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Editorial and Business offices:

316 E. Juneau Avenue

Milwaukee, WI 53202-2793

Mailing address: P.O. Box 514036

Milwaukee, WI 53203-3436

Fax: 414-276-7483

E-mail: tlc@livingchurch.org

www.livingchurch.org

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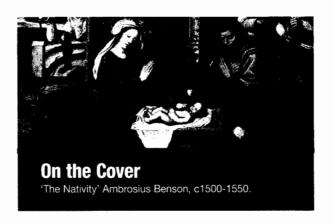
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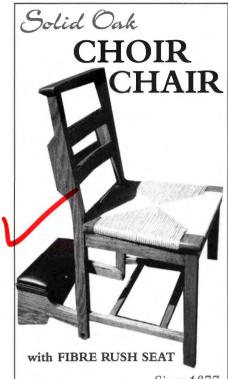
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Mary, Icon of Faithfulness

"... let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)

The Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year B), Dec. 21, 2008

BCP: 2 Sam. 7:4,8-16; Psalm 132 or 132:8-15; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38 **RCL**: 2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16; Canticle 3 or 15 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

There is, most assuredly, a level of reality which transcends what we usually see and hear. It consists of those paradigms and ideals by which people strive to organize their lives. It includes things like freedom and mercy and self-sacrifice, and all of these are real indeed.

There are people in the past and the present, moreover, who are so identified with these overarching paradigms that they seem to embody them in the flesh. Martin Luther King, Jr., for instance, is so associated with racial justice that the ideal can, in some sense, be seen when one looks at his photograph. For many throughout the world, Nelson Mandela has become an incarnation of mercy and forgiveness through his work with South Africa's Truth and Justice Commission. And Maximilian Kolbe of Auschwitz, freely giving his own life to save that of a condemned fellow prisoner, is an almost universal icon of Christian self-sacrifice.

Finally, there are places where, by close association, these "incarnate ideals" seem almost to be present and where their voices can figuratively be heard. Visiting the Lorraine Motel and the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis can occasion a sort of spiritual renewal. On Robben Island in South Africa, one can vaguely feel the presence of the former president. And at the

site of Auschwitz, Fr. Kolbe's spirit is obviously present among those of a million or more Jewish martyrs.

In today's gospel, blessed Mary personifies a paradigm of conforming one's own will to that of God. She models, that is, cooperation with God's "hand at work in the world about us" (BCP, p. 372), "Do not be afraid, Mary," says the angel, "for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." "The Holy Spirit will come upon you," moreover, "and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God." But frightening though this must be for an unmarried girl, Mary's response is both direct and immediate: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." And herein lies an example for all Christians.

Mary is most certainly an icon of free cooperation with the saving will of God. Indeed, it is through her selfless obedience that the Incarnation becomes possible. It's hardly surprising, therefore, that her spirit is known in statues and images present in many of our churches, and shrines at places like Lourdes, Guadalupe and Walsingham hold such appeal for millions of faithful people.

Look It Up

According to Acts 1, how does Mary express her faithfulness following the Lord's resurrection?

Think About It

What are some of the places in which I feel particularly close to God? Why?

Next Sunday

The First Sunday after Christmas Day, Dec. 28, 2008

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

Provisional Structure Unveiled for New Province

A jubilant congregation of 700 witnessed the unveiling of a provisional governing document in the form of constitution and canons for a new Anglican province proposed for North America Dec. 3 at Wheaton Evangelical Free Church in Wheaton, Ill.

"Today is the beginning of the healing of the Anglican Communion," said the Rt. Rev. Robert Duncan, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, in a homily. "Many said we could never come together. We know ourselves all too well. We don't always get along."

The new province, tentatively named the Common Cause Partnership, consists of nine founding entities: the American Anglican Council, the Anglican Coalition in Canada, the Anglican Communion Network, the Anglican Mission in the Americas, the Anglican Network in Canada, the Convocation of Anglicans in North America, Forward in Faith North America, the Missionary Convocation of Kenya, the Missionary Convocation of the Southern Cone, the Missionary Convocation of Uganda, and the Reformed Episcopal Church.

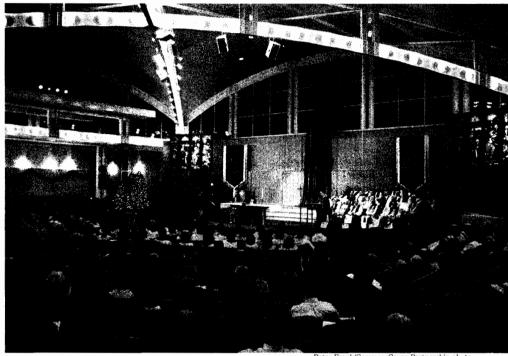
U.S. and Canada

The partnership claims to represent 1,000 congregations and 100,000 average Sunday attendance. All nine founding entities have ties to The Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church of Canada.

During the service, it was announced that Bishop Duncan would be elected the new province's first archbishop and primate later this year. Under the provisional constitution, the primate is elected by the bishops and may serve not more than two consecutive five-year terms.

The provisional constitution recognizes the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, its Ordinals, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion as standards for doctrine and discipline.

Together the provisional constitution and canons are less than nine pages in length. A draft, prepared by a task force formed in August, was final-



Peter Frank/Common Cause Partnership photo

A congregation of 700 at the Common Cause Partnership service in Wheaton.

ized during an all-day meeting of the executive committee the day of the service. In an interview, Bishop Duncan compared the provisional document with the constitution and canons of The Episcopal Church, which exceed 200 pages. Other notable differences include:

- Specific language vesting title to property in the hands of the local congregation;
- Dioceses' "clusters or networks" are specifically accorded the right to leave;
- Removal from membership of a diocese "cluster or network" after due warning by at least two-thirds of the provincial council members and at least a majority in two of the three orders of bishops, clergy and laity within the provincial council.
- A provincial tribunal whose jurisdiction "shall be to determine matters in dispute arising from the constitution and canons of the province and such other matters as may be authorized by canon.

The congregation included clergy

and leaders from throughout North America and nearly filled the modernistic church, which has a seating capacity of 1,000.

While most of those in attendance seemed elated by the unveiling, many Episcopalians greeted the news with sorrow or bewilderment.

"We will not predict what will or will not come out of this meeting, but simply continue to be clear that The Episcopal Church, along with the Anglican Church of Canada and La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico, comprise the official, recognized presence of the Anglican Communion in North America," said the Rev. Canon Charles Robertson, canon to Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, in a statement e-mailed prior to the official release of the documents. "And we reiterate what has been true of Anglicanism for centuries: that there is room within The Episcopal Church for people with different views, and we regret that some have felt the need to depart from the diversity of our common life in Christ."

Steve Waring

Analysis

Recognition of Province Not Likely for Years

The members of the Joint Standing Committee (JSC) of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the college of primates met in London in late November in preparation for ACC-14, the meeting of the ACC's delegates scheduled for May in Jamaica.

Among other matters, the JSC received an update on the work of the Faith and Order Commission proposed by the Windsor Continuation Group at the Lambeth Conference, and learned details of the meeting of the Anglican Covenant Design Group in Singapore in September.

The JSC meeting came shortly after Bishop Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh announced that leaders of the Common Cause Partnership (CCP) were to meet Dec. 3 in Wheaton, Ill., to endorse a draft constitution to govern the loose coalition of breakaway dioceses, congregations, and Anglican jurisdictions in the United States [TLC, Dec. 14].

Endorsements Needed

It is technically possible for a vote on a new province to come before the primates' meeting in February in Alexandria, Egypt, and then be forwarded to ACC-14. This is unlikely, however, because the necessary constitutional work in forming a CCP-based North American province probably will not be completed. This could take as much as two years because the diocesan conventions of the four breakaway Episcodioceses -San Joaquin, pal Pittsburgh, Quincy and Fort Worth will have to endorse the constitution of the proposed province over two meetings of their conventions. CCP members also will need to ratify the constitution and amend their own governing documents in order to bring its terms into force.

It is more likely that the primates would address the creation of a new province at their meeting in 2011. If approved, the matter would be brought before ACC-15 in 2012.

While special meetings of the ACC and the primates can be called on the initiative of their standing committees, no such meeting has ever been (Continued on page 14)



Anglican Communion Institute photo

The Rev. Peter Robinson (left), Diocese of Toronto; the Rev. Catherine Sider-Hamilton, University of Toronto; the Rt. Rev. N.T. Wright, Bishop of Durham in the Church of England; the Rev. Ajit John, Diocese of Toronto; and Christopher Wells, University of Notre Dame; participate in a panel forum during a conference sponsored by the Anglican Communion Institute Nov. 25-27 at Wycliffe College in Toronto. The Anglican Communion Institute is sponsoring a series of conferences on the theme "Anglicanism: A Gift in Christ." The conferences will serve as a context for producing a 14-speaker DVD series on various topics of theological, biblical, liturgical, and missionary significance, for adult education in Anglican congregations. The Toronto conference focused on New Testament, Old Testament, Hymnody, Christian Witness in the Muslim world, and the Parish as the Center of Christian Renewal.

Assistant Named for Reorganizing Dioceses

The Ven. Richard I. Cluett, retired archdeacon of the Diocese of Bethlehem, has been appointed by the Presiding Bishop as pastoral assistant to reorganizing dioceses. In this new position, Archdeacon Cluett will provide pastoral guidance and assistance to dioceses of The Episcopal Church that are in the process of reorganizing and reconstituting.

Archdeacon Cluett will report to Bishop Clay Matthews in the Presiding Bishop's Office of Pastoral Development. His main office will be located at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City. Prior to retirement in 2004, Archdeacon Cluett was responsible for the coordination and oversight of ministry and administration for the Diocese of Bethlehem. For 20 years he worked with parishes in planning, problem solving, and ministry development; with clergy in vocational and professional development; with persons in the ordination process; and with the diocesan staff, committees and boards that have responsibility for diocesan life and ministry.

Episcopal News Service contributed to this report.

Bishop Reus-Froylán of Puerto Rico Dies

The Rt. Rev. Francisco Reus-Froylán, Bishop of Puerto Rico from 1965 to 1986, died Nov. 19 of pneumonia. He was 89.

Bishop Reus-Froylán was elected Bishop of the Missionary Diocese of Puerto Rico by General Convention in 1964 and consecrated bishop coadjutor Nov. 30 of that year. He was the first Puerto Rican native to be consecrated a bishop of The Episcopal Church. In 1979, General Convention made Puerto Rico an extra-provincial diocese with the expectation that it would found a Caribbean province with other dioceses such as Cuba and Haiti. When that did not happen, the diocese was welcomed into full union with General Convention in 2003.

He and his wife, Doreen, lived in Ver-



Bishop Reus-Froylán

mont in his retirement. She and his daughters, Pamela, Sandra and Carolyn, survive him.

Home and Abroad

The convention of the Diocese of **Rochester** focused on storytelling when it met Oct. 24-25 at a hotel convention center in Rochester, N.Y. It included a workshop by Digital Faith Community introducing the new diocesan website and how best to create congregational websites. Other workshops focused on a variety of subjects including Arab/Israeli Conflict: When Stories Clash, and Hymns, Psalms and Spiritual Songs: Our American Heritage.

This was the first convention at which the Rt. Rev. Prince Singh presided. He was consecrated bishop of the diocese in May. According to delegate Dave Galleher, of St. Peter's Church, Geneva, "There was a palpable

Bishop Ackerman to Assist in Springfield

The Rt. Rev. Keith L. Ackerman, who resigned last month as Bishop of Quincy, will serve as an assisting bishop in the neighboring Diocese of Springfield. The Rt. Rev. Peter H. Beckwith, Bishop of Springfield, said the Presiding Bishop's office had been notified that the part-time position would become effective Dec. 1.

Bishop Ackerman's resignation came a week before an overwhelming majority of delegates to the annual synod of the Diocese of Quincy voted to leave The Episcopal Church and to affiliate with the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone, based in Argentina [TLC, Nov. 30].

Unlike an assistant bishop, the position of assisting bishop, which is not defined in the canons and constitution of The Episcopal Church, is at the discretion of individual diocesan bishops. Before the appointment in Springfield became official, however, Bishop Ackerman needed the consent of the House of Bishops to his resignation in Quincy.

feeling of warmth, caring and respect in the air."

Bishop's Singh's address began with a story of his personal journey, and he concluded by saying, "We have to celebrate our story thus far and in some specific areas we have to collectively rewrite our story ... God needs your radical hospitality, your passionate spirituality, and your response through fresh and creative mission to create God's new future."

In the business sessions, convention adopted a budget for 2009 of \$2.4 million. Two resolutions were presented. The first urged "the New York State Senate to pass Senate Bill S5884, amending the New York State Domestic Relations Law to permit marriage between persons of the same sex." This resolution was adopted.

The second resolution called for convention to endorse "The Genesis Covenant," an interfaith initiative that challenges national religious governing bodies to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 50 percent in 10 years in places of worship, offices, schools, camps, retreat centers, and other facilities." This resolution also was adopted.

(The Rev.) Don Hill

'Family Crisis'

The Rt. Rev. Peter Beckwith, Bishop of **Springfield**, predicted that fissures and friction in the Anglican Communion will only get worse until all warring parties agree to cease the type of unilateral action identified by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Beckwith made the remarks during his address to the annual diocesan synod, which met Oct. 24-25 at a hotel and conference center in Benton, Ill.

The bishop likened the current situation in the Anglican Communion to a family crisis in which one confused family member maintains over a mobile telephone to the others that all the other cars on the freeway are going in the wrong direction through Chicago.

"How all this will play out is uncertain," Bishop Beckwith said. "What is



Ron Andrews/Living Water photo

The Rt. Rev. Prince G. Singh, his wife Roja and youngest son Eklan greet Rochester's convention.

certain is that the Evil One, Satan, is having a 'field day'. We have again bought into his 'playbook' and are dancing to his tune."

The Rt. Rev. Keith L. Ackerman, who retired as bishop of the neighboring Diocese of Quincy less than a week after the synod meeting in Springfield adjourned, was among the guests recognized during the meeting, as was the Rev. Canon Edward den Blaauwen, president of the Quincy standing committee.

Language in a resolution describing tithing as being "essential" to spiritual life was changed to "important" before it was approved. A budget of \$948,259 was approved for 2009, about \$62,000 over projected income.

Free of Paper

Guided by the theme, "Tending God's World — Now!" clergy and delegates to the convention of the Diocese of **Vermont** concluded an 18-month-long celebration of the diocese's 175th anniversary and looked toward a future in which care for God's creation and environmental sustainability will be prominent concerns.

Missing from the scene at Trinity (Continued on next page)



Anne Clarke Brown/Mountain Echo photo

Carleton North and Heather Ogelby share the reading of the Prayers of the People at the convention Eucharist in Vermont.

Vermont

(Continued from previous page)

Church, Rutland, Nov. 7-8, was the rustle of paper, for this was Vermont's first paper-free convention. Necessary information was projected on a screen at the front of the nave, and by using e-mail to transmit resolutions, the budget and other convention information to delegates, the diocese saved some 50 reams of paper, several hundred envelopes, and significant expense on postage.

The Saturday session began with the Eucharist, with the Rt. Rev. Mary Adelia McLeod, retired Bishop of Vermont, as preacher, followed by the annual address of the Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely, Bishop of Vermont. Bishop Ely spoke about stewardship as it related to the diocese, the environment, and the Anglican Communion.

Delegates adopted without debate or amendment a balanced budget with revenues and expenses of \$1.2 million, an increase of less than 1 percent, as well as all seven proposed resolutions.

One resolution asks General Conven-

tion to direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to prepare liturgical rites of blessing for same-gender couples for consideration by the 2012 General Convention. Another calls on General Convention to provide \$450,000 over three years for needsbased scholarships for Episcopal seminarians, and a third urges parishes and communicants to "seek alternatives to phosphorous-laden fertilizers."

Anne Clarke Brown

Uncertain Times

Discernment of the Holy Spirit's movement during uncertain times was the focus of two meditations by the Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE, Bishop of **Massachusetts**, as he set the tone for those gathered for convention in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Delegates met Nov. 7-8 at the Hyannis Resort and Conference Center.

Convention approved an operating budget of \$6.9 million for 2009 that reflects "an intentional scaling back of staff and programs," including reduced funding for grant programs to congregations; staff and program cuts in diocesan communications; reduced costs due to transitions in youth ministry, the Micah Project intern program and college chaplaincies; and elimination of the grant-supporting Episcopal City Mission's public policy program.

The budget projects income over identified expenses resulting in an unallocated reserve of \$128,000. This reserve, together with as much as \$100,000 from the annual fund and another \$180,000 in income from House of Mercy agency restricted funds, could provide as much as \$400,000 to address needs in 2009.

Convention adopted seven resolutions dealing with various social justice and public policy issues. These included a call for a self-convening "community of practice" for non-violence education; the establishment of a diocesan immigration policy to educate congregations on the plight of immigrants and refugees; support for transgender civil rights; and an affirmation of regret for slavery. Delegates also passed

two resolutions in support of establishing a feast day for Andronicus and Junia on May 17.

Convention also admitted the Church of the Holy Spirit, Fall River, as a parish, which resulted from the merger of three congregations.

The convention's guest speaker, Bishop Suheil Dawani of Jerusalem, described the church's role in bringing about reconciliation and peace.

Church Without Walls

Meeting Nov. 7-8 in Salinas, Calif., the Diocese of **El Camino Real** celebrated the first anniversary of Bishop Mary Gray Reeves' episcopate, and focused on the theme of "A Church Without Walls."

In an address that concerned rapid change in the world, Bishop Gray Reeves said, "I think, now more than ever, we must become sociologists of sorts, stretching ourselves to understand and to welcome people we may not have had occasion to know very well, but who live in our communities and who are searching for a joyous, spiritual community gathered around Jesus Christ."

The Rev. Canon Anthony Guillen, The Episcopal Church's Latino missioner, preached at the convention Eucharist.

Convention adopted resolutions supporting the Millennium Development Goals; setting minimum compensation standards for full-time clergy; establishing companion diocese relationships with Gloucester (England) and Western Tanganyika (Tanzania); and urging the elimination of plastic water bottles for parish and diocesan events. Delegates also adopted resolutions urging the next General Convention to repeal Resolution B033 on the consecration of partnered homosexual bishops, and to authorize a national committee of both houses to examine the theological dimensions of Christian marriage.

Delegates passed a budget of \$1.4 million for 2009. Approval of a balanced budget required transfers of approximately \$50,000 from both the endowment and the operating reserve fund.

The Blowing Snow

The yellows were sun-bright. The oranges pumpkin, and the reds a deep hue of scarlet. The soft Appalachian mountains glowed the incandescence of fall. From Lake Logan, anchoring the valley, the hills rose as fire lapping gently to the sky, and that is how I found western North Carolina in late October, when I arrived Monday morning for the CREDO retreat.

On Monday night, the sky filled with clouds. wispy at first. Ice crystals encircled the moon,

something Appalachian folklore says is a portent of snow. It doesn't snow in North Carolina in October, at least not very often, but this October it did. It snowed, and by morning, a manna of white formed lightly on grass, split rails, and mossy stones.

We gathered Tuesday for Morning Prayer in Celebration Hall, the camp's chapel. Enormous windows framed the snow. As I sat in prayer and watched, the snow became a gift that transported me to another place and time - home. The snow that by now was blowing felt like home because I remember so many times in Tennessee, whose hills are gentle like the North Carolina mountains, warming myself by a fire, staring out-

side at falling snow. And here I was, rocking myself by the hearth of soul, watching snow swirl and blow in North Carolina, and I returned home in one of those ways unique to the heart. Home, with the warm solitude of the cold snow.

The gathering itself

becomes the snow

blowing around

the soul's shadows.

Returning home reminds me of Christmas. I think now of Christmas, and the infant Jesus who found home among animals, in an old weatherworn barn. Mary held him tightly, committing to memory each detail of the night, and what child is homeless as long as his mother holds him? The warmth of breast, the security of solace soft.

Jesus was at home in a world that would never fully welcome him, but Joseph was not at home that night. Nor was he for many nights to come. He was a Galilean. He found himself in Bethlehem, several days' travel (southward) away from his family. Worse, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph without warning — he could not prepare for such an event — and led him further south, to Egypt. Joseph became like the sons of Jacob, exiled in a country not his own, among people not his family, for purposes beyond his dreams and imagination. Contrary to his own life's design, Joseph entered a destiny far greater than anything he had considered, all because an angel of the Lord said, "Go." Perhaps that is where Joseph found home - not in Bethlehem or

Egypt or even Galilee, but in that one simple word, Go.

We gather as family at Christmas to see spiritual snow swirl and fall outside, and if we don't have family nearby, we gather as friends and church people and acquaintances because the act of gathering feels like home to people in exile. The gathering itself becomes the snow blowing around the soul's shadows. We as exiles are taken to homelands distant and remote, across temporal chasms, all by the company of others, and all because we long for something we cannot identify, something we cannot access, something we cannot in the end control. We long for home, we long for that place by the fire . . .

But we are not home in the way we would like; we are a Joseph people in exile. Yet the Christmas promise to a people

so far from home is that home is a bare space away. That snow swirls about you in ways and creating depths you did not know. Maybe you, like Joseph, will find home in a simple word. Only your word is different. It can't be "Go," for you have gone. Perhaps your word is . . . kneel.

Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Kneel in awe at the gentle work of God on this night of new creation. Kneel in awe at the presence of divinity wearing the clothes of humanity. Kneel in awe at the absolute and perfect love of a God who has, after all this, welcomed you home.

Our guest columnist is the Rev. Rob Gieselmann, rector of St. Paul's Parish, Chestertown, Md.

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Quote of the Week

The Rt. Rev. Pierre Whalon, Bishop-in-Charge of the **Convocation of American** Churches in Europe, in an article on his website: "Our polity exists to support a dynamic missionary expansion as its first priority, and it does this admirably."

EDITORIALS



Despite the tension in Iraq and Afghanistan, the message of Christmas is heard loud and clear.

Peace and Rejoicing

When Jesus came to earth as the Prince of Peace, he chose to be born in a part of the world perennially torn by strife. As we approach another celebration of Christmas, the area immediately surrounding our Lord's birth has been relatively quiet recently. But not far away the ravages of war continue in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sometimes it seems as if there is never peace in this part of the world. The multiple problems of restoring peace in one place while trying to maintain tranguility in another spot is a major task.

Despite the tension of that part of the world, the message of Christmas is heard loud and clear. Christians continue to practice their faith, sometimes at great risk, and live an insecure existence. There are Anglicans among them, along with Eastern Orthodox and members of other Christian bodies. They need our concerns and prayers at this Christmastime and at all seasons. So do all those serving in the military in faraway places this Christmas, especially those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Life in the Middle East emphasizes how much humanity needs Jesus Christ. In the face of all the tragedies of earthly life, we can rejoice that the Lord comes again. God is with us, and in his love he continues to claim us as his own.

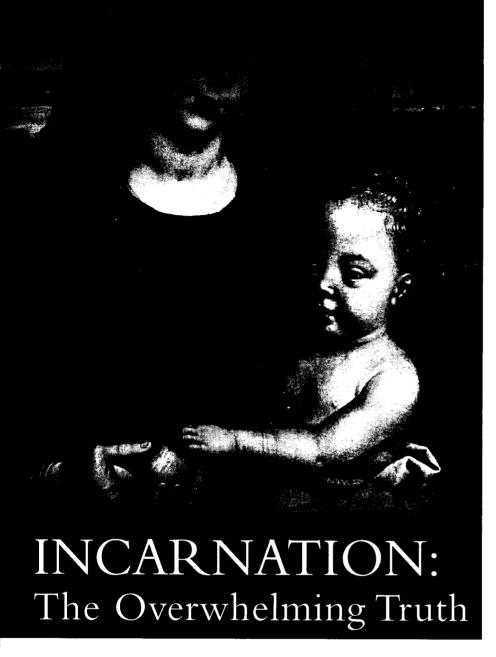
May this be a time in which you can know the reality of the presence of the Savior, who was born among us and makes us fellow heirs of his kingdom. May this also be a time of great joy and happiness for all our readers, their families and friends. A joyous Christmas to all!

Responding to Layoffs

Layoffs are becoming all too familiar these days. In business, in branches of government, and in churches and church-related agencies employees are finding their jobs terminated. In some places, those with long experience and excellent records may be among the most vulnerable, loyalty and longevity forgotten. In other places, those most recently hired are the ones to go, regardless of the enthusiasm and excellence on the job they may have shown. Layoffs are demoralizing to individuals, families, communities, and to society at large.

Most of the layoffs in recent months have been the result of the economic downturn experienced in this country. While in many cases the layoffs may have been expected, the shock of losing one's job hasn't been lessened. Some churches have been able to offer counseling and advice to parishioners who have lost their jobs, but many other people have been left on their own. We hope employers, whether in the secular or religious market, will handle terminations in the most humane and considerate way possible, with clear expressions of gratitude.

Churches, dioceses, and various ministries should take steps to minimize layoffs. There should be clear understandings of tenure and expectations of the job between employer and employee, and churches and other religious organizations should be careful not to overstaff. With many people already out of work, churches and various ministries may be able to find volunteers to help with some of their tasks. That could turn out to be fulfilling for the volunteers and less costly for the employers.



READER'S VIEWPOINT

By David M. Baumann

"I know how you feel." These words are often said whenever someone wants to express sympathy or support to another in a time of frustration, anger, grief, or even shame. They may be well intentioned, but, if truth be told, don't they always fall a little short? If we are the person in need, don't we often respond inwardly, and perhaps outwardly too, "No one can possibly really know how I feel!"?

But wouldn't it be wonderful if the words were actually true? Love often appears to be able to make those words true; when we are deeply in love, we are richly content to know and believe that our beloved truly knows us with our needs and feelings—and we are blessed, uplifted, and fulfilled by that belief.

Perhaps at that point we can begin to understand the Incarnation—the "coming into flesh" of God the Son in Jesus Christ. In our deepest self, we long for someone truly to love us, and in that love to know and to be known. The Incarnation tells us that we have such a Person. It is Jesus. Jesus alone truly "knows how we feel"—at all times, in all circumstances. It is possible because he loves perfectly, and fully became as we are.

"Hark! the herald angels sing," begins the carol, and continues to the words,

"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity." The next line was changed in our hymnal, but the original version read, "Pleased as man with man to dwell." He became one of us. He knows us.

The truth of the Incarnation is that Jesus Christ is God in human nature— "true God and true Man" as it was defined by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The council formularized the theology of the Incarnation. (For the council's concise statement see the Book of Common Prayer, page 864.) Though the theological formula was not easily defined, and became so only after much reflection and even argument. once clarified the passages in the New Testament that express the Incarnation stood out. Among the clearest and best are John 1:14, Colossians 1:15-20, and Hebrews 2:14-17.

God's purpose in the Incarnation is also provided in many passages: to save sinners and give life to those who have no other hope. For example, see John 3:16, John 10:10, and 1 Timothy 1:15. Jesus himself told Pontius Pilate, "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37).

"God is love," wrote the apostle John simply but profoundly (1 John 4:16). Therefore certainly God the Son became incarnate not by compulsion, but by love-love for his Father and love for his fallen creatures who were helpless in their sin, misery, and despair.

As we anticipate Christmas and the wonderful and deeply comforting, nurturing festiveness of that season that most people in our wealthy nation and affluent church know, it is important to recognize that the passage from Hebrews that speaks of the Incarnation addresses not joy but the human fear of death and redemption from sin: "Since the children share in blood and flesh, [the Son] likewise shared in them that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life. ... He had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before

(Continued on next page)

READER'S VIEWPOINT

(Continued from previous page)

God to expiate the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:14, 17).

Perhaps because Incarnation is about redemption from sin, we are somewhat uncomfortable with its overwhelming depth of power and prefer the safer comfort of Christmas festivity. There are two human tendencies away from this revealed truth, in which may be found the basis of all incarnational falsehood. The heresies associated with these two tendencies are docetism and adoptionism — either denigrating the humanity of Jesus (he was not really a man, but only appeared to be so) or his divinity (he was an ordinary man who was adopted into God). But the Incarnation is about unconditional love becoming immediately accessible to fallen human beings, and their redemption from sin and evil. Only One who is "truly God and truly human" can make this so.

The Rev. Hilda Hellaby was a deaconess of the Anglican Church of Canada. In the first half of the 20th century, she worked with the very poor in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Later she devoted her years to the poor and underprivileged in the Diocese of Yukon. She died on Dec. 7, 1982, after a long life of heroic courage and observable sanctity. She well believed that Jesus was "true God and true Man," and served him in the poor of her world. For her the Incarnation was a daily, practical reality. One of her poems expresses her intimate relationship with Jesus, the incarnate Son of God:

"Hymn to the Incarnate Word"

O Word of God, who for our sakes
revealed God's love to man,
And robed in flesh, made visible
the Father's loving plan —
The world, thine own, received thee
not; but we thine own would be,
And all our lives spend listening,
O Word of God, to thee...

The Rev. David M. Baumann, SSC, is the rector of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Placentia, Calif.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsung Communities

The editorial, "Honoring Veterans" [TLC, Nov. 9] was a timely and intelligent embrace of service in uniform. Whenever there is a salute to veterans and the tireless work of our chaplains, it speaks for all of us, so thank you.

Moreover, the editorial highlighted another aspect of our mission that is often missed: the civilian congregation. These stalwart faith communities, many of which are adjacent to bases or posts, are the unsung powerhouses in this mission outreach. I could not have said it better as a description of what concerns this episcopacy.

If our 107 chaplains serving in the military give life and breadth to the work, then these countless congregations are the allies in achieving a believable outreach to the more than 19,000 Episcopalians who serve in the U.S. military.

(The Rt. Rev.) George E. Packard Bishop Suffragan for Federal Ministries, New York, N.Y.

Lived in Fear

A minor comment on the Very Rev. Kevin Martin's interesting reflections on the two memorials of English female sovereigns in Westminster Abbey [TLC, Nov. 23]:



Queen Mary I

Although Queen Mary long believed that she was pregnant, hoping for a Roman Catholic male heir, she was not. She did not die in childbirth, and it is thought that she suffered a malignant tumor, which was the real cause of her painful death.

It might also be remembered that her half-sister, who did not share Mary's strong Catholic viewpoint, which caused so many of her subjects loyal to their country to be burned at the stake for their supposed heresy, lived for many years in fear of her life, despite her promises to respect Mary's sovereignty.

We can remain grateful for the efforts of Wycliff and Tyndale in earlier years for their struggles, enabling the English-speaking world to hear the word of God in their own tongue.

Nigel A. Renton Berkeley, Calif.

'Blatant Bias'

I have hesitated for more than a month as to whether I would renew my subscription to TLC. I have been a subscriber for most of my adult life, but as TLC's blatant bias for the so-called "continuing American Anglican" clergy, parishes, and dioceses has increased, I

have lost much respect for what at one time was the magazine's even-handed reporting of news of the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church.

When it comes right down to it though, I guess I'm a news junkie, and I know that I would miss TLC's weekly report of news around The Episcopal Church [TEC] — no matter how biased I may consider it. I remember the "good old days" of Boone Porter's TLC, but I must admit he was directing the coverage of a church different from today's.

Having gotten this off my chest, I enclose my renewal order, and I plead for a kinder, gentler handling of TEC and our beleaguered bishops who are doing their best to hold the church together.

(The Rev.) R. Michael Darrow Denver, Colo.

It's in There

We do not have to wonder "what gospel the apostles used in their spreading the faith" [TLC, Oct. 19]. It's in the Acts of the Apostles. Over and over, the apostles proclaimed two things: forgiveness of sins and resurrection.

This is indeed good news (which is what "gospel" means). Love and service and the rest of Christ's teachings, important as they are, are not, in and of themselves, good news. They are guidelines to shape our response to the good news that Christ is risen.

Let's not confuse kerygma (proclamation of the good news) with didache (instruction of those who respond to the proclamation).

Laura Rico Los Banos, Calif.

Reasons to Believe

By **John Marks**. Eeco. Pp. 384. \$26.95. ISBN 0060832762.

This book contains equal parts of memoir and reporting, skillfully woven together, but its narrow understanding of Christianity is troublingly parochial. Marks doesn't acknowledge that Christian belief has a long and wide tradition that does not begin and end in American evangelicalism.

Raised in an affluent Texas town, Marx attended an affluent protestant church, and was born again through the ministry of Young Life. Some four years later, he went on a junior year abroad in Germany, read Nietzsche, lost his virginity, and lost his interest in Jesus, whom he now describes as a "walking corpse," though he still hung on to some idea of God. Then, as a reporter in Bosnia, his experience of the ethnic killing enraged him at the idea of a benevolent God. So he

rejected God too. Later he rejected the idea of a God who would send his Jewish wife and child to hell. That would all make

sense if the only conception of Christianity that one had was protestant extremism, American style.

He seems an effective interviewer for the admittedly interesting people he interviews. He is well disposed and friendly toward them, as a good reporter should be. They are open and friendly toward him, though sometimes with an obvious eye on winning him back. His account, for instance, of an intelligent design conference in Prague is fascinating. His ongoing narrative of his friendship with a Texas couple is deep and moving.

But the shallowness of his thought is everywhere. The narrative is bookended by the *Left Behind* books of





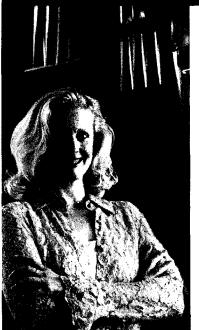
Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Marks seems to think that the question of whether one will be left behind at the rapture is the central question of the Christian faith.

Marks is a good writer and covers interesting, if strange, terrain. But for me, I spent a wonderful afternoon last summer in the cathedral in Birmingham, England, where a retired priest told me, "The older I grow, the more I believe about less and less." That is not disbelief. That is the necessary consolidation of belief that we all go through as we mature. What John Marks, and his cohorts Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, are acting out is teenage spite against a dad who won't hand over the car keys. Marks is angry at a God who won't give him what he thinks he wants. When he grows up, I'd like to have a chat with him.

> (The Rev.) Bonnie Shullenberger Ossining, N.Y.

"The Handbook has been a treasured resource for me for many years. The inclusion of RCL texts, with suggested hymns, is most helpful."

—Janette Fishell, Distinguished Professor of Music, East Carolina University Director of Music/Principal Organist, St. Paul's Church, Greenville, N.C.



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ANALYSIS

(Continued from page 6)

called. In the current political climate within the Anglican Communion, expedited action is unlikely.

Approval of the CCP document outside of North America will likely be faster because the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) primates' council — including the primates of Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, West Africa, and the Archbishop of Sydney — was scheduled to meet after the Wheaton gathering to vote to receive the constitution.

Meetings have been tentatively scheduled between the GAFCON primates and Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams before the primates' meeting in Alexandria to seek his counsel and input into the process. However, Archbishop Williams' approval is not a prerequisite for creating a new province for the Anglican Communion.

The meeting of the ACC will likely have all of the provinces of the Anglican Communion represented, as the voluntary withdrawal of the U.S. and Canadian delegations from the ACC ended with Lambeth 2008.

The JSC includes, in part, members of the primates' standing committee elected by regional blocs at the primates' 2007 meeting.

(The Rev.) George Conger

New FIFNA Executive Director

Forward in Faith North America (FIFNA) has announced that Michael Howell has been appointed executive director.

The position of executive director is the organizing center for a ministry comprised primarily of volunteers. FIFNA is a member of the Common Cause Partnership which recently announced plans to seek admittance as a second North American province of the Anglican Communion.

Dr. Howell, a former associate professor at the University of South Florida, currently serves on the boards of FIFNA, the American Anglican Council, and Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry.

Dr. Howell, whose appointment is effective Jan. 1, succeeds the Rev. Canon Ed den Blaauwen, who was recently appointed vicar general of the Anglican Diocese of Quincy.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Appointments

The Rev. **Susan Garrity** is priest-in-charge of St. Thomas', 5 Hale St., Dover, NH 03820.

The Rev. **Miranda Hassett** is assistant at St. Andrew's, 354 Main St., Hopkinton, NH 03229.

The Rev. **Alan Kittelson** is rector of St. Paul's, PO Box 196, Vergennes, VT 05491.

The Rev. **Susan Langle** is priest-in-charge of Trinity, 120 Broad St., Claremont, NH 03743.

The Rev. **Jean McDonald** is priest-in-partnership at St. Andrew's, 1265 Main St., St. Johnsbury, VT 05819.

The Rev. **John Merz** is priest-in-charge of St. Mark's in the Bowery, 131 E 10th St., New York, NY 10003.

The Rev. **Penny Nash** is assistant at St. Patrick's, 4755 N Peachtree Rd., Atlanta, GA 30338.

The Rev. **Brent Owens** is rector of St. Alban's, 210 N Broad St., Monroe, GA 30655.

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West Tennessee-James Newsom.

Deacons

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Texas — Bertrand Baetz III, John Chase, Jr., Susan Gerding, Janice Jones, Judith Jones, Jennene Laurinec, Robert Merrill, Jr., John Newton, Stacy Stringer.

Resignations

The Rev. **Wesley Smith**, as rector of Christ Church, Macon, GA.

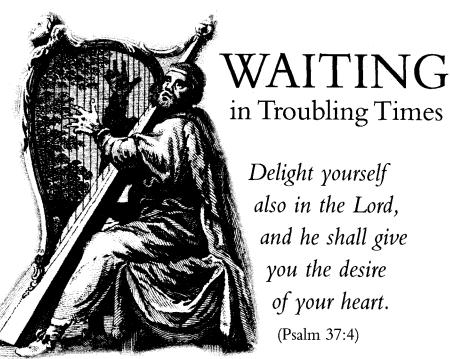
Deaths

The Rev. **Donald E. Castle**, 60, rector of Calvary Church, Lombard, IL, for 30 years, died Nov. 23 at his home in Elmhurst, IL, of complications from esophageal cancer.

Fr. Castle was born and raised in Dixon, IL, and graduated from Northern Illinois University and Nashotah House. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1975 in the Diocese of Chicago and served at St. Mary's Church, Park Ridge, as curate for two years before becoming rector in Lombard in 1977. Fr. Castle was diagnosed with cancer in 2005 and retired in 2007. He was a member of the Order of St. Luke. He is survived by his wife, Carla; a daughter, Ruth Ann; a son, Donald; three brothers, Ronald, Kevin and Dan; three grandchildren; and a sister, Karen Miller.

Next week...

News of 2008: In Review



Delight yourself also in the Lord, and he shall give you the desire of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

By David F. Sellery

This year, some of the most unlikely are lining up for great big Christmas gifts — General Motors, Ford, Citibank, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and on and on. What strange and troubling times we live in. But these are not the first and surely will not be the last.

David was a connoisseur of troubled times — mostly his own making. As we wait on the Lord this Advent, his Psalm 37 helps us to put our troubling times in perspective. At first glance, the text seems to promise that God will serve up all the goodies our hearts could desire, from bridge loans to new bicycles, from fiscal stability to flat screens. But God promises us far more than just the fruits of prosperity. He promises us a peace of heart and mind impervious to the crisis du jour. He promises salvation.

David's words proclaim a profound truth. The closer we draw to God, the more our hearts' desires come to reflect his desires. As we grow in this knowledge, as we are alert to what God wants from us and for us, our worries come down to size. In Psalm 37, David, no stranger to depression and despair, lays out a path to happiness: Trust in the Lord. Commit your way to the Lord. Wait on the Lord. And then you will delight in the Lord.

Delight — that is the key. God delights in us and we in him. Advent is not for sourpusses and hand-wringing. While we wait on the Lord, we rejoice in

Sure, Santa Claus is coming to town, along with Frosty and Rudolph, the Grinch and the rest of the gang. Maybe they're a little shop-worn and marked-down to reflect a shaky retail season. But the big news is that Jesus will be born again in our house this year. It doesn't get better than that.

So in the remaining days of Advent, let's get ready for him. Start each day with a devotional moment to seek his will for us. Keep him with us through the day. Give him our worries. Ask his forgiveness. Shelter in his calm. Close our day knowing it is another one closer to him.

As our relationship deepens, what is dear to God's heart becomes dearer to ours. Our prayers become less a litary of gimme, gimme, gimme, and become more a profoundly comforting Thy will be done.

These are surely strange and troubling times. But in the Advent of Christ, these are precious days to discover and draw closer to God's plan for us. Let us delight in them.

The Rev. David F. Sellery is priest-in-charge of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Church, Bayshore, N.Y.

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To place a church directory listing, contact Amber Muma at amber@livingchurch.org

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.