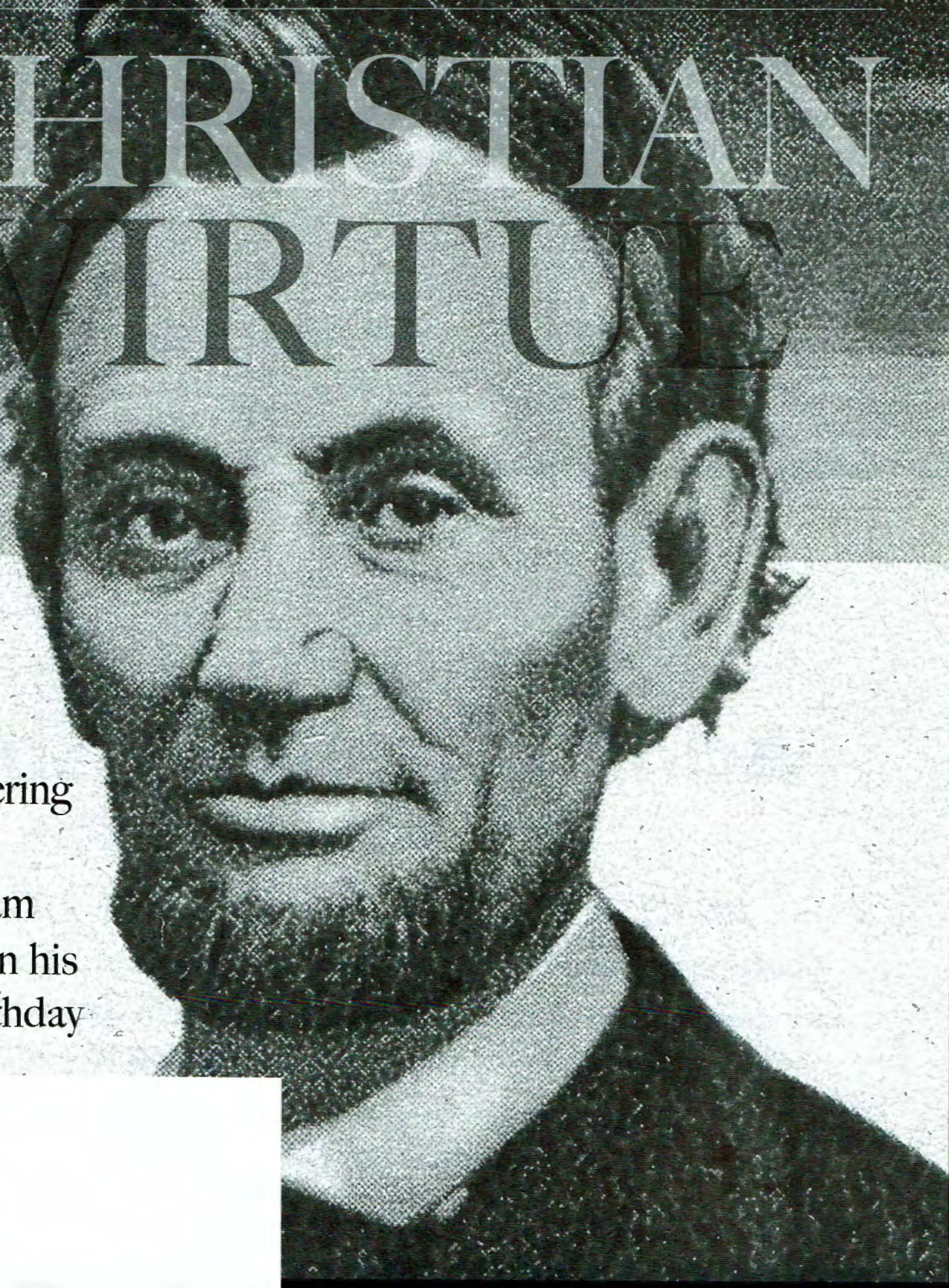


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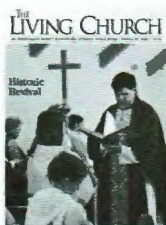
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Volume 238

Number 6

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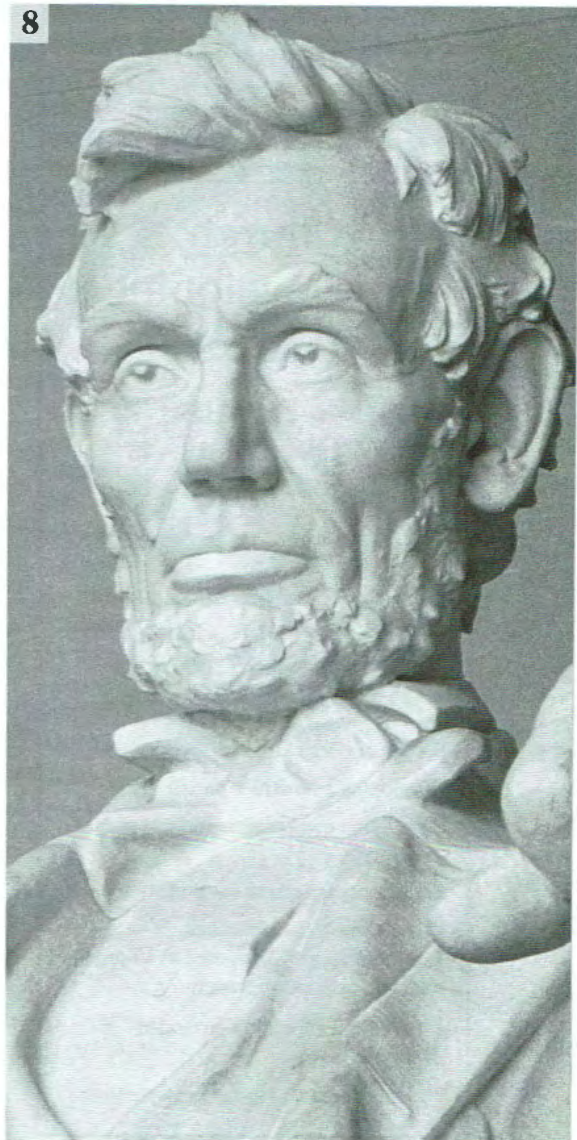
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SUNDAY'S READINGS

Sneak Previews

'He healed many who were sick with various diseases' (Mark 1:32)

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Feb. 8, 2009

BCP: 2 Kings 4: (8-17) 18-21 (22-31) 32-37; Psalm 142; 1 Cor. 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39
RCL: Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-12, 21c; 1 Cor. 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

It's winter, and this means that sickness is all around us. We all get sick, and we all know and love people who get sick. It has ever been thus. And it was even more so the experience of people among whom Jesus lived and walked and exercised his ministry.

St. Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus' fame was constantly spreading, practically from the moment of his baptism. And primarily, Jesus' fame arises from his astonishing ministry of healing the sick. It's tempting for us to be envious of those crowds who followed Jesus around and saw him make blind people see and deaf people hear and paralyzed people walk. We think to ourselves that any doubts we might have about Jesus would dissolve if we were able to witness such miraculous events.

Miracles like that still happen. Through prayer and laying-on-of-hands and anointing with oil, people are being healed of back pain and cancer, headaches and heart disease, and we give thanks for these wonderful signs of God's victory over the forces of sin and death. The problem is, not everybody is healed. So we're confused. It seems like God is playing with our emotions for his own amusement, healing some and not others. What could God be thinking?

Look It Up

Healing and health are mentioned in several of the psalms. See 6, 30, 41, 60, 103, 107, and 147.

Think About It

The need and desire for healing are perhaps most often experienced as physical, but they can also be emotional or spiritual. What is your need for healing? Have you allowed Jesus to minister to that need through his body, the Church?

Next Sunday

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, Feb. 15, 2009

BCP: 2 Kings 5:1-15b; Psalm 42 or 42:1-7; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45
RCL: 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45

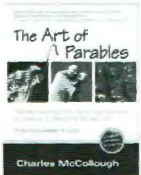
Word and Prayer

ORIGINAL PRAYER: Themes from the Christian Tradition. By Lavinia Byrne. Orbis. Pp. 160. \$16. ISBN 978-1-57075-812-6.



British author and broadcaster Lavinia Byrne offers an overview of the classic approaches to prayer of such luminaries as Ignatius Loyola, Benedict, Teresa of Avila and Francis of Assisi, with insight into common threads and points of departure. She also includes personal reflections, connections between prayer and the arts, and modern movements like Taize and "cyber-prayer."

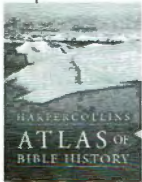
THE ART OF PARABLES: Reinterpreting the Teaching Stories of Jesus in Word and Sculpture. By Charles McCullough. Pilgrim Press. Pp. 256. \$34.95. ISBN 978-1-55145-563-1.



A theologian, teacher and artist looks to sculpture and other artwork for a fresh, visually inspired approach to the 31 parables of Jesus. A special emphasis is placed on ethical and social justice issues raised in these stories. Includes many illustrations and a CD for use in multimedia presentations.

HarperCollins Atlas of Bible History

Edited by James Pritchard and Nick Page. HarperCollins. Pp. 192. \$26.95. ISBN 978-0-06-145195-9.



Despite the anachronistic use of the term Palestine (coined by the Romans in 134 A.D. following the Bar Kokhba revolt to rename the land of the Jews for their ancient enemies, the Philistines) for Canaan and, at times, Israel, this is a highly useful, informative reference. Less so on both counts, to be sure, than Carta's classic *The Sacred Bridge*, but then this being a précis of much of the same material for a quarter the price makes it more attractive to the non-scholar. A relative bargain.

*Daniel Muth
Prince Frederick, Md.*

BECOMING YOUR BEST: A Self-Help Guide for Thinking People. By Ronald W. Richardson. Augsburg Books. Pp. 184. \$14.99. ISBN 978-0-8066-8052-1.

BECOMING YOUR BEST



Drawing on his 30 years experience as a marriage and family therapist, the author considers the factors that go into good relationships, including strength of character and emotional maturity. Uses examples from the nov-

els of Jane Austen to illustrate the timeless values he identifies.

ON THE WAY WITH JESUS: A Passion for Mission. By Richard Showalter. Herald Press. Pp. 150. \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-8361-9415-9.



Explores the many challenges to and dimensions of Christian mission. The author focuses on both local and international mission opportunities.



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Conference Spotlights Christianity in the Public Square

An international panel of theologians, including the Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir Ali, Bishop of Rochester in the Church of England, and the Most Rev. Valentino Mokiwa, Archbishop of Tanzania, encouraged participants in the Mere Anglicanism conference to be compassionate and respectful in discussing Christian faith with Muslims or secular humanists. But participants also were urged to defend the place of the Christian faith in public society when it is imperiled.

Each year since 1997, the Diocese of South Carolina has sponsored a conference during January in Charleston. The meeting was held Jan. 15-17 at the Cathedral Church of St. Luke and St. Paul.

The ability to share the Christian faith in public in countries with a Muslim majority varies in direct proportion to the degree to which Muslim *Sharia* is applied to civil cases, said Bishop Nazir Ali, a native of Pakistan. He has opposed efforts in the United Kingdom to permit Muslim immigrants to use *Sharia* religious courts for family disputes and some civil infractions.

Bishop Nazir Ali noted that for the first 400 or so years after the Prophet Muhammad, relations between Muslims, Christians and Jews were relatively good until the time of the



Steve Waring photo

The Rev. Canon Kendall Harmon, canon theologian for the Diocese of South Carolina, concludes a panel forum at the Mere Anglicanism conference while the Very Rev. William McKeachie looks on.

Crusades in the 11th century.

"The Crusades were not just against Muslims," he said, pointing out that crusaders also sacked the city of Constantinople, putting its Eastern Orthodox Christian population to the sword as ruthlessly as Muslims. "This helped create the world we know today," he said, and the ensuing political vacuum in Asia Minor was filled by the Seljuk Turks who sought to use religion as a means of ensuring dominance over a widely diverse empire.

Partially in reaction to the blood-

shed arising from religious wars, secular humanists sought to make religious faith a private, personal matter in the West. Secular humanists have made tremendous gains in driving Christianity out of the public square in Europe and to a lesser extent the United States, but "the world is just as furiously religious as it ever was," said R. Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Prof. Mohler and Bishop Nazir Ali shared a concern that the spiritual vacuum in Europe and the U.S. will be filled by Islam. The need to witness and, at times, defend the place of the Christian faith in the public square was driven home forcefully during a panel presentation and a sermon during the closing Eucharist by the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Kwashi, Bishop of Jos in the Anglican Church of Nigeria. The lives of Bishop Kwashi and his wife, Gloria, were threatened on two occasions when vigilante mobs armed with knives and machetes invaded their house.

Debate and discussion on the proposed new Anglican province in North America occupied a third of the conference agenda.

Steve Waring

GAFCON Primates Prepare Case for New Province

The Rt. Rev. Robert Duncan, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh (Anglican), is involved in "an unanticipated series of consultations with the primates who originated the call" for a new Anglican province in North America.

Bishop Duncan had been scheduled to address "North American Anglicanism After GAFCON and Lambeth" at the Mere Anglicanism conference in Charleston, S.C. Instead, the Very Rev. William McKeachie, dean of the Cathedral Church of St. Luke and St. Paul which was the conference location, read a letter from Bishop Duncan. He

said that following consultations in December about the proposed new province between Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and members of the GAFCON primates' steering committee in London, Archbishop Williams had asked that a paper be prepared setting out the situation and the hopes for a new structure. The archbishop invited the primates to forward the case to the Anglican Consultative Council, with their comments.

Bishop Duncan said the GAFCON primates will make the case for an alternate province during the primates' meeting in Alexandria, Egypt.

New '815' Staff to Address Declining Numbers

Facing declining membership, the Episcopal Church plans to look at emergent church models in efforts to reach "new generations," Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said.

Reflecting on the state of the church in a wide-ranging interview with Episcopal Life Media, Bishop Jefferts Schori said there are "many plans to address the trend" of decreasing attendance.

"Among the new staff at church center [in New York] are ones dedicated to church planting work, one dedicated to work in evangelism, and one for work with small congregations," Bishop Jefferts Schori said. "We're going to bring aboard another person who will help to teach the rest of us and challenge the rest of us to think about emergent church models —

how the church can as a whole be more effective in presenting the gospel in language and images and idioms that can be more readily understood by new generations."

She also acknowledged that "many parish clergy are exceedingly nervous about their annual fund drives" during the nation's ongoing economic crisis, but noted that "we're not seeing a major impact yet at the church-wide level.

"History tells us that churches are usually the last to suffer in terms of bad economic times," she said. "People's generosity continues and particularly in their faith communities. Serving the needs of those with even less continues or grows in bad economic times. We are hopeful."

Team from Three Dioceses Plans Sudan Trip

A contingent from three dioceses is raising funds to purchase a vehicle that will allow them to travel across the southern region of The Episcopal Church of the Sudan this month.

The Church of the Sudan contains 24 dioceses, 20 of which are located in the southern portion of the country. Six dioceses in the south have companion relationships with dioceses in The Episcopal Church. A primary purpose of the visit is to develop relationships with the remaining 14. The plan is to donate the vehicle to the Sudanese

church at the conclusion of the visit.

"We want to reach out to these often overlooked places and let them know that we have not forgotten them, that we support the work that they do and that we are praying for them," said Buck Blanchard, world mission coordinator for the Diocese of Virginia.

Mr. Blanchard will join Phil Darrow of the Diocese of Chicago and Robin Denney of the Diocese of El Camino Real on a tour of eight dioceses. The team will travel about 265 miles, requiring three uninterrupted days of travel on mostly unpaved roads.

Mr. Blanchard and Ms. Denney will continue their trip at a retreat for Sudanese bishops in Yei, where they will be joined by the Rt. Rev. David C. Jones, Bishop Suffragan of Virginia, and the Rt. Rev. Francis C. Gray, former assistant Bishop of Virginia and newly appointed commissary to the Church of Sudan.

Bishop Gray will help conduct part of the bishops' retreat through a series of meditations on the human soul. Retreat leaders are the Most Rev. George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Most Rev. Henry Orombi, Archbishop of Uganda.

California Supreme Court to Review Fallbrook Case

The California Supreme Court has accepted a petition for review filed by the rector and vestry of St. John's Anglican Church, Fallbrook.

The decision to review the case sets aside an appellate court decision in October which found that the vestry had ceased to be eligible to serve as directors of the corporation when they considered disaffiliating from the Diocese of San Diego and the Episcopal Church in July 2006. In November of that year, a lower court judge refused to recognize a board appointed by San Diego Bishop James Mathes as the legitimate trustees of the congregation, leaving the departing members in possession of the property.

This is the second case the California Supreme Court has agreed to consider within the past 14 months [TLC, Jan. 25]. The decision by the state Supreme Court also means the diocese cannot obtain a judgment evicting the Anglican congregation until after a decision is handed down.

Pasadena Rector Explains 'Gay Gift' Comments

The Rev. Ed Bacon, rector of All Saints' Church, Pasadena, Calif., said he "unleashed a flood of healing throughout the country" after he said on a nationally televised talk show that "being gay is a gift from God."

The comment, made on a Jan. 8 segment of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, generated significant viewer response and four days later Ms. Winfrey asked Fr. Bacon back, via video link, to explain his comments.

"It is so important for every human being to understand that he or she is a gift from God, and particularly people who are marginalized and victimized in our culture," Fr. Bacon said. "Gay and lesbian people are clearly outcasts in many areas of our life, and it is so important for them to understand that when God made them, God said, 'You are good.'"

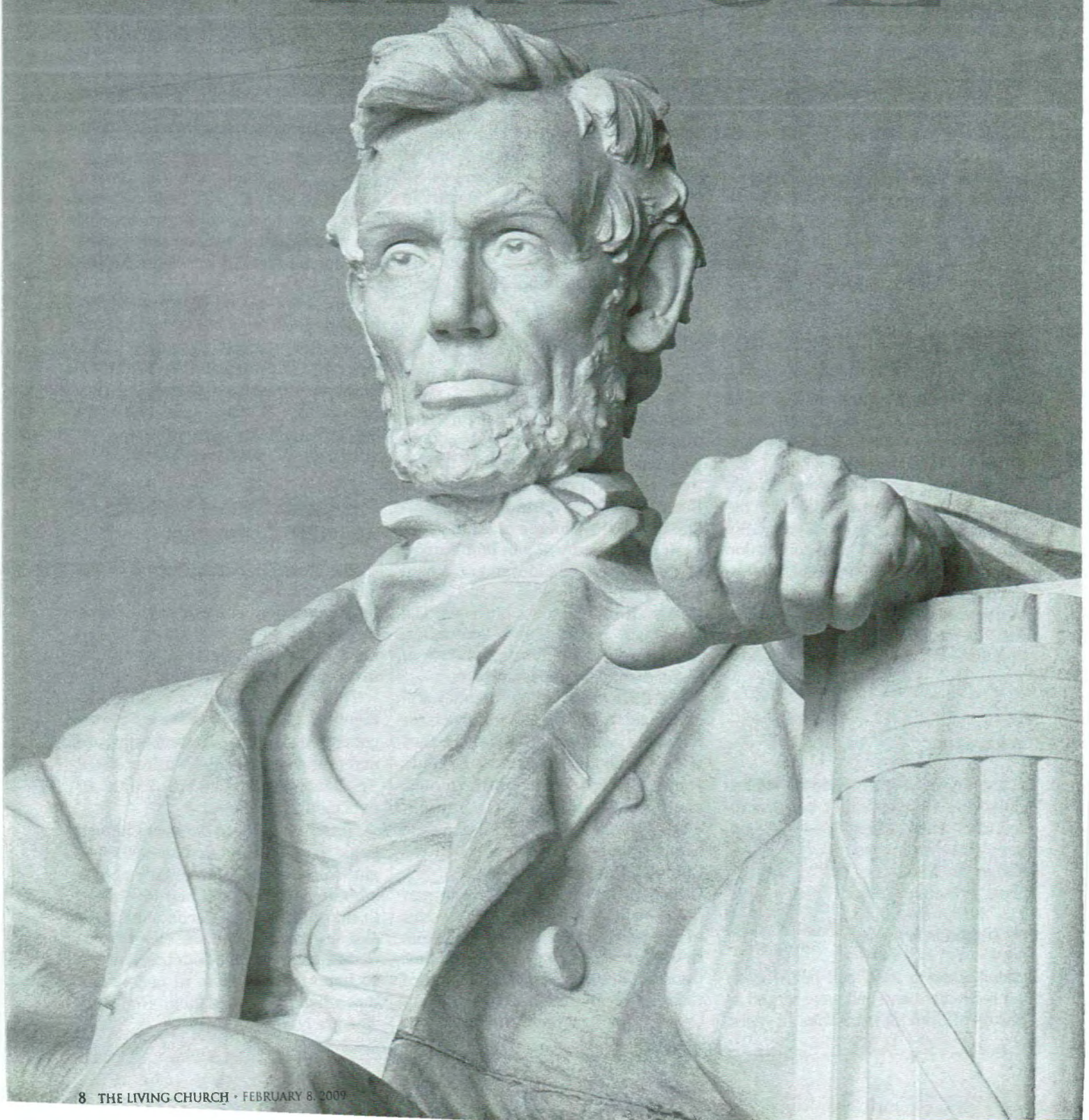
BRIEFLY...

The Rt. Rev. **Carolyn Tanner Irish** has called for the election of her successor after announcing her intention to resign as Bishop of Utah, effective Sept. 11, 2010, the date upon which her successor will be consecrated. Bishop Irish will be 70 upon her retirement and will have served as Bishop of Utah for more than 14 years.



Bishop Irish

CHRISTIAN VIRTUE



Remembering the faith of Abraham Lincoln on his 200th birthday

By Boyd Wright

Senator William Pitt Fessenden of Maine grew so angry over a patronage problem that he burst into “intemperate language” in the presence of Abraham Lincoln. The president took it coolly. “You are an Episcopalian, aren’t you, Senator?” he inquired.

“Yes, sir. I belong to that church.”

“I thought so,” said Lincoln. “You Episcopalians all swear alike. [Secretary of State William] Seward is an Episcopalian. But [Secretary of War Edwin] Stanton is a Presbyterian. You ought to hear him swear.”

President Lincoln sometimes attended Presbyterian services in Springfield and Washington, but he always made it clear that he never joined, and never wanted to join, any church. Yet what he thought about God in his inner heart and mind is another matter.

We celebrate his 200th birthday this Feb. 12, and historians have had plenty of time to study his religious beliefs. Some points are clear.

Lincoln was no conventional Christian. He refused to accept any particular creed beyond love of God and neighbor, and he apparently put little faith in the divinity of Christ. But he did believe profoundly in God, and it is quite possible that no other U. S. president ever made a more determined effort to discern God’s will.

Faith came gradually to him. Self-taught in his log-cabin days, he studied the Bible, and King James cadences echo through his later writings. He once told a friend: “Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier and better man.”

But young Lincoln also read the works of skeptics, and may have talked so much about them that while running for Congress in Illinois, he had to issue a statement: “That I am not a member of any Christian church is true; but I have never denied the truth of the Scriptures.”

New responsibility brought new faith. Saying goodbye to his friends in Springfield before taking the train to Washington and the presidency, he declared: “Without the assistance of [the] Divine Being ... I cannot succeed.” In his first inaugural address he spoke of “a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land.”

Then came the war, and, as the four terrible years of slaughter wore on, the God or providence Lincoln spoke of in his speeches became less a remote force and more an active and personal deity. He himself described “a process of crystallization” in his belief.

He certainly practiced Christian virtues. His honesty, charity, humility and temperance spawned legends. He constantly visited hospitals, and the wounded knew real compassion when they saw it. Above all, picture him, the whole load of managing the war on his shoulders, spending days on end poring over the records of hundreds of soldiers accused of failing their duty. To the chagrin of his generals, he found ways to pardon and save the lives of many.

Some noticed that the president turned more to God for comfort when his beloved son Willie died in the White House at age 11. To one sympathizer, Lincoln promised, “I

will try to go to God with my sorrows.” A few days later, he added, “I think I can.”

In September 1862, Lincoln made the momentous decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. He told his cabinet that he had determined to interpret the partial victory at the bloody battle of Antietam as “an indication of divine will, and that it was [my] duty to move forward.” It was a promise, he said, that he had made to his “Maker.” Not he himself, he explained, but God, “had decided this question in favor of the slaves.”

About this time, we catch a glimpse of Lincoln’s mighty struggle to understand God’s will. Alone in his office, the president began to write on a small sheet of paper. This was not meant for the public but just for himself. When he had finished, he put the undated memo in a drawer, and it lay there until his secretary discovered it after his death.

With unsparing logic and the precision of a skilled lawyer, Abraham Lincoln wrote out what his reason told him about God and the great conflict that raged all about him:

“The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both *may* be, and one *must* be wrong. God can not be *for*, and *against* the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party — and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose.”

We can almost watch Lincoln struggle to convince himself. In the final sentences, we see that he found faith in God’s goodness no matter what the outcome:

“I am almost ready to say that this is probably true — that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His mere quiet power, on the minds of the now contestants, He could have either *saved* or *destroyed* the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.”

Two years later, with the war almost won, Lincoln, in his second inaugural address, showed that he believed not only in a just God but a merciful one. Both North and South, the president declared, had suffered for the sin of slavery. Both sides “read the same Bible, and pray to the same God. . . . [L]et us judge not that we be not judged. . . . The Almighty has His own purposes.”

So what finally is God’s will? In this, his greatest speech, Lincoln gave us his answer: “With malice toward none; with charity for all . . . to bind up the nation’s wounds.”

Six weeks later Abraham Lincoln would be dead from an assassin’s bullet. Biographers often sum up his life with Secretary Stanton’s epitaph: “Now he belongs to the ages.” But, from a Christian point of view, Secretary Seward may have said it even better: “His magnanimity is almost superhuman.” □

Boyd Wright is a retired newspaper editor who lives in Mendham, N.J.

Don't Repeat the Past

Did You Know...

The practice of offering invocations and benedictions at presidential inaugurations began in 1937.

Quote of the Week

The Rev. Rick Warren when asked if he would say the name of Jesus in his inaugural invocation: "I'm a Christian pastor so I will pray the only kind of prayer I know how to pray."

As I watch the sad saga of our bishops' legalistic and punitive response to "traditionalist" bishops, dioceses, and parishes that are attempting to leave The Episcopal Church in order to form a new North American province, I am reminded of the defensive and dismissive response of the Church of England bishops to the Methodist movement in the 18th century. The result was, of course, the founding and development of a separate Methodist Church, which is now much larger than the "Anglican" Church (at least as we are now constituted) on this continent.

Imagine the strength and witness of Anglicanism today if the Methodists were welcomed as a preaching order within the Church of England. Surely they would be more "orthodox" and we would be more "vibrant," and together we would be much larger and much more effective for the gospel in the world than we are divided. This, by the way, is exactly what Innocent III achieved when he embraced St. Francis and welcomed his friars into the ministry of the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the 13th century, despite the fact that they were preaching such a dangerous "new" doctrine.

Now what I wonder is this: What would happen if the Presiding Bishop, with the support of the House of Bishops, were to welcome the formation of a new province for "traditionalists" within The Episcopal Church, allowing every diocese, parish, and church institution to join this province with a two-thirds vote by the appropriate parish meeting, convention, or governing body? She could even stipulate an acceptable window of a year during which this vote would be required to happen.

In this way, both "sides" of our church could continue in dialogue from protected positions of mutual respect without the

present feelings of distrust and fear. Both would also be encouraged to grow by teaching the doctrines and practicing the liturgies in which they believe, which they could proceed to do with conviction and enthusiasm. We could, for instance, continue to share the Church Pension Fund and Episcopal Relief and Development, and our primates and bishops could continue to meet on an annual basis to look for areas of agreement, common witness, shared costs and joint projects, but in a way which is more representative, more

conducive to collegiality, and more focused on results than our present General Convention. I also wonder if it would not be appropriate for the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Consultative Council to ask us to do this in one final attempt at unity and civility before they are forced by our actions to actively establish or passively recognize a permanent state of schism between us.



Such an action would show true Christian humility and a more genuine openness to the power of the Holy Spirit...

I would hope that the traditionalists would find such an arrangement better than what is now proposed, as it would allow clergy, congregations and dioceses to reorganize without the loss of their properties and the cost

of legal action. The risk for the Presiding Bishop, of course, is that too many will want to leave, but at least they will not be leaving completely, and no one will remain because they have been bullied and threatened into submission. There is also the obvious advantage pointed out by others who have written to this magazine before me that such an action by the Presiding Bishop and by the rest of the House of Bishops would show true Christian humility and a more genuine openness to the power of the Holy Spirit to build the church and thus to lead the church in his, if not necessarily our own, direction.

Our guest columnist is the Rev. D. Stuart Dunman, headmaster of St. James School, St. James, Md.

Forgoing an Opportunity

In the Examination portion of the Ordination of a Bishop, candidates are asked whether they will “boldly proclaim the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people.” Given the opportunity to present the invocation at a pre-inaugural event to an audience of thousands at the Lincoln Memorial and millions more watching on television, the Bishop of New Hampshire made the conscious decision not to spread the gospel.

To be sure, the four-minute invocation Bishop Robinson presented was designed to stir up consciences. He offered petitions for a litany of gifts for God to give our new president and to the nation. These included tears, anger and discomfort at a long list of injustices and social ills, followed by patience, humility, and “freedom from mere tolerance.” The invocation ended with calls for God’s guidance and protection for the president and his family.

But from the time his invitation was announced, Bishop Robinson repeatedly told the media that he would not be offering a Christian prayer or quoting from scripture. He said he was “horrified” that previous inaugural prayers were “specifically and

Bishop Robinson was given an opportunity to witness for Christ and he squandered it.



aggressively Christian.” He said that because he wanted all Americans to feel that “this is their prayer,” he would address the invocation to the more general “God of our many understandings,” language he adopted from 12-step recovery programs.

The inaugural committee said that Bishop Robinson was chosen, in part, for his work on behalf of the church. Yet while he refused to use the inaugural spotlight to share a Christian prayer, Bishop Robinson emphasized that this civic ceremony was a critical time to advocate for gay rights, calling it “important for any minority to see themselves represented in some way, in our case a sexual minority.”

Prayers offered at state occasions and civic ceremonies are almost invariably non-descript. But Bishop Robinson was given an opportunity to witness for Christ and he squandered it, and announced his intention to squander it in advance.

Early Ecumenists

As we look ahead to this summer’s vote by General Convention on whether to enter into full communion with the Northern and Southern provinces of the Moravian Church in America, it is a fitting time to honor the ministries of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, whose feasts we celebrate on Feb 14. Though perhaps these brothers are best known for Cyril’s invention of an alphabet for their native Slavonic language, they also are considered patron saints of ecumenism.

It was to the disputed territory of Moravia (now part of the Czech Republic) that the brothers were sent as leaders of a missionary delegation in 862. Though their mission was a success, they were caught in the crossfire of a theological dispute between Eastern and Western churches. They were welcomed and honored in Rome, where Cyril died, and Methodius was later consecrated archbishop of Moravia. Political sea changes later led to his arrest and the banning of the Slavonic liturgy, but Pope John VIII eventually secured his release and restored the liturgy to use. Near the end of his life, Methodius returned to Constantinople where his ministry was approved by the patriarch.

In recognition of their devotion to the gospel and willingness to risk persecution in times of political and theological turmoil, these brothers are honored in both the Eastern and Western churches. Their lives are examples of Christian leadership we all would do well to emulate.

Irony in a Call for Unity

We cannot ignore the clear parameters the scripture places around God's gift of sexuality.

By Russell Levenson, Jr.

As I read the remarks of the Presiding Bishop to the National Press Club as reported by Peggy Eastman [TLC, Jan. 11], I had to ask, "Has the Presiding Bishop considered that the idolatry against which she warns is a fruit of the revisionist's agenda, not the response of those who disagree with her and her position?"

The Presiding Bishop emphasizes that the church's role is to strive continually for unity, based on the belief that all God's children are one. I agree with her on the goal of unity, but it must be noted that those who have continued to promote an agenda around human sexuality inconsistent with holy scripture, tradition and Lambeth 1.10 have continued to thumb their noses at the vast majority of the Anglican Communion by suggesting "prophetic voice" is more important than church unity.

One cannot have it both ways. You cannot suggest and promote unity when you are the very cause of disunity. I disagree that our unity is based upon the belief that all God's children are one. Our unity comes from our relationships grounded in Jesus Christ, the fruit of which should be our unity. You cannot build unity when there is not first that relationship in Christ, (*a la* 1 Corinthians 12).

In the Presiding Bishop's comments, she also noted that when it comes to inclusion of gays and lesbians within The Episcopal Church, she has heard a prophetic voice and that there are some very odd images of family values in the Bible. She said that to not consider the possibility of alternate lifestyles is to

suggest that some members of the body are more equal than others. In these comments rest a few of the great misunderstandings of the revisionists' agenda as it stands against that of those who oppose it.

Those who are conservative around the issues of human sexuality do not suggest that those Christians who are living in a lifestyle not consistent with the teachings of holy scripture are "less equal" than other Christians. It is true that we see an evolutionary and progressive teaching around human sexuality from Genesis to the gospels and through the epistles. This trend begins with relationships we would not, nor could we, endorse today — polygamy for starters. Jesus holds up no other model for human sexuality than heterosexual marriage or the gift of chastity; the New Testament notes that clergy should have but one spouse. Neither of these teachings denied that other expressions of human sexuality existed in Jesus' day (or in our own), but neither endorses those lifestyles, and in no way commends them to receive a sacrament of the church (albeit blessing or ordination).

The overstated argument that "Jesus never said anything about homosexuality" as a suggestion that he had no problem with alternate lifestyles simply does not hold water. The Church must, of course, admit that God's love can certainly and does certainly embrace Christians who live out their sexuality in a wide variety of ways, but we cannot ignore the clear parameters the scripture places around God's gift of sexuality. When our sexuality breaks those parameters (regardless of our orienta-



tion), we must be willing to offer that to God's guidance, redemption, and grace.

Do we not now deny ordination to heterosexual persons who are promiscuous or living without the benefit of sacramental marriage? Do we not sometimes deny marriage to heterosexual couples based upon what is learned in pre-marital counseling? Would we honestly consider (or should we) a candidate for bishop who has a pattern of serial monogamy? If we do not in these cases, what is the basis for our decision if not the moral theology we find in the holy scriptures and the tradition of the Church? Just because some might be, in some way, denied access to ordination or marriage does not mean they are considered "less." It does not mean they are not a child of God, nor does it mean they do not have the fullness of his love. It means that sacraments also require standards, and we find those

and have for two millennia in the holy scriptures.

Last, let me return to the point where I began. The P.B. has suggested that when congregations focus excessively on human sexuality, "it becomes an idol," and idols are against biblical teaching. I have to offer a hearty "amen" to that. But the near-obsessive compulsion of those promoting a revisionist agenda on human sexuality are the ones who began tossing the precious jewels of the church to be melted down to create the idol.

Loss in Outreach and Mission

We have witnessed the continued building of this idol at the cost of global, national, diocesan, and parish unity, with the result being the hemorrhage of members, diversion from evangelism, and the loss of millions of dollars in support of outreach and mission. Others have built their own idol

out of trying to tear down the first one.

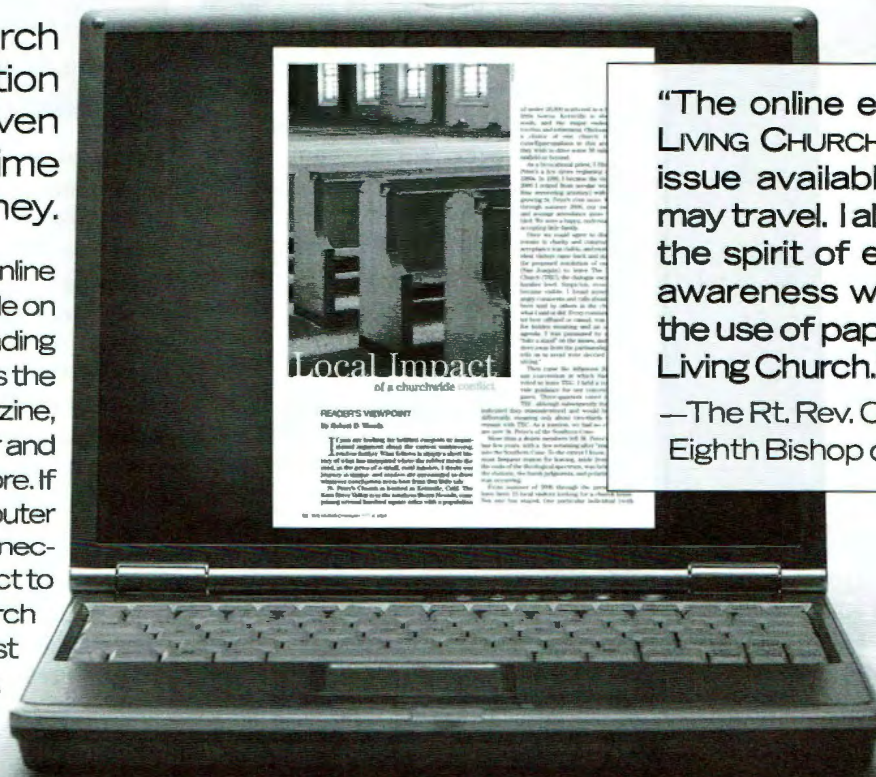
If the Presiding Bishop really believes that the Church's role is to "strive continually for unity," then she — and her brother and sister bishops — will at all costs do what they can publicly and privately to prevent a breach of the requested moratoria on issues around human sexuality, and not attempt to push (or allow) the Church to attempt to pole vault over our current crisis and divisions until there is a viable solution that allows for greater unity. If that time never arrives, then perhaps we just honor the unity by putting our idols around human sexuality aside, in favor of our relationships with Jesus Christ. He in the end is the only one who can, indeed, make us one. □

The Rev. Russell Levenson, Jr., is the rector of St. Martin's Church, Houston, Texas.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Problem for Catholics

The Rev. Jim Stickney [TLC, Jan. 18] seems a little confused. When Bishop Iker declares that Bishop Jefferts Schori has "no authority ... and never has," it is not over a policy disagreement. It is because she is a woman, and therefore for Catholics, she is not an ordained bishop.

She is, of course, ordained a bishop in The Episcopal Church. However this does not mean that she is a bishop in the Catholic Church. No less an authority than the late Pope John Paul II said that even he has no authority to change Holy Orders. Anglicans believe they can change Holy Orders. This has always been the problem for Catholics in TEC, and will remain so. Bishop Iker is merely being honest and logical.

(The Rev.) Tony Noble
All Saints' Church
San Diego, Calif.

The Rev. Jim Stickney takes Bishop Iker to task for saying the Presiding Bishop had no authority over him. I understand his mindset but he misses the point altogether.

Bishop Jefferts Schori has no diocese and her job is to "preside" over the House of Bishops, not to rule the Church as she obviously intends to do, as did Bishops Griswold and Browning before her. Even Canterbury does not presume authority over his peers or to reject the mind of the Church and inject his own theological preferences. Bishop Iker no longer is affiliated with TEC as a constituent member. How could Bishop Jefferts Schori have even a presumption of authority?

(The Rev.) James Graner
Larned, Kan.

Which Tradition?

I am glad to see that the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church is so devoted to the ancient tradition of the Church [TLC, Jan. 11]. But what Church is she talking about? Is it the ancient Catholic Church that the Second Vatican Council claims to subsist in the Church of Rome? If so, then TEC and the rest of the Anglican Communion are the breakaway part of the ancient Church and are now guilty of boundary crossing into Roman Catholic dioceses and archdioceses.

Perhaps she is talking about the church of all the baptized, but then we are in communion with one another



no matter what jurisdiction, province or denomination we may happen to belong to. My guess, however, is that she is really only talking about The Episcopal Church, which has no ancient tradition. If that's the case, she is quite right to say that those who leave TEC are no longer in communion with that church as a corporate body. We are excommunicate from TEC but not necessarily from the Anglican Communion or the rest of the Catholic Church. But so are many provinces of the Anglican Communion, as well as those dioceses that have disassociated from the TEC's General Convention.

The Presiding Bishop of TEC

letters to the editor
tlc@livingchurch.org

PEOPLE & PLACES

throws out a lot of emotive terms and phrases such as "communion relationship" but she never pins down what all these terms and phrases mean. Like Humpty Dumpty of *Alice in Wonderland*, the words she uses mean just what she chooses them to mean, neither more nor less.

*(The Rev. Canon) John H. Heidt
Canon Theologian to the Bishop of
Fort Worth
Fort Worth, Texas*

Major Contributions

Thank you for publishing the obituary for Canon Bosmyer [TLC, Jan. 11].

A close reading of the obituary notes a missing 15 years in her career biography. For most of the decade of the '90s, she was professor of Contextual Education at the School of Theology of the University of the South, Sewanee, and director of the Sewanee Field Ed Program. With her husband, the Rev. Dennis Campbell, she was co-vicar of St James' Church, Midway, Tenn. She made enormous contributions to the life and work of the school and the mission and to the lives and formation of seminarians and their families. When Peggy and Dennis returned to Arkansas to her first love of parish ministry, she (they) left a major hole at Sewanee, and many still miss her (them) very much.

*(The Very Rev.) Guy Fitch Lytle III
Sewanee, Tenn.*

Media Discrimination

I am bewildered and shocked that Bishop Gene Robinson's opening prayer was neither announced nor broadcast on coverage of the Jan. 18 pre-inaugural event. This is a gross insult to Episcopalian Christians, gay and lesbian Americans. President Obama specifically invited a wide variety of groups to be part of the event to show that our country is inclusive of all people, not just those approved of by CNN and HBO who covered the event.

*(The Rev.) Robert Warren Cromey
San Francisco, Calif.*

Deaths

The Rev. **Don H. Gross**, 85, of Sewickley, PA, died Nov. 13 at a Pittsburgh hospice.

A native of Pittsburgh, Fr. Gross was a graduate of Carnegie Institute of Technology, University of Pittsburgh, Harvard, and Episcopal Theological School. In 1949, he was ordained deacon and priest in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, then went on to serve a number of churches in that diocese, Rochester, and Massachusetts. He was priest-in-charge and later rector of St. Peter's Church, Brentwood, PA, 1951-57. In recent years he was associated with Grace Church, Pittsburgh. Fr. Gross was a member of Forward in Faith North America. He is survived by a son, Steve, of Corapolis, PA; a daughter, Meg Guilot, of Sewickley, PA; and five grandchildren.

The Rev. **Richard E. Pistole**, rector of St. John's Church, Naperville, IL, for 28 years, died Nov. 18 in a Naperville nursing facility. He was 82.

Fr. Pistole was a native of Huntington Beach, CA. He graduated from Ripon College and Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, and was ordained deacon in 1956 and priest in 1957. His ordained ministry began as curate at All Saints' by-the-Sea, Santa Barbara, CA, 1956-57. He was also assistant at Grace, Glendora, CA, 1957-59; priest-in-charge of Christ the King, Lansing, IL, 1959-65, and rector in Naperville from 1965 to 1993, when he retired. Fr. Pistole is survived by his wife, Doris.

The Rev. **John H. Snow**, retired priest of the Diocese of Massachusetts, died Nov. 17 at his home in Ashfield, MA. He was 84.

Born in Washington, DC, he was educated at Harvard and Columbia universities and the Episcopal Theological School [ETS]. He served in the Navy during World War II. He taught for several years and then was headmaster of St. Michael's Country Day School, Newport, RI, before pursuing holy orders. He was ordained deacon in 1958 and priest in 1959. Fr. Snow was assistant at Christ Church, South Hamilton, MA, 1958-60; director of Gould Farm, a Christian therapeutic community, 1960-62; assistant at Christ Church, Cambridge, MA, 1962-68; and Episcopal chaplain at Princeton University, 1968-72. In 1972 he became professor of pastoral divinity at ETS, where he remained until 1990. He retired in 1990 and became professor emeritus. Surviving are his wife, Mary; a son, Thomas; two daughters, Helena and Lydia; and several grandchildren.

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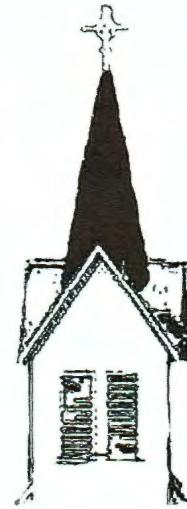
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