unintelligible languages, yet these charismatic authorities commanded the attention of the people.

The major and minor prophets of the Old Testament displayed somewhat similar powers of insight and speech but these powers, and their voices, unlike that of the pagan prophets, echoed directly from an intimacy with God. This mystery was overwhelming for the people. Kings and peasants relied on these prophetic voices seeking knowledge and understanding in order to prepare them to live confidently day by day and to enable them better to enter the future with little anxiety.

John the Baptist, in his own strange charismatic demeanor, was likened to the great prophets such as Elijah and Isaiah, yet he was unlike the prophets before him. John realized that he had to decrease so that the Lord of salvation may increase. Christian faith declares that Jesus is God's Word and he who was born of Mary satisfies humanity's desire and need to seek God's presence and hear God's voice. As Irenaeus taught Christians and the world centuries ago, "The glory of God is a living person..." and for those of us who believe in the gift of the Incarnation, Jesus is the vision and voice of God that humanity longs for.

While I was attending a board of trustees meeting in November, I was struck one

evening while walking in New York City, Manhattan to be precise, to see so many fortune teller shops open, with people lined up on the sidewalk waiting in the cold to speak to the self-appointed oracle. On public display were Tarot cards, palm reading, tea leaves and the whole gamut of prescriptions used by these modern-day "prophets" who allegedly help people gain knowledge and foresight in facing and understanding life crises and the unknown future.

Christians anticipate the meaning of daily life and the future differently from those who consult psychics or horoscopes. We trust in a personal God and proclaim to the world that the essential truth we need to know and the ways in which we need to live have already been given to us in the life, teachings and ministry of Jesus. In Jesus we recognize the Person of God. We find wisdom and grace sufficient to meet every life crisis and to be assured of a future ultimately with God. In the human experience of Jesus, God became available to us as the very depth and breadth of human life itself.

The body of Christ then is the bearer of God's message of salvation intended for all people in every generation. In our complex age, which offers a variety of escapes from the realities of the human condition, "God become man" in Christ Jesus means that humanity is encouraged to continue to believe that the search for God ultimately begins with the acknowledgement and acceptance of the dignity of every human being and of all creation. In each living person and creature we are challenged and enabled to see a glimpse of the glorious vision of God.

Human beings long to hear from God, whether consciously or unconsciously. The Church's task is both to proclaim and to witness to the good news of God in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God that this holy gift in Christ Jesus is a gift offered to all humanity. God has come. God in Christ is the glory of humanity.

Our guest columnist is the Rev. Michael Vono, rector of St. Paul's Within the Walls Church, Rome, Italy.

More Conversation

By this time, Episcopalians and other Anglicans should have known not to expect much from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Those who were hoping he would admonish The Episcopal Church's House of Bishops and those who were optimistic that he would agree with the American bishops, and most people in between, probably were disappointed that his Advent communication [TLC, Jan. 6] didn't say more. What we received was another attempt to get church leaders involved in conversations, and the formation of still another group to work on providing responses to unanswered questions.

The Most Rev. Rowan Williams used his Advent letter to the primates of the Anglican Communion as the occasion to correspond with the Communion, and he touched on a number of topics — the role of the Anglican Communion, the current debates about sexuality, the Lambeth Conference, the American House of Bishops, and the future of the Communion. The archbishop's letter is worth a closer look.

On the Anglican Communion: As he has done in the past, Archbishop Williams shows a strong insight on the Communion and his role in it. He employs the language of the Windsor Report that "it is historically an aspect of the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury 'to articulate the mind of the Communion' in moments of tension and controversy," and admits that "all of us will be seriously wounded and diminished if our Communion fractures any further." After seemingly recognizing the seriousness of the present tension, he seems not to grasp it when he writes of having "facilitated conversations" between the leadership of The Episcopal Church and those with whom they are in dispute. Similar consultations have accomplished little in the past, so it's difficult to be optimistic about a resumption of talks. In fact, the archbishop acknowledges as much in his letter.

On the debates about sexuality: Again, the archbishop seems ready to make a declarative statement when he brings up the matter of "the character of same-sex unions," but he turns away from the topic. Those looking for the archbishop to come down on one side or the other on this matter probably will find his letter lacking. On the other hand, Archbishop Williams turned again to Lambeth Resolution 1.10 as "the only point of reference clearly agreed by the overwhelming majority of the Communion," and he upholds the importance of scripture as a guide.

On the Lambeth Conference: As Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Williams is the one who invites bishops to the gathering of Anglican bishops, held in Canterbury every 10 years. The next conference is in July, and even though invitations have been extended, there remain questions about who will participate. The letter spells out the role of Lambeth as "a meeting of the chief pastors and teachers of the Communion, seeking an authoritative common voice," but doesn't address the matter of one of the provinces failing to respect that common voice by its actions. Since the letter was written, a group of conservative archbishops revealed that they were considering a plan to hold their own conference likely to be held a month before Lambeth. With that kind of planning, the archbishop's "common voice" will not be heard.

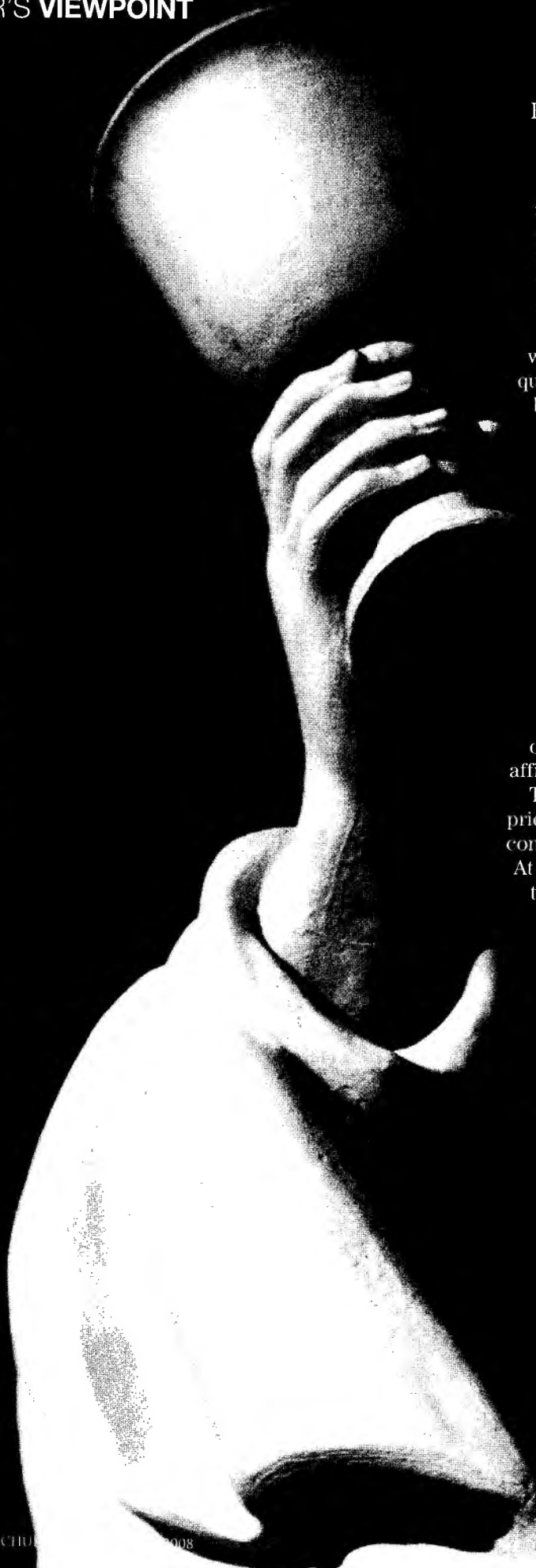
On the future of the Communion: The primate describes a possible Anglican Covenant as a "positive rallying-point" in looking toward Lambeth and beyond. Early glimpses of proposed covenants have not been well received, and many Anglicans are uncomfortable with having any kind of covenant. He writes of the need to address the question, "Who speaks for the Communion?," and says it needs "urgent resolution."

In general, Archbishop Williams' Advent letter is much like previous correspondence. He is an advocate for keeping warring factions in conversation even though the situation may look hopeless. His writing may seem ambivalent, for that's where he probably stands. On one hand, the archbishop does not want to see the Anglican Communion fracture while he is in office, and on the other hand, his personal views probably are close to the majority in The Episcopal Church. There is little in his letter to encourage those on either side of the current divide.



Anglicans should have known not to expect much from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

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By Joseph Neiman

The arrival of the Christmas season found a growing number of congregations welcoming all to Holy Communion, whether baptized or not, whether nominally Christian or persons of another faith. It is called "open communion" and extends sincere hospitality. Is this practice acceptable?

The immediate answer is "No," but perhaps it would be better to say "Not yet." There are many questions and issues to address before this could become an acceptable practice in The Episcopal Church and not simply a sincere or misguided fad.

First, the canons of The Episcopal Church (Title I, 17.7) state: "No unbaptized person shall be eligible to receive Holy Communion in this Church." Resolution 43 of the 1979 General Convention and Resolution D084, adopted at the 2006 General Convention, reaffirmed this traditional statement. The latter did, however, ask for further study into "the relationship between Holy Baptism and Eucharistic practice." Furthermore, Resolution 45 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference affirmed the same traditional practice.

This immediately raises a question whether a priest with or without the consent of a particular congregation can decide this canon is voluntary. At ordination, all clergy affirm they will "conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church" (Constitution of the Episcopal Church, Article VIII). Open communion is not mentioned.

Second, the New Testament is not clear concerning whether Jesus baptized or not (John 3:22; 4:1-2), and yet Matthew's gospel closes with the great commission, quoting Jesus telling the 11 to make disciples of all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

Certainly there is a difference in the gospels between Jesus' relationship to the crowds, the disciples, and the 12. We see this in the explanation of the parables after they had been shared with the crowd (e.g. Luke 8:4-15). Recent biblical exegesis and studies related to the quest for the historical Jesus have given the Church many new insights to digest, but there is not unanimity on many questions nor on their relationship to current liturgical practice or church order.

The Acts of the Apostles have several baptismal incidents, and they rep-

resent a range of means and formulas, yet clearly they infer that baptism was common practice from earliest days. It appears that following the Pentecost speech of Peter many were baptized, and then we are told how they lived together faithful to "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:41-42). Paul was baptized by Ananias following his conversion experience on the road to Damascus.

The best that can be said in fairness is there is no certain pattern in the New Testament stating clearly that one must be baptized before receiving Holy Communion, yet baptism is assumed and seen as necessary for a change in life. It would seem that such change is necessary before taking part in the Lord's Supper unworthily (1 Cor. 11:17-34). This sense is incorporated in the Exhortation in the Book of Common Prayer (p. 316), in the Catechism (p. 860), and in the Disciplinary Rubrics for the Eucharist (p. 409).

Some who advocate open communion cite the gospel witness that Jesus ate and drank with sinners (Mark 2:15-17), and from this derive the importance of open communion for all who come to the table of the Lord. The research in recent decades as part of the quest for the historical Jesus, particularly that of John Dominic Crossan, strongly emphasizes "commensality" or the shared communal meal as essential to the ministry of Jesus. Yet it is difficult to take what appears to be a New Testament practice of Jesus and import that into the 21st century. Much of church life today would fade away, including the ordained clergy, the parish, the diocese and some of the sacramental rites — none of which were part of the life of the disciples of Jesus.

What was it that led the early church to develop the link between baptism and Eucharist? In the Preface for the First Book of Common Prayer, Thomas Cranmer stresses the importance of the "decent order of the ancient fathers" concerning church practice. Clearly the early church linked baptism before Eucharist. In the *Didache*, written perhaps at the end of the first or beginning of the second century, the author states boldly: "You must not let anyone eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the Lord's name." A survey of early church fathers, including Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Chrysostom, Augustine, and many others would establish this link.

Communicating unbaptized persons is contrary to the practice of the Church from earliest times to now. What have we learned about baptism and Eucharist

in this century that warrants a change? Richard Hooker has argued in the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* that we should not make changes in ancient practices, such as the forms of the ministry, without substantive theological and liturgical reasons.

When we state in our Catechism that there is an "inward and spiritual grace in baptism" (BCP, p. 858), are we speaking of just a historical moment in the life of an individual or a family, or is there is difference between a baptized person and an unbaptized person? Through the centuries Christians have spoken of the unrepeatable nature of baptism, the indelible mark on the soul, the giving of the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins. Are these just words, or is there a reality behind them?

The traditional sequence in Christian life was

**THERE IS NO CERTAIN PATTERN
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AS NECESSARY FOR A CHANGE IN LIFE.**

stated: "renounce Satan, repent of our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior" (BCP, p. 858). Then we come to the table not "for solace only" but for "strength" and not for "pardon only" but for renewal. Baptism leads us to Eucharist which leads us to service in Christ's mission and ministry in the world. How does radical hospitality develop this pattern, this change of life?

It is only recently that The Episcopal Church dropped the requirement of confirmation before Holy Communion. Both this change and the development of the catechumenate resulted from renewed appreciation of baptism as full entrance into the church. What can we say now about the relationship of baptism to Eucharist, and what might this mean for the reception of Holy Communion? Much discernment needs to be done before open communion is an acceptable change in eucharistic practice in The Episcopal Church. ┘

The Rev. Joseph Neiman is a retired priest of the Diocese of Western Michigan. He lives in Paw Paw, Mich.

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

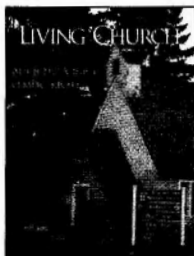
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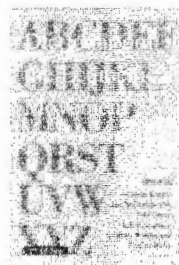


Mystical Tradition

Under the heading of "Spiritual Awakening" [TLC, Dec. 23], Joan Francis takes Bishop Steven Charleston to task for some remarks he made at the convention of the Diocese of Utah.

In the theological ring, the good bishop and I stand squarely in opposite corners. In this instance, however, I cannot fault him for wishing "a great spiritual awakening ..." led by Native American traditions, including spiritual centering and a relationship with nature. His words seem more like an endorsement of inculturation than a deviation from Christian orthodoxy. Inculturation has always been a common practice of the Church: a practice that has enriched her in terms of worship styles and flavorful expressions of the Christian faith.

The *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* has this to say on the subject: "Etymologically, 'inculturation' means the insertion of new values into one's heritage and world-view ... Inculturation asserts the right of all peoples to enjoy and develop their own culture, the right to be different and to live as authentic Christians while remaining truly themselves at the same time. It makes Christianity feel truly at home in the culture of each people, thus reflecting its universality." I have no quarrel with that.



"Inculturation asserts the right of all peoples to enjoy and develop their own culture, the right to be different and to live as authentic Christians while remaining truly themselves at the same time."

— *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*

Neither spiritual centering nor a relationship with nature presuppose a rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ or a denial of his redeeming work on the cross. Spiritual centering belongs to the mystical tradition of the Church: It is not the peculiar property of Native Americans. As to our relationship with nature, "The Canticle to Brother Sun and Sister Moon" of St. Francis of Assisi and "A Song of Creation" (BCP, p. 88) attest to our God-given oneness with nature.

The respect for nature is sorely wanting in today's global culture. Calling for "a great spiritual awakening" sounds like the right thing to do.

(The Rev.) *Federico Serra-Lima, SSC*
Chatham, N.Y.

Not Appropriate

Bishop Hampton offered an alternate prayer [TLC, Dec. 23] which, were it to be used in our church, this dedicated parishioner would depart promptly and permanently.

When will the leaders of The Episcopal Church begin to understand that opinion pieces are not what the Prayers of the People are all about? In this prayer, Bishop Hampton expresses his thoughts on our current president as having failed us and made assertions that were opinion, not fact. Clearly, he believes our president to be the enemy of the American people. He then refers to "restraint in dealing with those we call our enemies." Would that be fanatic Islam? If so, we did not choose to call them our enemies. They chose us.

This church of ours is diverse, politically and doctrinally. Its diversity can be its strength or it can bring division and schism. We worship together, cherishing the liturgy and the Trinity, and we recite the Nicene Creed.

When we leave the church, we pray and study and seek to find for ourselves the path we will follow, as Christians, in a complex world. We love our fellow parishioners as fellow Christians.

We must not alienate each other over political opinion in the lectern or the pulpit.

In a neighboring Episcopal church, a friend has told me that they prayed for the soul of Yassir Arafat after his death but did not do so for Ronald Reagan or Gerald Ford.

Bishop Hampton went way over the

Apostolic Succession: A Lutheran Perspective

line with this prayer. I fear that this lack of sensitivity to the pew is why our beloved church is crumbling away.

*Lois Young
Edina, Minn.*

I was appalled to read the letter from Bishop Hampton, suggesting a prayer for the president. I have missed having us pray for him in his incredibly difficult job as we have always prayed for our country's leaders. But the idea of telling him what he has or has not done wrong is praying about a matter of opinion, not a consensus.

Better to continue praying for our church, whose leaders certainly need guidance, and to keep quiet about our president, whom I think has done a magnificent job with very little help or understanding.

*Maryal Stone Dale
Chicago, Ill.*

After reading Bishop Hampton's prayer for President Bush, I have to ask, in printing this prayer, has TLC not endorsed a particular political viewpoint, as the prayer asks "forgiveness for his many failures," and ask that we show a "spirit of restraint in our dealings with those we call our enemies?"

*Rob Kirschner
Lakeville, Mass.*

Points of view expressed in the letters are the authors', not TLC's. Ed.

I note with pathetic interest the letter to the editor from retired Bishop Hampton. His closing paragraph is certainly not a Prayer for the President, but a bitter political statement. He should know better.

*(The Rev.) David W. Arnold
Town of Ulster, N.Y.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
can be sent to:
tlc@livingchurch.org

I read with interest a letter written by Don Gnuse titled "The ELCA and Episcopate" [TLC, Sept. 9]. He asked how the introduction of apostolic succession provided by The Episcopal Church is taking root. Or is it taking root in the ELCA?

I have served in ordained ministry for 36 years — 30 of them in the Lutheran Church (ALC and ELCA) and six years in The Episcopal Church. In 2005, I became a priest of The Episcopal Church. Perhaps I can answer that question.

In Lutheranism there has been and will be only one office of the ministry of word and sacrament. The ordained are set apart for particular ministries within the community of the faithful for the service of the gospel and the sake of good order in the church. The difference between the pastor and the bishop is oversight. In reality, a pastor is a "bishop" in the local congregation and a pastor is a "bishop" of a synod or the national church. The ordination is the same. It is only in oversight that they differ.

Lutherans in America do not use the word "ordination," but rather "installation" for the liturgical rite of giving permission to an elected pastor to function in wider oversight (bishop).

Lutherans do not understand ordination as making a change in the character of the person set apart, for it is in baptism we have become priests, but in ordination the person is given permission by the Church for the sake of good order, to celebrate the holy sacraments, preach and teach the apostolic faith as witnessed by the Lutheran Confessions.

Lutherans understand "apostolic succession" as the laying on of hands, and the correct use of apostolic scriptures, the confessions of the church as set forth in the Book of Concord and the celebration of the holy sacraments. The "historic episcopate" is understood as a symbolic link with the church of the past, but unnecessary for the validity of the ministry or sacraments. The Lutheran Church has agreed to include the "historic episcopal succession" for the sake of the unity of the Church and not as a necessity of being Church. With this in mind, the Lutherans would not see The Episcopal Church providing anything that they did not already have.

In the writings of Richard Hooker, we find some of the same questions and struggles. Hooker does not understand the episcopate as being of divine origin. Archbishop Rowan

(Continued on next page)

THE LIVING CHURCH

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The Living Church, the only national weekly magazine serving The Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion, has begun a search for an Executive Editor. Our incumbent will retire soon, and we need to find an experienced Episcopal or Anglican journalist who will be responsible for our three publications, our website, and provide leadership for a staff of 12. Must be committed to Catholic Anglicanism and be willing to work in our Milwaukee office. Send cover letter and resume to:

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PO Box 482, Riverside, IL 60546
E-mail: searchforeditor@yahoo.com.

Deaths

The Rev. Canon **James E. Rasnick**, 72, rector of Church of the Holy Trinity, West Palm Beach, FL, died Nov. 27 in Tullahoma, TN, of a heart attack.

Canon Rasnick was born in Kansas City, MO, and graduated from Drury (MO) College and the School of Theology of the University of the South. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1960, and served his entire ordained ministry in Florida. He was curate of St. John's, Homestead, 1960-61; vicar of St. Simon's, Miami, 1961-64; rector of Good Shepherd, Tequesta, 1964-75; and rector in West Palm Beach from 1979 to 2000, when he retired. Canon Rasnick was canon to the ordinary from 1975 to 1979, and in the mid-1990s he led a diocesan planning process. He was an honorary canon of Trinity Cathedral, Miami. Surviving are his wife, Cathy; two sons, a daughter, and five grandchildren.

Next week...

Ecumenical Cooperation

Lutheran Perspective

(Continued from previous page)

Williams, in his book, *Anglican Identities*, states some of Hooker's thinking in this statement: "It is almost that the episcopacy is the more desirable the less you think about it theologically . . ." One of the hallmarks of Lutheranism is that Lutherans always want to think "theologically," which causes the problem with the concept of episcopal succession.

The Lambeth Conference of 1888 Resolution 11 makes this statement: "(b) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church" (BCP, p. 878) It would seem that the Lutherans have "locally adapted" and the Anglicans have "locally adapted" the historic episcopate to meet their past and present realities. Perhaps the future "adaptation" of the episcopate will be different from what we have known in our separate journeys.

(The Rev.) *John Tait Allen*
St. Mark's Church
South Milwaukee, Wis.

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HALF-TIME VICAR: *St. Stephen the Martyr, E. Waterboro, ME*. Pastoral-sized church in growing southern Maine seeks a priest to guide our growth and stewardship in this congregation known for local outreach. Preaching, pastoral care and liturgy skills a plus. See website at www.ststephenwaterboro.org and contact CDO at **Diocese of Maine, 143 State St., Portland, ME 04101, 1-800-244-6062**, or e-mail Vicki.Wiederkehr@episcopalmaine.net.

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FULL-TIME RECTOR: *The Anglican/Episcopal Church of Christ the King, Frankfurt, Germany*, and **Bishop Pierre Whalon, Bishop to the Convocation of American Churches in Europe**, wish to call a new full-time rector. This welcoming, caring and lively English-speaking international church is seeking an energetic priest with strong pastoral gifts who will help it grow in study and outreach, interpret scripture in a changing and contemporary world, and support and develop the active ministries within the parish such as music, Christian education and youth work. He or she should relate well to people of every age from many nationalities, traditions and backgrounds, be open to offering new patterns of worship within the Anglican tradition, and speak some German. Please visit our website at www.christ-the-king.net to read the parish profile. All inquiries and applications to search@christ-the-king.net by January 25, 2008.

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Annual Page Views (est.) =

More than 60% are college graduates

More than 50% of visitors have household incomes of \$55,000 or greater

TLC Website visitors are active in the Church

More than 70% are in the Episcopal Church

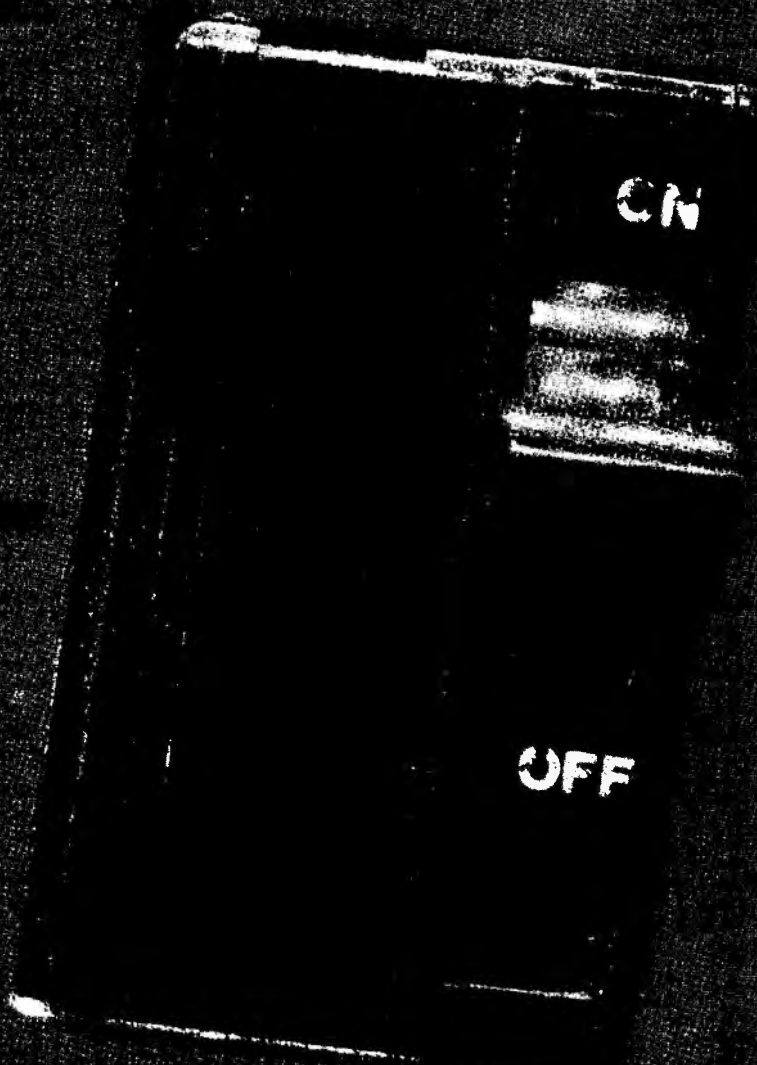
More than 60% have recently attended, or plan to attend, a faith-related conference

More than 40% of visitors spend 1+ hours online daily for business

More than 30% spend 1+ hours online daily for personal use

More than 20% of visitors purchase 5 or more books online per year

Nearly 10% order products online at least once a month



For full details about online advertising opportunities with The Living Church News Service, and rate information, please call Tom Parker, Advertising Manager, at (414) 276-5420, ext. 16.

*From June-August 2007, The Living Church conducted an online survey to identify who visits the website and to determine purchasing habits of visitors. More than 650 visitors responded.