

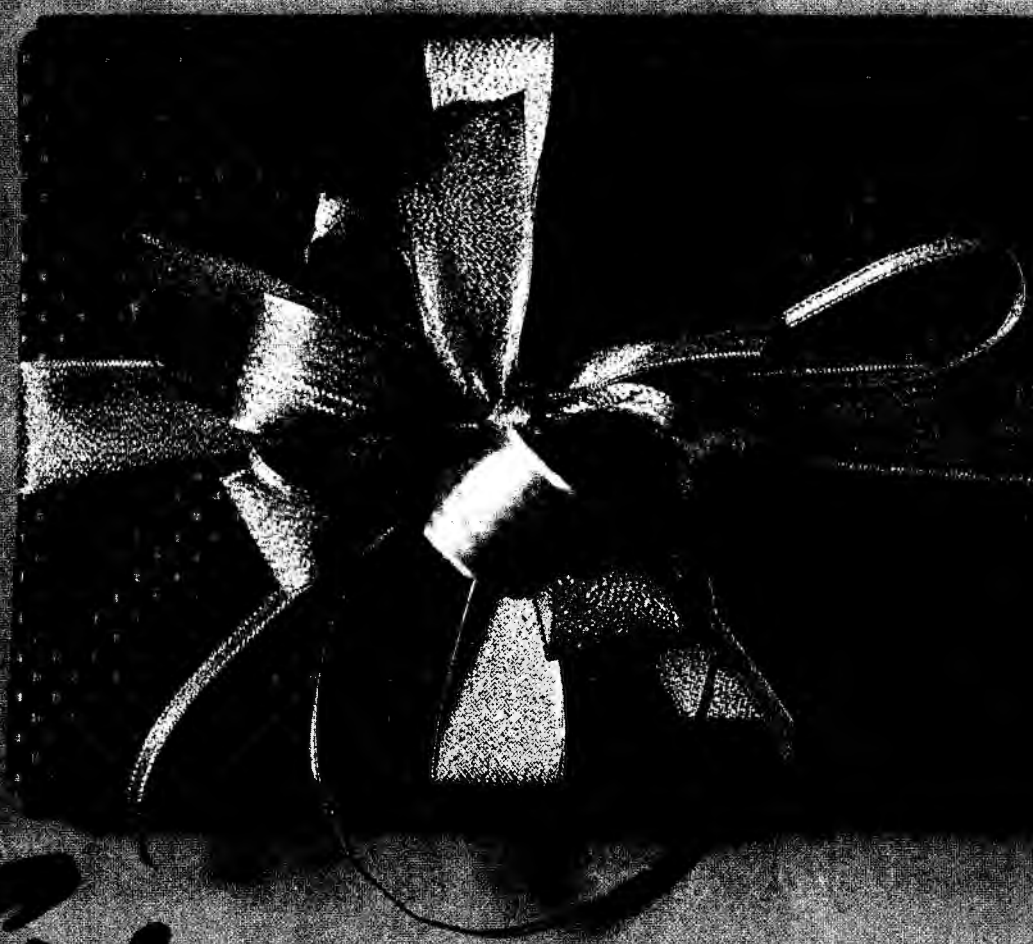
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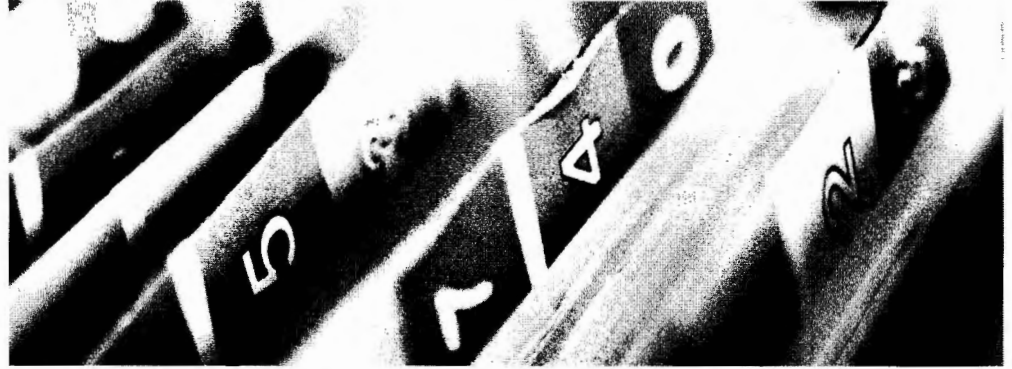
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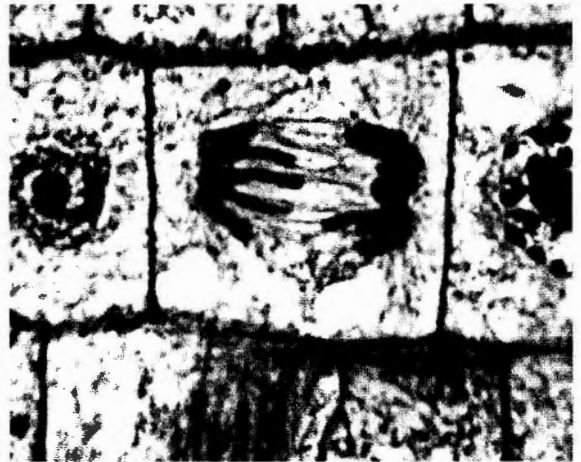
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Bishop Wolfe at Kansas convention.
Bob Hirst photo



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On the Cover

Candles are lit at St. James' Cathedral in Chicago Nov. 2 to remember family and friends who have died because of violence [p. 5].
David Skidmore/Diocese of Chicago photo

Christ the King

'Come, you that are blessed by my Father..'

(Matt. 25:34)

The Last Sunday after Pentecost: Christ the King (Proper 29A), Nov. 23, 2008

BCP: Ezek. 34:11-17; Psalm 95:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Matt. 25:31-46

RCL: Ezek. 34:11-16, 20-24; Psalm 100 or Psalm 95:1-7a; Eph. 1:15-23; Matt. 25:31-46

Among the functions of kings in antiquity was the public administration of justice. Solomon, we're told, personally presided in "court" and resolved difficult legal matters in Israel (1 Kings 4:34). And Roman emperors, on occasion, certainly engaged in similar activities. The king's decision was always final. There was no further appeal.

In the modern world, this tradition persists in the British sovereign's role as the "font of justice." Laws are promulgated and legal decisions are rendered in the name of the monarch, who, through her Privy Council in London, has final say in any law's application. This tradition is so strong, in fact, that even citizens of the independent republics of Dominica, Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago maintain the legal right of royal appeal on conviction of any major crime.

The Church today celebrates Christ as its sovereign, a prime function of whom is final judgment. It honors a king whose legal decisions are final, and its gospel reading provides us with tremendous insight into how the Lord reaches decisions.

Christ the King is no distant figure

holed up in a palace. Instead, he abides with and in human beings, most particularly in the weakest and most vulnerable. His binding judgments on obedience to his own law of love, moreover, come not from any law book but instead from his own experience.

Christ the King inevitably says this to those whose conviction for sin he overturns: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." For "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." But those who do anything less for the needy hear this: "[D]epart from me..." and "go away into eternal punishment." The king's decision is based on how we've treated him in the Lazaruses among us (Luke 16:20-25). It depends on what we've done for our down-and-out neighbor (Luke 10:30-37).

Our challenge on this Feast of Christ the King is to mold our lives according to the kingdom values upon which he shall judge us.

Look It Up

How does Jesus identify the nature of his kingship in John 18:36?

Think About It

How have I ministered to Christ in the needy today? In the past week?

Next Sunday

The First Sunday of Advent (Year B), Nov. 30, 2008

BCP: Isaiah 64:1-9a; Psalm 80 or 80:1-7; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; Mark 13:(24-32)33-37

RCL: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

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San Diego Diocese Wins Appeal in Fallbrook Case

A California appellate court has sided with the Diocese of San Diego, reversing a lower court decision which found no valid basis for Bishop James Mathes' removal and replacement of the board of directors of St. John's Anglican Church, Fallbrook.

In July 2006, the vestry and rector of St. John's Episcopal Church voted to leave The Episcopal Church and to call for a parish vote three days later. At that meeting the congregation voted 71-13 in favor of disaffiliation. The majority of the congregation subsequently affiliated with the Anglican Church of Uganda and continues to worship in the church building.

Bishop Mathes claimed that the vestry and clergy had disqualified themselves from parish leadership when they voted to leave The Episcopal Church. He appointed new vestry and clergy leaders at St. John's and sued for control of the church property. The Episcopal congregation has been holding Sunday services at the Fallbrook Community Center since 2006. A lower court found in favor of the Anglican congregation in November 2006, but the appellate court ordered the lower court to reverse its previous ruling on Oct. 21.

'In Good Standing'

"We must defer to the Episcopal Church's decision on this ecclesiastical matter, even if it incidentally affected control over church property," the three-judge panel of the 4th District Court of Appeal said in its opinion. "The constitution of the San Diego Diocese confers authority on Bishop Mathes to resolve the dispute between the dissident and loyalist members of St. John's parish. Moreover, under the San Diego Diocese's constitution, in order for a member of a parish to be a member of the vestry, and thereby a director of the parish corporation, he or she must be a member in good standing in The Episcopal Church. Once the defendants renounced their membership in The Episcopal Church, they could no longer serve as members of the vestry and directors of the parish corporation."

Eric Sohlgren, the lawyer for St. John's Anglican Church, said the California Supreme Court is expected to issue an opinion within the next month in another case involving a California congregation where the majority voted to leave The Episcopal Church and refused pleas from the diocesan bishop to vacate the property.



David Skidmore/Diocese of Chicago photo

During a service at St. James' Cathedral in Chicago Nov. 2, Maxwell Montaga of Messiah-St. Bartholomew Church, Chicago, places a votive candle on the high altar, one of 50 lit in remembrance of the children of Chicago who have died from violence in the past year. The service, attended by 150 people, was a way for the diocese to "pledge ourselves to join hands with city government, schools, agencies, and all people of faith to stop the killing," the Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Lee, Bishop of Chicago, said prior to the service [see cover].

Council Aids Reorganizing Dioceses

Episcopal dioceses seeking to reorganize after a majority of their diocesan conventions voted to leave The Episcopal Church have received financial assistance from the national Executive Council.

Resolution A&F075, approved during the meeting in Helena, Mont., Oct. 21-24, authorized up to \$700,000 in 2009 for clergy salaries and other expenses in San Joaquin and other similarly situated dioceses. A budget approved by delegates to the convention of the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin assumes receiving \$597,611 in

funding from the program budget of General Convention. The San Joaquin convention authorized allocating all of the \$260,000 it expects to collect next year in assessment income to its ongoing court battle with the leadership of the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin.

In addition to San Joaquin, three other diocesan conventions have or were scheduled to hold referendums on their affiliations. They are: Pittsburgh (which voted Oct. 4 to realign) Fort Worth (Nov. 14-15) and Quincy (Nov. 7-8).

Five Nominees for Bishop of Central Ecuador

The standing committee of the Diocese of Central Ecuador recently announced a slate of five nominees for the election of a bishop on Dec. 20. The candidates are: the Very Rev. Aston Jacinto Brooks, dean of the Cathedral Church of All Saints, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands; the Rev. Rosalí Fer-

nández-Pola, vicar of San Mateo Apostol, Penuelas, Puerto Rico; the Rev. Thomas G. Mansella, assisting priest at St. Michael's Church, Arlington, Va.; the Rev. Luis Fernando Ruiz, vicar of San Lucas Iglesia, Medellin, Colombia; and the Rev. Carlos J. Sandoval, rector of St. Simon's, Miami, Fla.

At Home and Abroad

The convention of the Diocese of **Indianapolis**, held Oct. 24-26 in Evansville, included a challenge to fund the renovation of the Malek Bible School in the partner Diocese of Bor in Sudan.

The Rt. Rev. Catherine Waynick, Bishop of Indianapolis, pledged \$1,000 plus \$2 for every book in her home library to support the \$20,000 Advent project. She urged clergy to make similar offerings in thanksgiving for their theological education. In addition, a goal of \$50,000 was established for the construction of a girls' dormitory at the Jonglei Hope Academy in Marr, Sudan.

Convention participants watched a video that celebrated the successful completion of a project that was put forth at last year's convention — to raise funds and build a home for a hurricane-displaced family in Mississippi through Camp Coast Care.

Also shown were "Mission Minutes" that focused on mission projects in individual parishes and campus ministries, and a multi-media presentation on the diocesan Episcopal Fund for

Human Need, which provides emergency and stop-gap relief throughout the diocese.

Three resolutions were approved to do the following: establish a Lenten ingathering Sunday for Episcopal Relief and Development; adopt Exodus Refugee and Immigration Services as a cooperating ministry of the diocese; and enhance the diocese's emphasis on environmental sustainability.

Delegates participated in an exercise in budget prioritization, designed to stimulate thinking on mission and finances around the diocesan vision statement.

As directed by a canonical change, it was the first year the budget was developed by the executive council instead of the bishop's staff. A \$3.86 million budget was approved for 2009, an increase of \$170,000 from the previous year. The diocesan apportionment rose a quarter point to 13.75 percent, the first increase in several years. The diocese pays for all clergy health insurance.

Convention also emphasized the role and ministry of the diaconate. At the concluding Eucharist, two deacons were ordained and the Rev.

Susanne Epting, director of the North American Association for the Diaconate, preached. She was the convention chaplain.

Closings Explained

Delegates to the convention of the Diocese of **South Dakota** authorized a new committee to implement a capital campaign and received an update on the search for a successor to the diocesan bishop, the Rt. Rev. Creighton Robertson. Convention met Oct. 3-5 at a conference center in Oacoma.



Bishop Robertson

The election for a bishop coadjutor will be held in Pierre on May 9 with the consecration tentatively scheduled for Oct. 31 in Sioux Falls.

Convention adopted a motion for action calling for creation of a stewardship committee and charging it with implementing a diocesan-wide capital campaign "as immediately as possible."

Convention approved a \$1.7 million budget in which expenses exceed income by \$270,000. The 2008 budget was \$1.6 million.

During his address, Bishop Robertson explained the reasoning behind the recent decision to close a number of mission congregations on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He recounted the decades-long process that led to the decision and pointed out that the diocese has closed churches at one location and opened new ones elsewhere throughout much of its history. Bishop Robertson also noted that in 1994 the diocese deconsecrated a chapel which his family had built on land it had donated.

Most Canadian Bishops Affirm Lambeth Moratoria

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada acknowledged at the end of a five-day meeting on Oct. 31 that a growing number of dioceses are taking steps to authorize same-sex blessings and that these "incremental" and "experiential" steps should be encouraged.

The bishops spent considerable time discussing the moratoria on approving same-sex blessings, the consecration of persons in same-sex relationships to the episcopate, and cross-border incursions. According to a statement released by the bishops, they also called for the establishment of diocesan commissions to discuss the matter of same-sex blessings in preparation for debate at General Synod in 2010.

A week earlier, Bishop Barry Clarke of Montreal told his diocesan synod,

"For reasons, perhaps known only to God, I believe we, in the Diocese of Montreal, are among those who have been called by God to speak with a prophetic voice. It is our voice that is called to affirm that all unions of faithful love and life-long commitment are worthy of God's blessing and a means of God's grace. In time our voice will either be affirmed by the body, or stand corrected."

The Diocese of New Westminster has permitted parishes to perform same-sex blessings since 2002. This year, in addition to Montreal, three other diocesan synods have petitioned their bishops for permission to perform same-sex blessings. Other bishops anticipate similar requests in the not-too-distant future, according to Archbishop Fred Hiltz of Canada.

Hospitable Faith

An address by its bishop and two keynote talks by author Diana Butler Bass highlighted the convention of the Diocese of **Kansas** Oct. 24-25, which had as its theme "Mission: Possible."

The Rt. Rev. Dean Wolfe, Bishop of Kansas, noted that even in times of



Melodie Woerman/Plenteous Harvest photo

In Topeka, Diana Butler Bass describes how Christian practice brings vitality to congregations.

dwindling local resources and regional financial challenges, outstanding ministry is taking place in the diocese. He highlighted nationally recognized youth and campus ministry programs, along with the hiring of a church planter to create a new parish in suburban Kansas City and revitalization of the Kansas School for Ministry.

"In Christ no mission is impossible," he said. "No task is too formidable. No challenge is too great. And we are undeterred by stock market reports, negative demographics and the naysayers who believe it can't be done. In Christ, nothing is impossible."

Ms. Butler Bass offered a two-hour master class before the start of convention in Topeka, and then two hour-long talks to assembled clergy and lay delegates. In the first, she explored the

church's role in the move from a modern to a post-modern era. In her second talk, she gave a preview of her new book on church history by exploring the difference between militant Christians — from both conservative and liberal sides — and those who seek to move beyond labels to a faith of hospitality and meaning.

A 2009 budget of \$1.9 million was adopted. Diocesan treasurer Doug Anning noted the budget relies on an additional \$35,000 in apportionment payments but without a change in the rate paid by parishes. The increase comes because parish income increased nearly \$700,000 from 2006 to 2007, the most recent year of record.

A series of workshops focused on church growth, Christian practice in parishes, planned giving, how to set up environmental stewardship teams in local congregations, and a discussion of changes and enhancements to the Kansas School for Ministry.

Melodie Woerman

Financial Independence

The Diocese of **Western Kansas** committed itself to move toward financial independence when it met in convention Oct. 17-18 at Grace Church, Hutchinson.

The Rt. Rev. James M. Adams, Jr., Bishop of Western Kansas, said the diocese has drawn upon more of the interest of its endowment fund to cover expenses as a result of no longer receiving financial support from The Episcopal Church.

In an impassioned address that stressed the urgency of the need to grow financially and "in the kingdom of God," the bishop urged congregations to tithe to the diocesan growth fund, in addition to asking individuals to contribute to the growth fund.

In response to the bishop's address, convention delegates unanimously approved a resolution that commits the diocese "to a future centered on growth in love, truth, body and spirit" and a move toward financial independence through support of the

diocesan growth fund. The goal of a \$3 million endowment was established.

It was noted that any monies given to the growth fund are "restricted" endowment and are only to support the diocese.

In a second resolution, delegates agreed, in light of the diocese's financial constraints, to dedicate to youth ministry the plate offering from the first fifth Sunday of the year.

Convention approved a budget of \$350,797 for 2009, an increase of \$13,000. The assessment remained at 25 percent.

New Name in Europe

Episcopalians from the **Convocation of American Churches in Europe** welcomed Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori to their Oct. 16-19 convention in Waterloo, Belgium. The gathering focused on the power of story telling, and voted to rename the convocation.

"When we connect the stories that we know with great faith stories, we are doing the work of the gospel," Bishop Jefferts Schori told the delegates. She focused on the convention's program theme of "Telling Our Story, Building God's Mission in Europe." "We are telling the world and each other how we know God."

The storytelling model used in the small-group table discussions was based on the "Transformed by Stories" program being developed by the European Institute of Christian Studies (EICS), the convocation's education department. The program receives financial support from the Episcopal Church's Office of Ministry Development.

In convention business, delegates passed a resolution to change the formal name to the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. Since the convocation is defined in the Episcopal Church's constitution, two successive General Conventions will need to concur. Convention also urged parishes and organized missions to increase their assessment to the con-

(Continued on next page)



Nan Ross/Pathways photo

The Rt. Rev. Keith Whitmore, assistant Bishop of Atlanta, ordains the Rev. Robert Book to the priesthood at the Church of the Common Ground in Atlanta's Woodruff Park on Oct. 15. The majority of the congregation at the new church plant is homeless. Fr. Book, formerly an ordained pastor in the Lutheran Church of Canada, serves as the mission developer at Common Ground.

Europe

(Continued from previous page)

vocation to 7.5 percent of net disposable income in 2009 and 8 percent by 2011. A 2009 operating budget of \$655,300 was approved.

Delegates heard a report about the convocation's first delegation to the triennial Episcopal Youth Event, held in Texas in July. The convocation also held its own youth event in Rome, with participants volunteering at a refugee center.

The Rt. Rev. Pierre Whalon, bishop-in-charge of the convocation, noted that "the way of being Christian that is being an Episcopalian is very old, but it's also very adaptable."

Episcopal News Service contributed to this report.

Moravian Agreement

The convention in the Diocese of Milwaukee began Oct. 10 at Memorial Hall in Racine, Wis., with short presentations by visitors from the Episcopal Church Center: the Rev. Anthony Guillen, missionary for Latino/Hispanic ministries; the Rev. Angela S. Ifill, missionary for Black Ministries; and the Rev. Fred Vergara, director for ethnic congregational development. They

discussed their roles in and hopes for a "multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural church."

The Rt. Rev. Steven Miller, Bishop of Milwaukee, briefly discussed his work as co-chair of the Moravian-Episcopal Dialogue. The work of that dialogue is almost complete, Bishop Miller said. Next summer the committee will present to General Convention and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church a full communion agreement titled *Finding Our Delight*. He commended passage of the ecumenical agreement.

"Like another Anglican clergyman, John Wesley, I have 'felt my heart strangely warmed' as I have interacted with our Moravian sisters and brothers in Christ," he said. "Theirs is a tradition rich in devotion and hospitality."

Two resolutions were adopted after some discussion about specific wording. The first "deplore[s] the ongoing workplace raids carried out by the U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement Agency" and encourages assistance for "those seeking protection from detention and deportation." The second resolution "reaffirms the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church's condemnation of the use of torture and the practice of extraordinary rendition."

Among other business, convention

approved with no debate or discussion a \$1.6-million budget for 2009. The amount represents an increase of \$21,381 over the previous year.

Discernment Continues

Delegates to convention in the Diocese of Northern Michigan overwhelmingly approved a resolution affirming the work of the diocese's Episcopal Ministry Discernment Team, and endorsing the process it has designed.

That process will culminate in the selection of a bishop/"ministry developer" and an episcopal ministry support team at a special convention to be held in February. The commissioning and ordination, to be led by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, is scheduled for next October.

At the Oct. 17-19 gathering in Marquette, the discernment team presented its work to the delegates, and announced that it has received names of potential candidates for the bishop/ministry developer position, as well as for the episcopal ministry support team, which will work with the bishop in a manner similar to the way a ministry support team assists a locally trained priest in a mutual ministry congregation. After table discussion about process, a vote by tables on whether delegates felt they could trust the process as it had been designed was affirmed 85-4. A formal resolution to affirm the team's work followed.

Fredrica Harris Thompsett, retired professor of historical theology at Episcopal Divinity School, served as convention chaplain and addressed delegates on the theme, "Give us new eyes to envision God's dream for us."

"One of the great gifts of seeing is that it is best done together," she told delegates, as reported on the diocese's website. "If we are going to be asking for new eyes to see God's dream, we are going to be asking for a lot of eyes."

Diocesan treasurer Richard Graybill said delegates approved a budget of \$531,128 for 2009, about \$65,000 more than this year.



GUEST COLUMN

Benefits Plan Needs Healthy Debate

The General Convention of The Episcopal Church has earned its “revolutionary” reputation honestly. But most legislation, no matter how controversial, is the cumulative result of painstaking committee work and incremental legislation stretching back over more than a three-year convention cycle.

In addition to debating contentious issues, General Convention also approves a budget and business plan for the church. In most years’ legislation about the church corporation seldom draws much debate by the time it reaches the legislative floor, but next year’s convention might be different.

Like most corporations, The Episcopal Church continues to struggle with the rising cost of healthcare benefits for employees. A recent interim report to Executive Council noted that “total spending on employee healthcare benefits by domestic U.S. congregations, dioceses and official agencies in 2008 is projected to be \$133.7 million, or \$10,237 per employee.” This spending represents approximately 10 percent of all pledge and plate income. If current annual increases are not controlled, healthcare coverage is projected to consume 15 percent of pledge and plate income within six years.

Coverage today varies greatly. Most full-time clergy receive generous healthcare benefit packages at little or no out-of-pocket expense, but plans in some smaller dioceses require clergy to pay more. A significantly smaller percentage of full-time lay employees are eligible for healthcare benefits.

The 75th General Convention authorized the Church Pension Group to study healthcare benefits and make recommendations when General Convention meets next July in Anaheim, Calif. An advisory committee of the Church Pension Group’s 24-member board of trustees has studied the issue for three years and recently submitted its findings for publication in the so-called Blue Book of pre-filed General Convention legislation. The committee has already said it will recommend a mandatory, denomination-wide healthcare benefit plan for all church employees, clergy

and lay, to be administered through the Episcopal Church Medical Trust.

The advisory committee believes such a plan would result in collective savings of at least 10 percent annually. In its report to Executive Council, the committee said “using a single source for healthcare benefits will enable the church to leverage its aggregate size and obtain lower unit costs ... from a variety of sources, including elimination of most state premium taxes and brokerage fees, reduction in administrative service fees from our product partners, and improvement in the underlying health risk of the employee population.” The plan would give dioceses some flexibility in choosing a plan, and employees would be able to opt out if they already have coverage provided through other “approved sources.”

The proposed plan includes some increased costs, however, that would cut into the anticipated \$17.7 million in savings. The committee estimates that insuring all full-time lay employees currently not covered will increase costs \$3.6 million in 2010. They also expect that some employees currently insured by a spouse’s plan would choose one of the Medical Trust plans, all of which would have relatively low deductible and out-of-pocket expenses. This could result in a further \$9.4 million in expenses.

Offering healthcare benefits to parish secretaries and other lay employees working more than 30 hours per week is laudable, but it is unclear how many parishes would be able to cope with the additional \$10,000 annual expense per employee. Parishes and dioceses which place a premium on autonomy may resent a mandatory plan. Allowing dioceses the option of shopping for other plans would help ensure that the proposed one remains economically competitive.

A denomination-wide plan could offer a better product at a lower price, but by shielding it from the competitive forces of the market it could also wind up offering less at a higher cost. The advisory committee needs to explain why dioceses should be forced to subscribe to a plan if the economic benefits are not persuasive.

Steve Waring

Legislation about the church corporation seldom draws much debate, but this year might be different.

Did You Know...

In a recent Barna survey, only 36 percent of active church-goers said they had ever been exposed to any teaching about how Christians should respond to environmental issues.

Quote of the Week

Bishop John Chapman of Ottawa, on his plan to introduce same-sex blessings in the Canadian diocese: “In order to further the discernment process, we must ‘experience’ the issue as church before clarity of heart and mind might be attained.”

Praise and Thanks

Thanksgiving is a holiday filled with traditions. Obviously, there's the dinner menu. According to the not-disinterested National Turkey Federation, nine of 10 American households will have turkey as the main course that day. It's also a traditional day of rest for many, with 99 percent of employers offering their workers a paid holiday in the middle of the work week. When it comes to entertainment, there's the eight-decade tradition of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, and of course the football games, whether they're the televised pro variety or storied local high school rivalries.

Gathering to worship is also a Thanksgiving Day tradition. Services of thanksgiving for safe arrival were held from the time the first European settlers reached American soil, and colonies held their own days of prayerful fasting — not feasting — beginning in the late 17th century. George Washington proclaimed the first national day of “public thanksgiving and prayer” a century later.

It behooves us all to make worship a part of our personal Thanksgiving Day tradition. Gathering with a faith community affords us an opportunity to recall that we are all stewards of God's creation, recipients of his bounty, and called to attend to the needs of others. It is particularly appropriate on this day to celebrate the Eucharist — the word means “thanksgiving” in Greek — to thank God for the gift of Jesus' Presence in the sacrament of Holy Communion, in which God made manifest his love to the world, and the gift of his divine law, given to light our way and lead us to holiness.

Whether we meet in our home parish, or at a church where we are traveling, when we worship with prayer, praise and song on the fourth Thursday in November, we are celebrating an important part of our shared heritage as Americans and as Christians. In the words of Thomas à Kempis, “Let all people, nations and languages praise thee, and magnify thy holy and most sweet name with highest exultation and burning devotion.”

Stir Up Sunday

Many longtime readers of this magazine will remember “the Sunday next before Advent” as “Stir Up Sunday.” This informal but popular nickname came from the opening words of the collect, as appointed in the prayer books prior to the 1979 edition: “Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded.”

Today, many Anglicans observe this Sunday as the feast of Christ the King. The lections focus on aspects of God's righteous judgment at the close of the age, with the gospel emphasizing that our discipleship must be lived out through our corporal works of mercy. It is easy to overlook these duties even in the best of times; today, with many millions of people struggling with anxiety, uncertainty and the loss of a home or job, it can be even more difficult to rouse our spirits and live out our Lord's command to care.

What better time, then, as we look ahead to the start of a new church year, to ask Christ our King to inspire our hearts so that we might bring our will in line with his? Our free will is God's gift to us; when we allow him to stir us up to put our faith into action, that will is sanctified for our good, and the good of the world.



**Gathering
to worship
is also a
Thanksgiving
Day tradition.**



READER'S VIEWPOINT

Denying Our Anglican DNA

By Kevin E. Martin

In Westminster Abbey, you can learn a great deal about English history and culture. There are laid to rest kings, queens, prime ministers and poets. One chapel shows us something important about the Anglican Church. It contains the final resting place of two queens of England — Elizabeth and Mary.

When Henry VIII died, he left upon the throne Edward, a sickly, teenaged son. During his short reign, the English reformation moved in full force. Archbishop Cranmer produced the first and second prayer books. When Edward died, he was replaced by Mary, a staunch Roman Catholic, whose frequent persecutions earned her the title “Bloody Mary.” During her reign, three English bishops were among those burned at the stake.

Mary died in childbirth and was followed by Elizabeth, a protestant who initiated a ruthless persecution of Roman Catholics. She also brought about a compromise among Anglicans that we now call the Elizabethan Settlement.

Only the restoration of the monarchy

brought with it a final settlement and the end to this religious strife. Interestingly, Mary and Elizabeth are buried in the same chapel in Westminster. This is more than history. It is a statement about the nature of religious persecution and religious zeal. This statement has become, since 1660, an essential part of Anglican DNA. We might phrase it this way: Religion is very important, but religious passions should never be allowed to overwhelm a thoughtful acknowledgment that truth lies on both sides of an issue.

This gives to Anglicanism a conservative and reflective temperament that has for hundreds of years commended it to thoughtful people. It is more than toleration. It is the acknowledgment that there needs to be a wide and embracing center to Christianity.

This does not mean that Anglicans lack conviction and passion about our religious beliefs. In the 19th century, two strongly opinionated and believing groups — evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics — added much to Anglican church life. Still, despite strong disagreement, the Anglican sense of toleration continued and allowed the church

to embrace slowly various movements into the mainstream of its life.

This nature is often called the *via media*. *Via media* was never thought to be the simple middle or, even worse, the uncommitted middle. It was a way of being the church and of doing church that allowed Anglicans to embrace a wide group of Christians. This reflective, introspective and cautious character of Anglicanism's DNA is currently a

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problem that Episcopalians face in interaction with the worldwide Anglican Communion. From many within The Episcopal Church, we get demands for a definite decision that will bring about a quick resolve to our current

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from previous page)

issues. This is simply not in the DNA of Anglicanism, as the recent Lambeth Conference demonstrated. There are other ways that The Episcopal Church is out of sync with Anglicanism:

1. As obvious as it is, we have to admit that we are an American church.

We cannot separate ourselves from the way Americans are seen and sometimes stereotyped in the rest of the world. Others in the Anglican Communion are acutely aware that we are Americans. This view creates several problems for us.

2. We are a wealthy church.

While most Episcopal congregations are relatively small and often struggle to meet our budgets, compared to other Anglican congregations, we are wealthy beyond their wildest dreams. Reflective of our culture, the average American congregation has resources – buildings, office equipment, staff, utilities, and benefits for clergy that are unimaginable in the majority of the Anglican world. This is a source of both envy and resentment.

3. We are seen as being theologically imperialistic, just as we Americans are seen as culturally imperialistic.

This is hard for Episcopalians to understand. For example, many Episcopalians did not support the policies of the Bush administration, and have not supported the war in Iraq. However, we refuse to see that the imposition of sexual values that emerged from the sexual revolution of the '60s is not a part of most of the world's way of viewing sexuality. Further, the other dynamics that have given rise to the strength of the progressive religious views in TEC are not found in most of the Anglican world.

4. We are often unaware of the issues that other Anglicans face on a daily basis.

Periodically, Darfur or Rwanda come up on our radar screen, but like most Americans, we are largely ignorant of the daily struggles of the church in Africa, South America and Asia. Further, we are frequently unaware of the cultural and political dynamics of certain regions of the world. For example, it is interesting that the Archbishop of Nigeria is often the focus in our conflict with third-world Anglicans. We seem unaware of the place of Nigeria in the emergence of the new political dynamics of Africa. We seem to be insensitive to the fact that the growing influence of Nigeria in African Anglicanism is reflective of the growing influence of Nigeria in the political realities of the African continent.

To these American issues, we can add Anglican ones:

- We fail to understand that in most of the Communion, bishops have real power, and not merely the limited constitutional and symbolic power they have in the U.S. Perhaps we should simply say that in the U.S., our bishops' primary power is one of influence, not jurisdiction.
- We fail to recognize that our membership is very small compared to other Anglican churches. As Lambeth has become increasingly representative of worldwide Anglicanism, we can expect (and should anticipate) that this will mean that we will be increasingly marginalized in this body, as will most of the rest of western Anglican churches.

As globalization continues, The Episcopal Church will have to learn how to live out its relationship in the Communion in a better way.

As globalization continues, and as the influence of Anglican churches from Africa, Asia and South America continues to grow, The Episcopal Church will have to learn how to live out its relationship in the Communion in a better way. Just as important, however, is the strength we can draw from Anglicanism's DNA to find a way of living together in a more thoughtful and embrace manner within The Episcopal Church.

Each time we find ourselves in disagreement, we can remind ourselves that Mary and Elizabeth rest in the same chapel. This may cause us to stop and think before we speak and act. The more we are able to do this, the more we will be true to our own DNA, which is part of the rich heritage that is true Anglicanism. □

The Very Rev. Kevin E. Martin is the dean of St. Matthew's Cathedral, Dallas, Texas.

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

It Doesn't Matter

And so the acceptance begins. Our Presiding Bishop says the worst is over [TLC, Nov. 2]. We have a diverse church and all are welcome with any theological perspective you wish. Believe Jesus is the Savior of the world or just for the ones who choose to believe he is the truth? It matters not. What is in an indefinite article among friends? "The" or "a," it really does not matter. Jesus can be both at the same time and you can choose what to believe.

Is Jesus the Christ of God, the Way, the Truth and the Life, or just another choice among other ways to God the Father? It is just a matter of opinion, but can be termed orthodox in TEC.

Don't like the way canons are written and what they say? We can change the interpretation now, and then worry about the paperwork come General Convention. Our adherence to the discipline of the Church is only important when it serves the purpose of ridding the Church of "dissidents" and "trouble makers." But when we need to ignore a straightforward canon which has no interpretive wiggle room, like who may receive Holy Communion, then it is all right to declare "local option." That discipline of the Church can be ignored without another thought or challenge, much less a trial.

It no longer matters who Jesus is in TEC, because you can believe anything, and as long as you do not step on the wrong discipline, then all is well. Resurrection? Maybe. Incarnation? Could be. Atonement? If really necessary. Sacrifice? Depends. And sin is now a four-letter word.

All shall be well. Well, for TEC? I guess so, since it seems not to matter. For the kingdom of God? Now that is another matter all together. General Convention 2009 looks to be the time when all will be brought together, when all ideas will be acceptable, and truth is what one makes it out to be. Canons will be "fixed." The transformation will be coming to a close and TEC will be open to all — all except for those pesky old-time religion dissidents and trouble makers. Most of them will be gone soon

anyway, if not by convention. And again, all will be well.

*(The Rt. Rev.) James M. Adams, Jr.
Diocese of Western Kansas
Salina, Kan.*

Disagreement Outweighed

I was a priest in Pittsburgh with Bishop Ackerman [TLC, Nov. 16] before all the division in that diocese. I usually disagree with his theological and ecclesiastic positions, but have been so impressed and edified by his piety and kindness that they outweigh our disagreements. If ever there was a holy man who transcends differences with love and respect for those who disagree with him; who is able to enter into deep dialogue with prayer and reflection; and who really listens to other points of view, he is the man. I would choose him for my spiritual director if we

were in the same state, which says to me that our differences do not make much difference.

*(The Rev.) Donald Hands
Milwaukee, Wis.*

Having known Bishop Ackerman from his days at Charleroi, Pa., I can only say that whatever decision he has made has been made with deep prayer, consultation with many wise friends and his wise wife, and total reliance on the Lord whom he has served with grace, dedication and kindness. He is a man for whom the scriptures, Christian history and Anglo-Catholic tradition have been his hallmark. God bless the Ackermans as they look to their next great adventure.

*(The Rev.) Rebecca Spanos
Shepherd's Heart Fellowship
Pittsburgh, Pa.*

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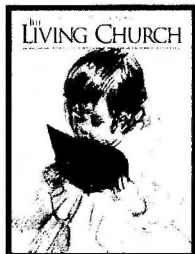
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BOOKS

The Fall of the Evangelical Nation

The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church

By Christine Wicker. HarperOne. Pp. 214. \$24.95.

ISBN 0061117161.

The dramatic growth and notorious political influence of evangelical churches during the last several decades could easily lead one to believe that these churches are the future expression of Christianity in this country. As mega-churches spring up in both urban and suburban settings, dwarfing and threatening the efforts of smaller and more traditional churches, the prospect of their invincibility becomes conventional wisdom. Joel Osteen's billboards in Houston and the constant spot radio announcements of the McLean Bible Church in the Washington metropolitan area seem to be signs of things to come.

Christine Wicker, 17-year columnist and religion reporter for the *Dallas Morning News*, self-proclaimed and grateful product of an evangelical upbringing, decided to look more closely at this readily accepted assessment of evangelicals and their future. The result of her careful inquiry is *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church*.

Wicker's conclusions are stark and unexpected. It is her judgment that evangelical Christianity in America is dying; rather than a vanguard, "They are a remnant, unraveling at every edge." By any measure, conversions, baptisms, membership, retention, participation, giving, attendance, religious literacy, effect on the culture, they are "down and dropping."

These are not so much Wicker's personal judgments as they are a careful analysis of evangelicals' own record-keeping. The author gives special attention to the meticulous record-keeping of the Southern Baptists and the National Association of Evangelicals and concludes that evangelical Christians do not come close to being 25 percent of the American population that was widely touted after the 2000 presidential election. The verifiable figure is that they constitute at best about 7 percent. George Barna, an

evangelical and reputable pollster, confirms this estimate.

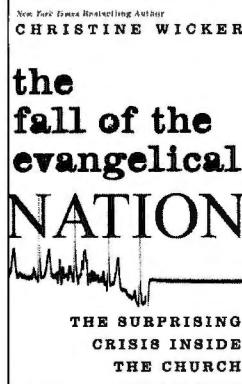
The evangelical and pentecostal churches have the same problems as their mainline counterparts. There are as many going out the back door as are coming in the front door. Much "growth" is what is called "sheep-swapping" — acquiring, for a time, members of other churches. Many belong to and participate in multiple churches. The younger generations are not hanging around and are not buying into the world-view that is being preached.

Members, especially members of evangelical churches, refuse to evangelize: "The truth behind all these numbers is that evangelicals are not converting and cannot convert non-Christian adult Americans," Wicker writes. Barna, in a startling judgment, proclaims that each year God is leading 20,000 persons to leave the institutional church.

Wicker perceives something of greater significance than the shuffling of institutional expressions at work. It is her conclusion that our world-view has so changed, whether perceived or not, in such a fashion that we can no longer believe in many, if not most of the truths proclaimed by the evangelical church. To add icing to the cake, younger church people cannot tolerate the rigidity, insensitivity, and sometimes plain meanness of evangelical Christianity's teachers and preachers.

This readable book is a more pertinent and accessible vehicle for understanding what is happening around us in the world of belief than Charles Taylor's enormous work *A Secular Age*, but each author's conclusions point to the same realities. These realities are sobering and deserving of a much wider audience.

(The Rev.) Phillip Cato
Potomac, Md.



Appointments

Steven Abdow is finance and administration officer for the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, 37 Chestnut St., Springfield, MA 01103.

The Rev. **Gayle Browne** is vicar of St. Andrew's, 733 State Rte. 41 SW, Washington Court House, OH 43160-9788.

The Rev. **Kimberly Knight** is chaplain at Bethany School, 555 Albion Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45246-4649.

Lee Ligon-Borden is lay vicar of St. Francis', PO Box 246, Prairie View, TX 77446-0246.

The Rev. **Ray Morgan III** is rector of St. Mary's, PO Box 29, Lampasas, TX 76550-0001.

The Rev. **Jim Reynolds** is rector of St. Martin's, 223 S Pearson Ln., Fort Worth, TX 76248.

The Rev. **Casey Shobe** is rector of St. Peter's, 72 Central St., Narragansett, RI 02882-0296.

Jennielle Strother is director of recruiting and admissions at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, PO Box 2247, Austin, TX 78768.

The Rev. **Paul B. Williams** is vicar of St. Andrew's, 8630 Refugee Rd., Pickerington, OH 43147-9509.

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We urge persons who know of the deaths of clergy and prominent lay persons to send notices to us as soon as possible.

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Advent 1

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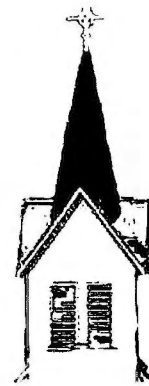
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818 E. Juneau Ave. www.ascathedral.org
The Very Rev. Warren H. Raasch, dean
Sun Masses 8, 10 (Sung). Daily Mass, MP & EP as posted

OTHER ANGLICAN

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL, MN

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF ST. DUNSTAN
Anglican Church in America/FIFNA
1928 BCP/Anglican Missal
www.stdunstananglican.org (952) 920-9122
Sun H Eu 8 & 10
Traditional Worship/Eternal Truths

LUTHERAN

BORON, CA

RESURRECTION Sr. Citizens Ctr. 20 Mule Team Rd.
Sun Eu 8

MOJAVE, CA

HOPE CHURCH K and Inyo Streets (909) 989-3317
The Rev. William R. Hampton, STS
Sun Eu 10

To place a church directory listing, or a print or online classified ad, contact Amber Muma at amber@livingchurch.org
(414) 276-5420 ext. 12

CHURCH DIRECTORY KEY

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