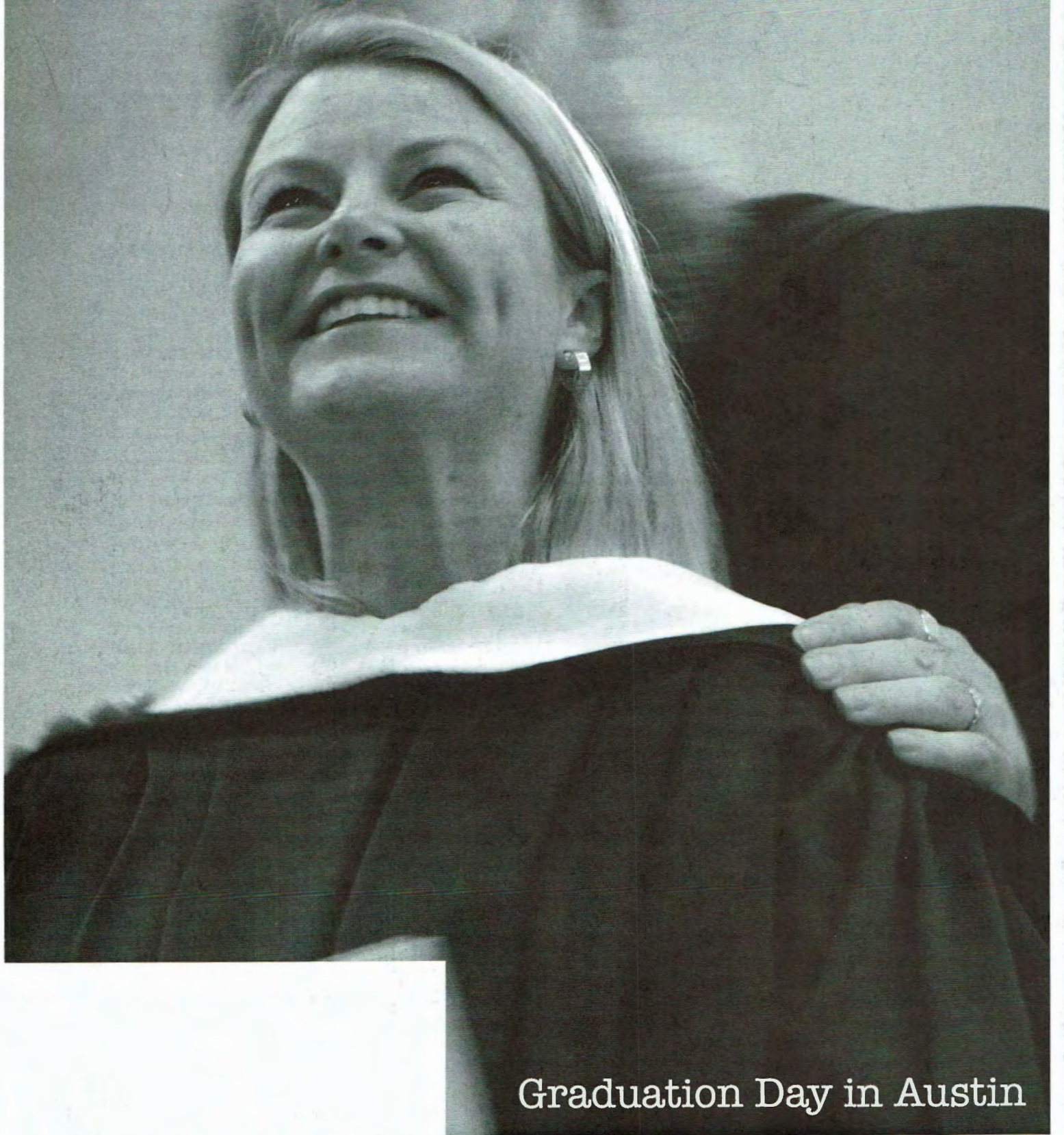


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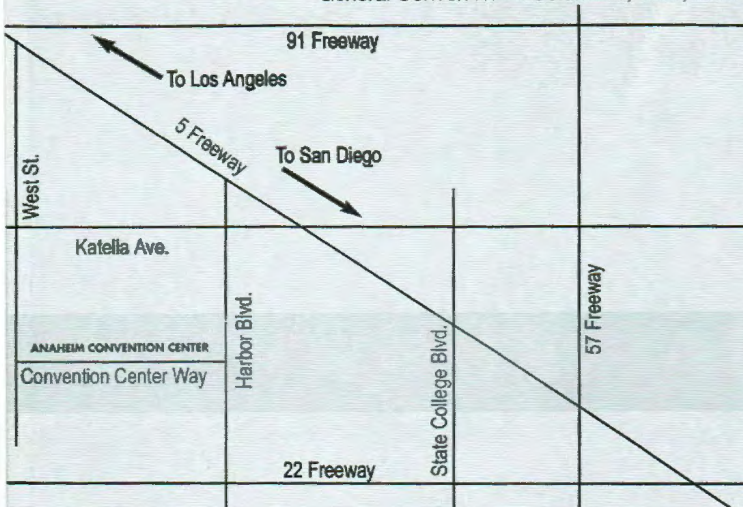


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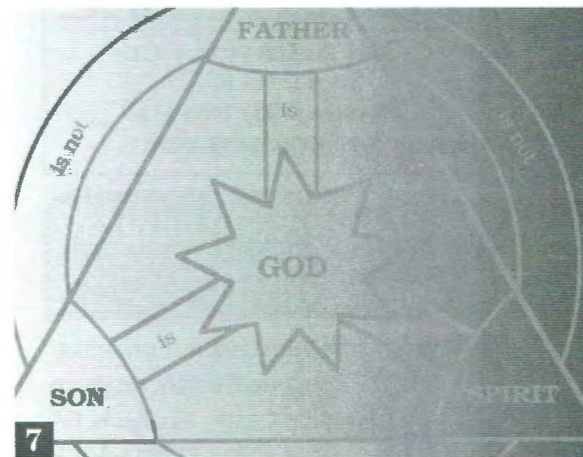
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The Cover

Bob Kinney/ETSS photo

Liz Powell receives her master of arts in counseling degree from the Rev. Alan Gregory, academic dean at Seminary of the Southwest, during commencement exercises on May 12 at St. Matthew's Church in Austin, Texas.



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SUNDAY'S READINGS

Seeing in the Dark

'We speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen' (John 3:11)

Pentecost 1 (Trinity Sunday), June 7, 2009

BCP: Exod. 3:1-6; Psalm 93 or Canticle 2 or Canticle 13; Rom. 8:12-17; John 3:1-16

RCL: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29 or Canticle 2 or Canticle 13; Rom. 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

Have you ever been lost in the dark? It can be dangerous and frightening. You may be limited in your ability to see where you've been, where you are, or where you're going. "Darkness" also can provide an image for a troubled situation, or a state of mind. When someone is confused or lacking understanding, we may say that person is "in the dark."

But sometimes darkness isn't so bad. Being in the dark, we can admit we need to find our way. We can let go of our illusions of self-sufficiency.

Being in the dark also can give us an in-between time, a time between who we were and who we are going to be. This can be a time of change and transformation that doesn't immediately appear on the surface of things. Seedlings grow in the dark with no changes visible on the surface. We can begin to grow in the darkness if we accept the possibilities and limitations of our situation.

It was that way for Nicodemus. He came to Jesus in the dark. He would never have been seen with Jesus in broad daylight. He wasn't ready to be associated with Jesus, or to be his

disciple. But his visit was more than mere curiosity. He was in-between. Nicodemus went to Jesus in the dark to ask the questions that mattered most. And at first his encounter with Jesus only led to more questions: How can anyone be born after having grown old? How can these things be? (John 3:4, 9).

Nicodemus didn't stay in the dark, and he didn't remain in-between. Later, in very public ways, Nicodemus would urge restraint against those who would have condemned Jesus without a hearing (John 7:50-51), and he actually went out with Joseph of Arimathea to honor and bury Jesus' body after the crucifixion (John 19:38-42).

It can be that way for us, too. We may find ourselves in the dark. We may be confused and uncertain about what comes next or where we are. But in the darkness we can let go of our illusions of self-sufficiency, and ask for help from our Lord. We can ask all our questions, and listen with our hearts. Like Nicodemus, we can grow in the light, and reflect what we have seen and known of our Lord.

Look It Up

See Martin H. Franzmann's hymn text, "Thy strong word did cleave the darkness" (Hymn 381). See also A Collect for Aid against Perils and A Collect for Protection (BCP, p. 123-124).

Think About It

When have you been lost in the dark? When have you had trouble finding your way, or knowing the right thing to do in a situation? What helped you to "see the light"? How have you known God's love in difficult situations?

Next Sunday

Pentecost 2 (Proper 6B), June 14, 2009

BCP: Ezek. 31:1-6, 10-14; Psalm 92 or 92:1-4, 11-14; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Mark 4:26-34

RCL: 1 Sam. 15:34-16:13 or Ezek. 17:22-24; Psalm 20 or Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14; 2 Cor. 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17; Mark 4:26-34

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P.B. Opposes Revisiting Resolution B033

The 76th General Convention, July 8-17 in Anaheim, Calif., should be of interest and import to all Episcopalians, according to the three senior officers in charge of convention planning and the bishop of the host diocese. The four spoke at a press conference broadcast over the internet on May 13.

"What happens at General Convention will affect you," Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said in response to a question e-mailed by a viewer. "It governs how your diocese is served by church-wide staff and how your diocese uses church-wide resources."

In addition to Bishop Jefferts Schori, participants included Bonnie Anderson, president of the House of Deputies; the Rev. Gregory Straub, executive officer and secretary of General Convention; and the Rt. Rev. J. Jon Bruno, Bishop of Los Angeles.

In response to a question regarding the repeal of B033, the resolution approved at General Convention in 2006 that recommends caution in consecrating bishops whose manner of life might cause distress to other members of the Anglican Communion, Bishop Jefferts Schori said B033

would be debated, but that she opposes its repeal.

"I've been very clear in my public communications for the last few months that my hope is that we not attempt to repeal past legislation at General Convention — it's a bad legislative practice," she said. "I would far more prefer us to say where we are today, in 2009, to make a positive statement about our desire to include all people fully in this church, and that we be clear about who we are as The Episcopal Church."

A number of viewers wanted to know how results from the recently concluded meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council might affect convention. Bishop Jefferts Schori said the need to debate the proposed Anglican Covenant obviously was a moot point since it failed to pass during the ACC meeting in Jamaica [TLC, May 31].

Bishop Jefferts Schori, Bishop Bruno and Mrs. Anderson all expressed hope that the church would emerge from convention as a people empowered and excited about mission.

"In the past, we tried to do that through programs," Mrs. Anderson said. "I'm not sure it is in our DNA yet."



©Tyler Gaskill/ Winfield Daily Courier. Used by permission

The Rev. Betty Glover, rector of Grace Church, Winfield, and Trinity Church, Arkansas City, Kan., organized a vigil on May 14 to honor law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty, as well as officers currently serving in the field. Ms. Glover, who also volunteers as chaplain for the Winfield Police Department, said her inspiration for the vigil came partially from visits to the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, D.C., while she was serving as a chaplain with the Topeka Police Department.

Churches Assist Victims of Alaska Flooding

St. Matthew's Church, Fairbanks, is serving as a staging area for Alaskan villagers evacuated after some of the state's worst flooding in decades.

No deaths or injuries have been reported from the flooding, caused by an unusually warm spring thaw, but the village of Eagle was destroyed May 12. Some villages remained under water, while others were littered with house-sized boulders of ice that remained after the river receded. The flood waters also have become contaminated with toxic chemicals, oil, and gasoline that were stored in tanks that ruptured.

At press time, about 50 evacuees had arrived at the Fairbanks church

from Tanana, a village of about 250 located along the Yukon River.

"They're just coming in now from the village, and I'm told there are three more planes coming in from Tanana," said Hilary Freeman, St. Matthew's parish administrator. "They brought elders, young mothers, and babies, little ones."

Telephone lines were down, according to the Rev. David Blanchett, the Diocese of Alaska's representative to Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, a coalition of non-profit organizations that respond to disasters as part of their overall mission.

Episcopal News Service contributed to this report.

Sudan Asks for Removal of Virginia Missionary

The Episcopal Church of the Sudan has requested the permanent removal of the Rev. Lauren Stanley, an appointed missionary from the Diocese of Virginia, whose comments in favor of legislation moving forward with same-sex blessings during the annual council meeting earlier this year "were deemed offensive."

The May 13 issue of *Virginia E-Communique*, a weekly newsletter of the Diocese of Virginia, included a statement from the bishop's office that the Rt. Rev. Peter Lee, Bishop of Virginia, had ordered Ms. Stanley to return to Virginia after receiving a request for her removal from the Most Rev. Daniel Deng Bul, Archbishop of Sudan. Ms. Stanley has been a lecturer at Renk Theological College, where she taught theology, liturgy, and English and served as a chaplain.



Brother Abraham Newsom/ENS photo

The \$3.9 million chapel and bell tower at St. Gregory's Abbey in Three Rivers, Mich., was dedicated May 9, completing a 20-year project to construct 10 buildings on the 500-acre campus.

Motions Precede Pittsburgh Hearing

With a court hearing drawing closer, lawyers for the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh in The Episcopal Church filed a motion on May 8, arguing that a stipulation order between the diocese and the rector and wardens of Calvary Church, Pittsburgh, that was made in 2005 makes clear "that only a diocese that is part of The Episcopal Church may continue to hold and administer property."

Lawyers representing The Episcopal Church filed a separate motion on May 12 arguing that all property is subject to the constitution and canons of The Episcopal Church and may be used by it only for mission. The Episcopal Church motion represents a new issue for the court to adjudicate. It refers only in passing to the stipulation order.

The Episcopal Church was permitted to file its motion after it sought permission to be added to the case through complaint-in-intervention at a hearing April 17. At that same hearing, the two sides agreed that a hearing scheduled for May 27 would proceed "assuming arguendo for the purposes of such hearing that the withdrawal of the Diocese was valid." That issue will be considered later, if necessary.

Individual Congregations

Lawyers for the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh in the Southern Cone contend that the 2005 stipulation order applied only to the property of individual congregations which might seek to leave the diocese. If the Alleghany Court of Common Pleas finds as a result of the May 27 hearing that the stipulation order applies to the diocese, the Southern Cone diocese may be forced to turn over all diocesan endowments to the diocese affiliated with The Episcopal Church.

In other news from Pittsburgh, the Rt. Rev. Robert H. Johnson has agreed to continue as an assisting bishop of the Episcopal diocese through the annual convention in the fall. Bishop Johnson originally planned to stay through July.

L.A. Diocese Denied Attorney Fees in Dispute

Orange County Superior Court Judge Thierry P. Colaw has denied a motion by the Diocese of Los Angeles that would have forced St. James' Church, Newport Beach, Calif., and its volunteer board of directors to pay the diocese's attorney fees in its ongoing property dispute.

The diocese had argued that the parish was guilty of "frivolous" conduct under California's anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) statute when it entered a special motion to strike the diocese's initial complaint in 2004. The court initially granted St. James' motion,

but the decision was reversed by an appellate court and upheld by the state supreme court. The parish is awaiting a decision on its appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, which will say yes or no to a hearing by October.

During the hearing on May 15, the court considered briefs filed by both sides and heard oral argument. While the SLAPP special motion had not previously been used in a church property dispute, the court ruled that it was not frivolous and had been brought in good faith by experienced and well-qualified defense counsel, according to a release distributed by St. James' Church.

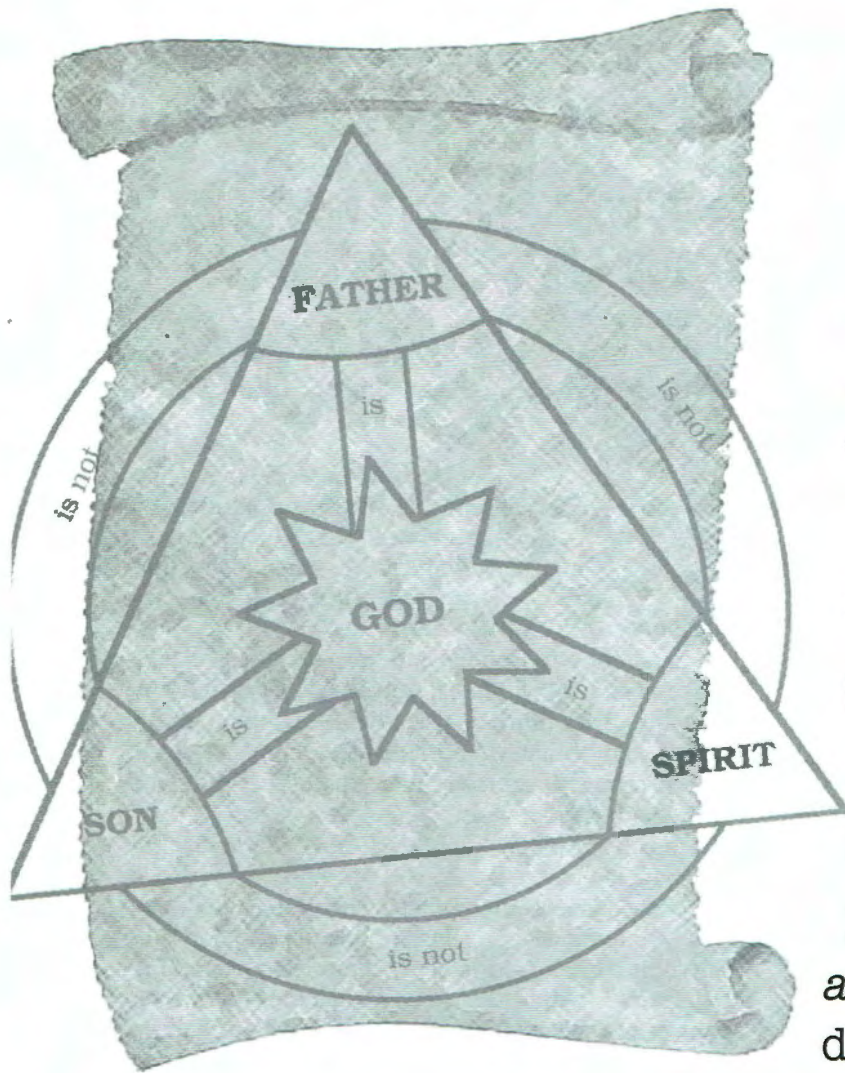
Response Filed in Fort Worth Property Case

In response to an April 14 filing in the 141st District Court, brought by The Episcopal Church and Episcopal leaders who have reorganized an Episcopal diocese in the Fort Worth, Texas, area [TLC, May 3], the former Episcopal diocese filed a motion to dismiss May 8 on grounds that the court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction.

In a separate statement, Bishop Jack Iker said that the special meeting held Feb. 7 to form the reorganized diocese was not called in accordance with the diocesan constitution and canons, making any litigation based on that meeting null and void.

The motion asks the court to take "judicial notice" based on citations from the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church that, among other things, The Episcopal Church is a voluntary association of dioceses and is not hierarchical above the level of the diocese.

Responding to the specific claims in the April 14 petition, the motion asks the court to confirm that the leadership of the diocese and corporation have not changed since the diocese last met in convention in November 2008. That being the case, it asserts, the diocese cannot sue itself.



Balanced View of the Trinity

By John D. Alexander

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis likens the doctrines of the Christian

faith to maps of reality. That is, they are not to be confused with the realities they represent. If we stand on the beach and look at the Atlantic Ocean, and then look at a map of the Atlantic, we're turning from something real to something less real: from sand and waves and salt spray to a sheet of colored paper.

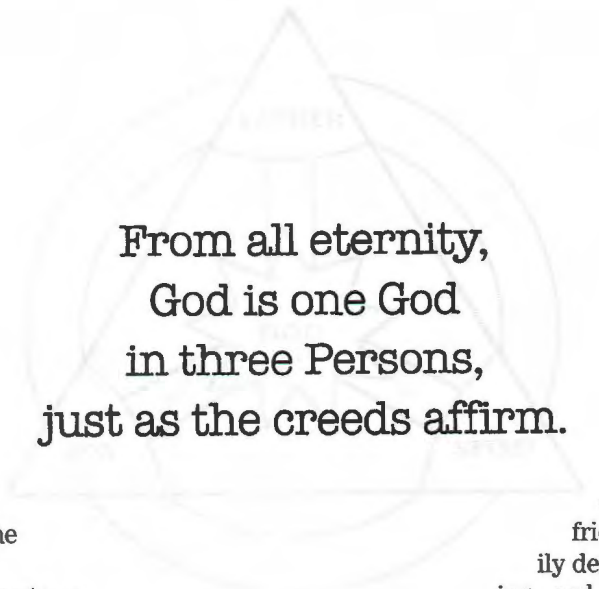
But, says Lewis, we must remember two things about the map. First, it's based on the cumulative experience of hundreds of thousands of people who've actually sailed the Atlantic, experiences just as real as ours; only the map fits all those different experiences together into a comprehensive whole.

Second, as soon as we want to go anywhere, the map becomes indispensable. Walking on the beach is more enjoyable than looking at a map. But the map is of more use than walks on the beach if we want to get from England to America.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity can be described as a map charting the Christian journey into the mystery of God. From New Testament times on, as the earliest Christians reflected on their new relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, they gradually formulated the classical Trinitarian doctrine as the only coherent language to account for their experience and to help

(Continued on next page)

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity can be described as a map charting the Christian journey into the mystery of God.



From all eternity,
God is one God
in three Persons,
just as the creeds affirm.

(Continued from previous page)
others recognize and know the
triune God for themselves.

Frederick Buechner suggests a helpful way of thinking about the Holy Trinity. From all eternity, God is one God in three Persons, just as the creeds affirm. But from our necessarily limited human perspective, we experience the Father as *God-beyond-us*; the Son as *God-beside-us*; and the Holy Spirit as *God-within-us*.

The Trinitarian doctrine points toward a balanced and healthy relationship with God. For we get into spiritual difficulty when any one aspect of this three-fold relationship comes to predominate at the expense of the other two.

Many people seem to focus exclusively on God-beyond-us, the first Person of the Holy Trinity. At its best, such a relationship produces a keen awareness of God's holiness, righteousness, power, majesty and greatness, which in turn elicits our worship and adoration.

Yet those who relate to God in this way are also tempted to think of him primarily as a demanding law giver and stern judge who holds us accountable for every thought, word, and deed. And that is true, so far as it goes. But relating solely to God-beyond-us tends to yield a type of religion that consists mainly in obeying rules. Such a God can be frightening. So often people are held back from growing in their relationship with God because deep down they're afraid, even terrified, of him.

So we need to know not only God-beyond-us, but also God-beside-us. The good news is that in Christ, God has drawn near to forgive us and reconcile us to the Father. Jesus offers himself to us as our mediator, intercessor, companion, and friend.

But when we focus on our relationship with Jesus to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit, we get into trouble again. One of my seminary classmates expressed this danger in a shocking way. He remarked to me that for many Christians today, Jesus is like a gerbil. I answered, "A gerbil? What on earth do you mean?" He answered: "Cuddly, cute, warm, fuzzy, and totally non-threatening; there when we need him; makes us feel good about ourselves; and when we're done with him we can put him back in his cage where he won't bother us until we need him again."

Many Christians like to talk about a personal relationship with Jesus. He's their friend. He accepts and affirms them just as they are. All of which is fine. The

only problem is that such a friendship with Jesus all too easily degenerates into a cozy, re-assuring, and comfortable relationship that makes no demands and doesn't challenge us in any way to change or grow.

So in addition to God-beyond-us and God-beside-us, we also need God-within-us. In classical Christian theology, the Holy Spirit is the divine agent of inner renewal and transformation, working mysteriously within to reform us and to bring us to the perfection for which God has created us.

But again, to focus solely on God-within-us, to the neglect of God-beyond-us and God-beside-us, has disastrous consequences. So much of what passes for spirituality today consists exclusively of a quest for "the God within." Such spirituality assumes that everything they discover within themselves, including their own disordered drives and impulses, is of divine origin. So they end up worshiping a God made in their own image.

Several years ago sociologist Robert Bellah wrote of a young woman named Sheila who was being interviewed in a survey on religion in contemporary society. Sheila said to the researcher, "Oh, I don't belong to any church or organized religion. But I'm very spiritual. I listen to my own inner voice. I don't know where this voice comes from. Maybe it's my own voice. Maybe it's me. Maybe my religion is Sheila-ism."

That story demonstrates that any spirituality focused solely on the experience of God-within-us becomes totally self-centered and self-absorbed. Indeed, such spirituality ends up mistaking the self for God, which is the ultimate form of the sin of idolatry.

The Trinitarian doctrine helps us avoid all these distortions. At one and the same time, we need to be in relationship with God the Father, who has created us and holds us accountable for obedience to his laws; God the Son, who draws near to call, forgive, reconcile, and befriend us; and God the Holy Spirit, who enters the deepest recesses of our souls to renew, transform, and re-create us from within.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is thus our roadmap into the fullness of the Christian life. For it charts our necessarily three-fold relationship with the God who has revealed himself as one God in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. □

The Rev. John D. Alexander is the rector of St. Stephen's Church, Providence, R.I.

Inappropriate Commemorations

Some thoughts regarding the Editor's Column, "So Many Commemorations" [TLC, May 3]:

1. Special Event liturgies: The church needs more special-event liturgies like we need more shrinking parishes.

2. Commemorations: As a former Roman Catholic who became an Episcopalian 37 years ago after a few years in a Roman Catholic religious order, I seriously question the intent of including (admittedly) some of my favorite Roman Catholic saints into an Episcopal book of commemorations, especially those men and women who were Episcopalian but converted to Rome:

• Mother Elizabeth Seton, founder of the American Sisters of Charity, was strongly urged by her close friend and spiritual advisor, the Rev. John Henry Hobart, when he was on staff at Trinity Church, Wall Street, not to become a Roman Catholic. Mother Seton is one of my heroes in terms of her work and that of the brave women who joined her community to develop the American parochial school system and the sisters' work as nurses and early social workers. However, what are we saying when we include an Episcopalian who converted to Roman Catholicism despite the strenuous arguments against her actions by her pastoral mentor?

• John Henry Newman. Brilliant man, theologically "tortured," it would seem, who only reluctantly "went over" to Rome. Rome didn't really know what to do with him. He was an "odd duck" in the Roman Church. He even expressed thoughts about the laity participating in Latin, in the liturgy. Such "novelties" in 19th-century Roman Catholicism were instantly squelched by Rome *ipso facto*. Indeed, he converted to Rome as well at a time when dozens of Anglican clergy were "going over" because the Anglican Church was embroiled in what would become known as the "ritualist controversies" following the initial catholic theological forays of the Oxford Movement in the early 19th century. Having said that, while I hold deep admiration for Newman and his brilliant works, I do not think it is appropriate to have him on the Episcopal calendar.



The church needs more special-event liturgies like we need more shrinking parishes.

• St. Vincent de Paul. The order he founded, The Congregation of the Mission, is known 300-some years later as The Vincentian Fathers and Brothers. Its main purpose initially was to run seminaries and train Roman priests in France at a time when priests were woefully ignorant and ill-prepared for parish work. Later, like the Jesuits, it branched out into higher education. The order owns and founded De Paul University in Chicago. Vincent de Paul was a visionary priest of great pastoral caring and charity in 17th-century France. However, why not include his good friend and close partner in his work, St. Louise de Marillac, the widow who founded a female version of DePaul's order, The Daughters of Charity? This order would go on to become the largest religious order in the world, with some 45,000 members worldwide well into the 1970s. Its members are nurses, teachers and social workers, run hospitals, day care centers and after-school programs. Louise de Marillac, a comfortable wealthy widow, gave up her social privilege and standing in French society to work among the poorest of the poor. These brave women and the generations of women who came after them deserve to have some mention for their place in the history of education, social justice and medical care.

But then the list goes on with more Roman Catholics: Trappist Thomas Merton and Dominican Sister Rose of Lima. Except for those of us who were members of religious orders, who knows Rose of Lima? What is the point? Certainly we can all be inspired by Merton's writings but for own personal edification. I do not think we should be adding more Roman Catholics to the commemorations in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*.

And a Southern Baptist? Who is Charlotte Diggs Moon? What is the purpose of including a Southern Baptist? Are we running out of Episcopal holy men and women to commemorate? What message are we sending to our Episcopal congregations? Become a Roman Catholic? Become a Baptist? Anything but Episcopalian?

Our guest columnist is the Rev. Steven M. Giovangelo, rector of All Saints' Church, Indianapolis.

Did You Know...

The Rt. Rev. William W. Niles was Bishop of New Hampshire for 44 years (1870-1914).

Quote of the Week

The Most Rev. Peter Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney (Australia) to the Church of Ireland Synod on the role of the laity: "The Church belongs to the laity, not to some bureaucracy."

An Idea Worth Trying

The Church of England is trying to do something about its lagging attendance and membership rolls. It has scheduled a Back to Church Sunday in September on which as many as half a million people will be invited to attend services. The idea is simple: Members of churches in each of the C of E's 44 dioceses will invite someone they know who used to attend church to come back to church on September 27. As many as 16,000 churches will participate in the event, which began in the Diocese of Manchester in 2005 and has spread to other churches in the British Isles and to Anglicans in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Argentina.

Those who return will receive a warm welcome without pressure in hopes that they will return.

The concept could be tried in The Episcopal Church. Each of us know someone who hasn't been seen in church for a year or two. Why not invite them to return? It's an inexpensive strategy, takes only a few minutes, and may well be appreciated by the invitee. It doesn't have to be organized on a diocesan or provincial level, as individual churches could try it anytime. Recent surveys have indicated there are many people who formerly were church-goers and no longer are affiliated. Episcopalians are certainly among them. What have we got to lose?



The Church of England has scheduled a Back to Church Sunday in September on which as many as half a million people will be invited to attend services.

Congratulations, Graduates

In recent weeks, commencement exercises have taken place at the 11 theological seminaries of The Episcopal Church. We extend best wishes to the more than 300 graduates as they embark on a variety of ministries. Again this year, thanks to a grant from Encourage, Inc., we are pleased to be able to offer a complimentary, one-year subscription to THE LIVING CHURCH to these graduates, and a discounted subscription for the following year.

We also extend congratulations to recent graduates from colleges and universities as well as secondary schools. Their accomplishments are substantial, and they are deserving of praise as they head into a rapidly changing world. We hope they will be strengthened by our Lord's promise that he will be with them wherever they go.

Attend Church, Will Travel

Despite difficult economic conditions, there are people traveling around this country and elsewhere, for it is the season for vacations. With most children out of school for the summer, vacationers are to be found on the highways, in airports and at resorts of all sorts. We urge all who travel to attend church while they're on vacation. Worshiping with Episcopalians in another part of the country can be a wonderful experience. The music or the liturgy or the preaching style may be a bit different than back home, but those who venture into other Episcopal churches will find much that is familiar. We hope all who travel receive a warm welcome and gracious hospitality at the churches they visit.



LETTING GO OF LEGALISM

Now is the time for some self-restraint for the health of the church's future

READER'S VIEWPOINT

By Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

In a letter Thornton Wilder wrote in the 1930s, he offers the following: *...The fundamentalist tradition in American protestantism has made into fixed hard laws the substance of the Gospel ... All that is censorious ... and joyless in the Calvinistic-Methodist-Baptist tradition is based upon a misreading of the New Testament and a failure to see that most of the tone in the Old Testament is expressly superceded in the New...*

It has been a while since many of us have experienced "joy" in what most of us know to be the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church [TEC]. I suggest that one reason for that joylessness is that rather than experiencing an open expression of freedom and authentic diversity, we are witnessing a denomination in which the strident conservatives and liberals run from grace into the pseudo-safety of fundamentalism.

On June 8, 1978, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn delivered a watershed speech at

Harvard University titled "A World Split Apart." In it, he suggested that when a society begins to collapse into a kind of moral chaos, it "falls back" on legalism. He said, "Every conflict is solved according to the letter of the law, and this is considered to be the supreme solution. If one is right from a legal point of view, nothing more is required. Nobody may mention that one could still not be entirely right, and urge self-restraint or the renunciation of these legal rights or call for sacrifice and selfless risk; it would sound simply absurd. One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody operates at the extreme limit of the legal framework..."

Are we not now witnessing this kind of "framework" in what we could easily say is a "church split apart"? Since the 1970s, TEC has lost nearly a third of its membership. Since the infamous General Convention of 2003, membership, financial giving, and attendance have declined at a rate that is nearly impossible to measure day by day.

The response to this church in crisis has increasingly become this kind of

fundamentalist legalism to which both Wilder and Solzhenitsyn refer. Conservatives have taken up the arms of schismatic and pietistic separation from those deemed unholy. Liberals have returned the favor by failing to include the conservatives fully, deeming them as a dying breed that needs to catch up, convert, or move on.

We now witness the high water mark of this legalistic hobgoblin in the court battles between the Presiding Bishop's office and the departing parishes and dioceses. The P.B.'s stance is that the forbears' ownership of properties initially entrusted to TEC must be preserved. One could arguably respond those forbears never would have believed TEC of today. In short, it is not the church of its forbears. Those who leave also believe they are embracing the hope of their forbears. One could argue that those same forbears would not have placed their parishes under the supervision of foreign, often disengaged, authorities. Could both be wrong? Of course. Could both be cor-

(Continued on next page)

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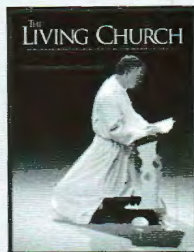
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LETTING GO OF LEGALISM

(Continued from previous page)

rect? Perhaps. Could there be a solution that is not legalistic? There must be.

The P.B.'s office has suggested that TEC has a kind of ultimate "authority" over dioceses (and *ipso facto* its parishes and clergy). The recent paper [TLC, May 17] signed by more than a dozen bishops (including two former candidates for Presiding Bishop, as well as one of the P.B.'s advisors) indicated "No."

Dioceses are autonomous bodies under the guidance, authority and pastoral care of their individual bishops. This paper, well grounded in the founding principles of TEC, sends a word of grace to those grasping at legalistic solutions to issues that demand not the drop of the gavel in a courtroom, but our "noblest impulses" that should allow us to find a solution to this blessed church now split apart. The recent confusion and debacle in Jamaica surrounding the attempt to properly "legislate" the proposed Anglican Covenant is yet another example of legislation gone awry [TLC, May 31].

General Convention looms. Liberals (who at this point clearly hold the majority of control) are already proclaiming a "victory" for issues around GLBT issues and calling for a stall on all things covenant. Conservatives are gearing up to respond with equal veracity. What if (thinking out of the proverbial box here) we did a little of Solzhenitsyn's self-restraint? What if we listened to the larger Anglican voice and honored the moratoria around revisionist proposals concerning human sexuality as well as foreign incursions that disrupt our internal unity? What if we hit the pause button with a firm finger and do nothing more to finish the tear in our fabric that has just about destroyed our Anglican family?

This "pause" could be for three years, until the next General Convention. In that interim, the Anglican Consultative Council, numbers of conservative, liberal, and moderate bishops and rectors in TEC, could develop a level-headed solution that respects the autonomy not only of individual bishops and their dioceses,

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

but also of clergy and their parishes.

Surely we love our Lord and this "room" in his larger house enough that we could lay down our arms for three years and forge a path forward. Perhaps bishops, dioceses, and congregations will operate in ways that have never before been seen. Perhaps parishes that wish to leave with "their property" could go without legal threat, and instead get a hearty "God-speed to you and your work."

Perhaps those that wish to return may be able to do so without any ramifications other than a gracious "Welcome back." Maybe we have "covenant" and/or Windsor/Lambeth 1.10 compliant parishes or dioceses, and those which are not — each bearing some costs that accompany their decision. Maybe we could find a way to move past issues and put our focus where it should be all along — the work of knowing Christ and making Christ known. What this may mean is the "death" of TEC as we know it, but if we are willing to welcome grace back into our midst, then perhaps a resurrection rests just beyond the corner.

The future of the effectiveness of TEC, and perhaps even its very existence, should be determined not by how the church accommodates to the conservative and liberal "fundamentalists" in its midst, but how it reclaims an authentic understanding of grace, by becoming what it has sometimes claimed to be, the roomiest place in God's house. Surely the foundation of that roominess is not legalism, but autonomy.

To fail to find a way forward will likely mean increasing the division in our beleaguered church, diminishing it to an impotent force in a world that desperately needs the hope Christianity brings. To let go of the strangling forces of legalism will reveal qualities in today's world — charity, mutual respect, authentic unity, and selfless compassion and understanding, thereby revealing the reality of God's love. □

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

Put, or Not to Stay Put

Many General Conventions have marked watershed events in the life of our church.

In 1970, women were seated as deputies. In 1976, they could be ordained to the priesthood. Three years later brought a new prayer book, and the 1982 convention upgraded our hymnal. In 2003, convention approved the consecration of a gay bishop. And since 2006, we have been praying for "Katharine our Presiding Bishop."

How will we remember '09? Could it mark the end of The Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion?

In my half-century as a priest, I have attended 11 General Conventions as deputy, alternate deputy, staff and press. My first convention was in St. Louis in 1964. The big excitement had to do with MRI — not the medical procedure, but Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the body of Christ. For many of us, it opened an awareness of being partners in a vital and significant international world church. You don't hear those words much anymore in church-speak. Autonomy is more in vogue today.

Rejecting the covenant would certainly have taken us off the Anglican map. Fortunately, that has been sent back for more work.

There is one more issue that may affect our membership in the Anglican Communion. That is the movement to repeal resolution B033 from the 2006 convention, which urged a moratorium on gay bishops and blessing same-gender relationships. If that goes, so does what's left of our "bonds of affection" with a majority of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion.

In the Church of England's General Synod, there is no such thing as tabling a motion. Instead the proper motion is "to not put."

To "not put" may be our only way to "stay put," at least for three more years and pray that the Holy Spirit will help us as the British would say, "sort things out."

*(The Rev.) Bob Libby
Key Biscayne, Fla.*

Why Respond?

It would be interesting to see the results of a poll of people who have read the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel without having considered Daniel Muth's [TLC, March 29] or anyone else's interpretation of Bathsheba's probable motives. Would the consensus support Mr. Muth's view or that expressed in letters by Fr. Safford [TLC, April 19] and Ms. Morris [TLC May 17]?

That conjecture aside, Mr. Muth's bias is made glaringly obvious in his reply [TLC, May 17] to Fr. Safford's letter, which he seizes upon as a pretext for a rant against "feminism," an "ideology" to which he has "dedicated as little thought as could be reasonably managed," and, therefore, about which he can hardly pretend to be well informed!

Mr. Muth's insistence that he "could

as he claims it to be, why would he respond with such acrimony, or, for that matter, even bother to respond at all? Fr. Safford's letter certainly raised Mr. Muth's hackles! I don't see that as indication of his indifference.

*Anita Stover
Allen, Texas*



Recovery Sunday

In the editor's helpful summary of interesting legislation proposed for General Convention [TLC, April 26], he mentions Resolution A078, which would make "Recovery Sunday" mandatory in every diocese.

I have experienced a well-crafted liturgy, which incorporated the Twelve Steps, at the expense of the Old Testament and New Testament lessons and the creed. I commend Church of the Reconciliation, San Antonio, on a service which was important and historically significant for this hospitable parish.

However, while I think it helpful for such a liturgy to be held up as an example for those who may choose to develop a Recovery Sunday, I believe it would be a mistake to force every diocese to hold such a service annually on a specific date.

*Nigel A. Renton
Berkeley, Calif.*

scarcely be considered to care less" about feminism strikes me as disingenuous. Since he perceives Fr. Safford's letter to be about feminism, if his "lack of interest" in that subject were as total



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Those interested should send a letter of application, full curriculum vitae, and at least three letters of reference to: **Teresa Smith, Human Resources Coordinator, University of the South, 735 University Ave., Sewanee, TN 37383-1000**. Submission via e-mail is preferred: tersmith@sewanee.edu. The University of the South is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Minorities and women are encouraged to apply.

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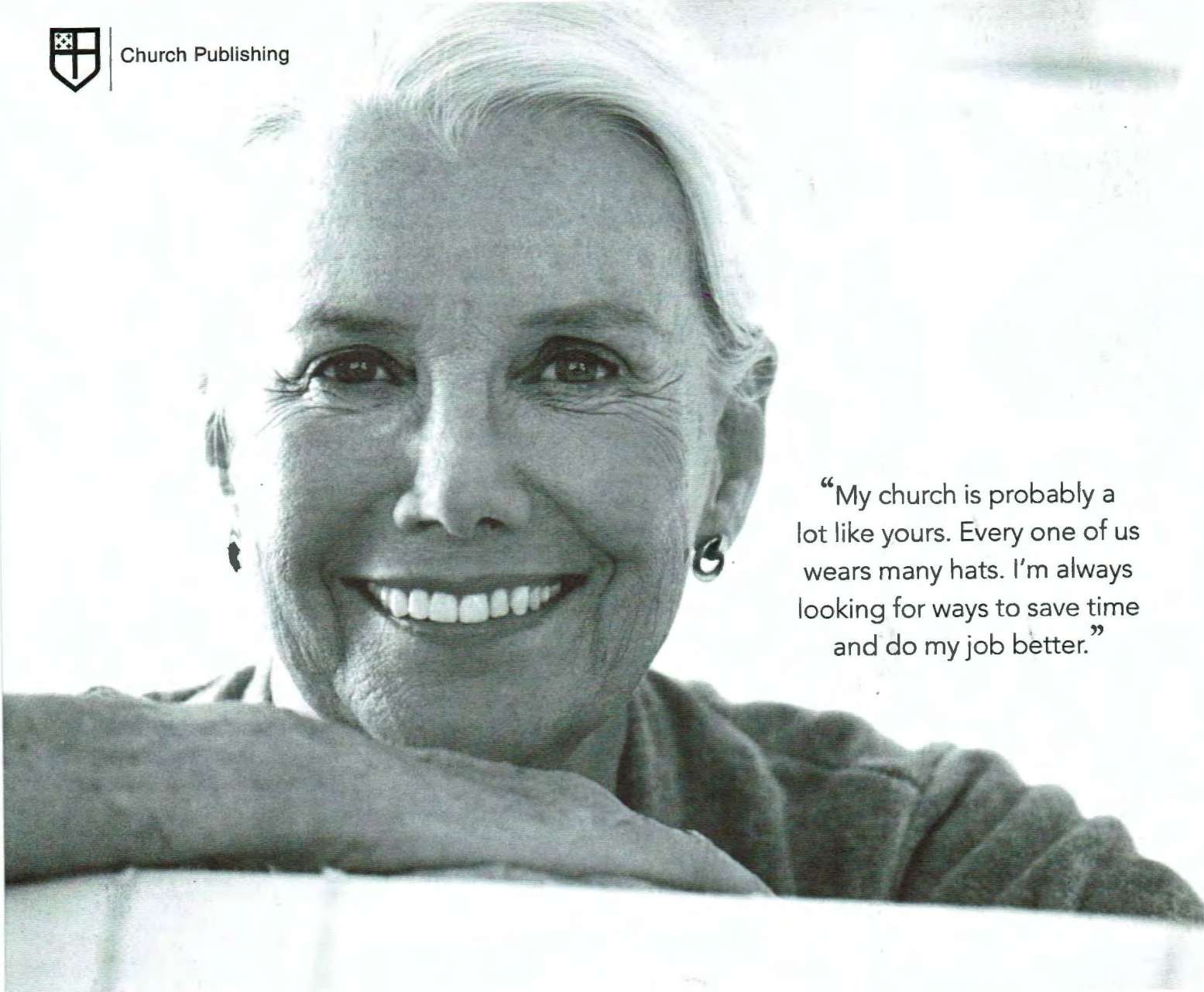
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light face type denotes AM, bold face PM; add, address; anno, announced; A-C, Ante-Communion; appt., appointment; B, Benediction; C, Confessions; Cho., Choral; Ch S, Church School; CP, Contemplative/Centering Prayer; c, curate; d, deacon, d.r.e., director 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.



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