

January 24, 2010

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THE LIVING CHURCH magazine is published by the Living Church Foundation, Inc. The historic mission of the Living Church Foundation is to promote and support Catholic Anglicanism within the Episcopal Church.

Bishops Focus on Changing Economy, Church

Convention addresses challenge delegates to grow in time of decline

In addresses to their diocesan conventions, a number of the Episcopal Church's diocesan bishops have focused on the need to come to terms with both a distressed U.S. economy and continued decline in church membership and attendance. Several acknowledged that their dioceses may face, or already have faced, the painful budgetary decisions that the House of Deputies and House of Bishops encountered at last summer's General Convention.

Following is a sampling of comments culled from the addresses bishops delivered at conventions last fall.

Bishop Wayne Smith, Missouri

The work of mission becomes all the more crucial for a church like the Episcopal Church, which continues its numerical decline. Over the last decade, our church has lost 16 percent in Sunday worshippers. In the one year from 2007-08, average Sunday attendance declined 3.1 percent among domestic dioceses. These are not happy numbers. In that same one-year period, the Diocese of Missouri showed a 0.4 percent increase in Sunday worship, which continues the same pattern of radical stability this diocese has seen for the past decade.

I think it is important to say numbers like these out loud, and to do so without blame or scorn. Finding fault is not my purpose; telling the truth is. There are underlying reasons for the decline and they may be other than the supposed reasons — for example, less to do with a gay bishop and more to do with the increasingly rapid secularization of



Bishop Smith

American culture. More to do with the small number of babies Episcopalian parents tend to have. But I find that telling the truth about our church's decline takes away anxiety. For a church in decline, mission is not an option. It becomes all the more important to know that the heartbeat of the Episcopal Church is mission, mission, mission, to use the Presiding Bishop's metaphor. The temptation, the danger of decline, lies in its seducing us to turn inward even more. Such internal tending seems intuitive; but it is in the counter-intuitive movement in mission where we find life. It is where Christians have always found life.

Bishop Mark Sisk, New York

This past year has been especially intense. Coming in the midst of it all was our General Convention this past July. I don't plan to spend more than a minute or two discussing it, but it is important to note it in passing because these triennial meetings are central to our institutional life as a church. In the end, in my opinion at least, the most important things done by convention — the adoption of a much reduced budget, a churchwide health plan, and a new disciplinary canon — got very little attention, while intentionally ambiguous actions relating to the ordination of bishops in same-sex committed relationships and the blessing of same-sex unions dominated media coverage.

Speaking directly to the institutional life of this diocese, a good bit of this past year has been dominated by the need to shape a conscientious response to the economic implosion



Bishop Sisk

that has been so all-consuming. The guiding principle has been to be realistic without being panicked yet to fulfill the primary mission of the diocese, which is to be of service to, and to assist, the parishes and people of this diocese in their life in Christ and growth in their mission.

Bishop Geralyn Wolf, Rhode Island

We know that the familiar church is passing away. I do not mean that the Church — the Body of Christ — is dying, but that our human structure of the earthly church is troubled and we are being called to discover a re-formed character. And, while there are many visions of this "new" church, and many books and speakers have sparked our imagination, we have yet to grasp adequately an expression of the faith that is both rooted in our historic beliefs and traditions and coherent for these changing times and the culture of New England.

I believe that we are living in the throes of a corporate Holy Saturday. Jesus' body has been removed from the Cross, and the promised rebuilding of the temple has yet to occur. Every mainline denomination, including the Roman Catholic Church and Jewish communities, has lost a significant number of members, and 15 percent of the population claims no religious identity at all. We are not alone in this season of anxiety. Christendom in the Western world is mourning for what was lost and not quite sure of what is to come; grieving as cathedrals become tourist attractions and pews are empty on Sunday morning. Holy Saturday is a time of anxious waiting;



Bishop Wolf

faithful to Jesus and his promises, uncertain as to how and when they will occur, but endlessly bound to his risen life.

Bishop J. Michael Garrison, Western New York

We exist as a diocese to support and encourage vitality. That means that all of us must share equally in creating it. My hope continues to be that the leadership of each of our parishes and missions will think and pray with their entire congregation about the vitality of the congregation's life and work.



Bishop Garrison

Other challenges include perennial ones for us as Episcopalians, the “e” word and the “s” word: evangelization and stewardship. These two areas are ones on which all of our congregations need to focus. I invite you as leaders of your congregations to continue the dialogue, continue the challenge of asking our people to invite and include others — family, friends, neighbors — into the life of this wonderful church. I invite you also to invest your time, your treasure, and your talent for the building up of our congregations and this diocese.

Bishop Catherine Waynick, Indianapolis

Religious observance in this country has begun to take on new shapes and forms. For over two decades many people have described themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” All the mainline Christian churches have felt the impact of this shift, and we will be well served to take seriously the reasons for it. We cannot stop it, and we cannot control it, but we can learn about it, and



Bishop Waynick

we can identify what we value most about our Anglican approach to Christianity, and offer it in fresh ways to those who seek companions as they define and live out their faith.

An ongoing challenge for us will be to increase the numbers of adults who regularly participate in education and formation as a part of living our baptismal covenant — to “continue in the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.” It is essential that we take time to consider what it means to be Christian in our pluralistic context, and to discover where the teachings of other faiths overlap and coincide with our own.

It is precisely in times like these that our faith is crucial — not only as a basis for our own hope, but as a sign of God’s love for the world. Just as Jesus himself is the sign of God’s Incarnate presence and love, so those of us who have joined ourselves to Christ must be, in each age, incarnational signs of God’s ongoing, sacrificial love for the world.

Bishop Alan Scarfe, Iowa

We need to plug away at learning how to work ministry together, and share resources through chapters or for our regions. Throughout Iowa there is one Episcopal/Anglican presence and witness to Jesus Christ, and we are all it. We continue “In mission with Christ through each and all.”

I want to emphasize that I bring you these words because I want to share what my eyes have seen and my ears have heard and how my heart has been stirred as I make my visits among you. . . . My visits are the heart of my episcopacy, and it is what I see among you that makes me so eager to have you work more together. I wish you could all see the great



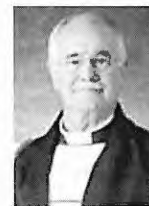
Bishop Scarfe

thing that is in each other as communities of faith. Above all, I wish you could appreciate the glory of Christ which you emanate.

Bishop Joe Burnett, Nebraska

In the past year or so our nation has experienced the most challenging economic downturn since the Great Depression. It has affected the church at national, diocesan, and local levels. The most immediate example of national cutbacks can be seen right here in Nebraska, where at least for the time being the regional office of the Church Center that had just begun a little over a year ago is closing.

And yet — though the newspapers and internet blogs didn’t really take note of it — what emerged from the painful budget decisions at our General Convention was an astonishing refocusing on God’s mission. This came in many forms: licensing and resources for training lay evangelists; a concrete plan to nurture members in the faith of the church; strategic initiatives to reach out to increasing Latino populations in our society; commitment to world mission priorities; and a host of other ministries that reflect the promise of our baptismal covenant to “strive for justice and peace among all people.”



Bishop Burnett

Bishop Wendell Gibbs, Michigan

I believe that the Church is a living organism, instituted by God and infused with the lifegiving Spirit of God. If the Church is to remain vibrant, relevant and responsive to God’s call, then she must always be prepared to change.

To be faithful to this God-centered life, we must constantly moderate our perceptions so that they do not

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Bishop Gibbs

become inflated to the level of gospel truth. We must continue to remind ourselves to focus on God's mission rather than our own agenda of self-promotion,

self-assurance or self-sufficiency. When we falter — not if we falter but *when* we falter — then we are to repent of our selfish behavior and seek a renewed (or changed) relationship with God. Only then are we available to be servants and instruments of revitalization — new life!

Bishop Stephen Lane, Maine

The mission strategy for the Diocese of Maine has been "The Episcopal Church for everyone in every place." I like that statement. It says we will maintain an Episcopal presence in every place we can, all around the state. But it doesn't say what we will do in all those places. It doesn't say what our mission is. And it doesn't say how we will do it. It doesn't say what our strategy will be or how we will pay for it. Those are the issues we need to address.



Bishop Lane

What I challenge you to begin at this convention is a process that will help us adapt to our changing times and be a church adapted to the life and culture of the 21st century. I'm not suggesting that we should change our core beliefs or change the message Jesus gave us. Rather I'm inviting you to begin a process that answers the questions of what we will do and how we will do it. How will we be church in this world? How will we connect with the people of the 21st century?

Archbishop Praises MDGs

The Archbishop of Canterbury used his New Year message to commend the Millennium Development Goals as a continuing focus for relieving the suffering of people across the world.

"The truth is that there are fewer and fewer problems in our world that are just local. Suffering and risk spread across boundaries, even that biggest of all boundaries between the rich and the poor," Archbishop Rowan Williams said in the video, which depicts him taking a brief stroll along the banks of the Thames River.

More than 200 heads of state adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration in September 2000. Those leaders, setting a deadline of 2015, set eight ambitious goals for themselves and their successors: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary

education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; develop a global partnership for development.

"We've seen some signs of change; we can make more, by supporting efforts to help children out of poverty across the world — and locally as well — by campaigns to protect our environment, by keeping up pressure on our governments," Archbishop Williams said. "In a world where risk and suffering are everybody's problem, the needs of our neighbors are the needs of the whole human family. Let's respond just as we do when our immediate family is in need or trouble. We may be amazed by the difference we can make."

Retrospective Includes Palm Sunday Image

A photograph by an Episcopalian in New Orleans is among the hundreds of images in "Documenting the Decade," an online feature by *The New York Times*.

Cam Davis, a 16-year member of the Episcopal Church of the Annunciation, photographed a Palm Sunday procession led by the Rev. Jerry Kramer.

His photograph captured a crucial moment in the life of the parish, which was devastated by flooding after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. In the photo, Fr. Kramer leads a small procession, including a girl riding a donkey, past a trailer parked near the church. A homemade banner on the trailer announces, "We Need Electricity."

The city took several months to restore electricity service to many churches and residences. Annunciation bought two large trailers — one for worship, one for office space —

and relied on gas-powered generators to generate electricity.

Fr. Kramer, who led the parish through recovery, rebuilding and vigorous outreach in the Broadmoor neighborhood, is now preparing for missionary service in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Mr. Davis, a former senior warden of Annunciation, took the photo as part of his work on the parish's website.

"I didn't do a lot of photography after Katrina because a lot of other people were doing it," he said.

When Mr. Davis saw that the procession was approaching the trailer and its banner, he stood in the median (what New Orleanians call the "neutral ground") of Claiborne Avenue to capture the image.

"It was fortuitous," he said. "I would say that of the photography I did for the parish after Katrina, that was the most memorable image. It represents hope."

Royally in Denial

The Need for Transformation to Move the Church Forward

By Neal Michell

Theologian Walter Brueggemann tells the story of Toots Shor, the famous New York saloonkeeper who died of cancer, who said just days before he died, "I don't want to know what I have." That's the impression I sometimes have of our church: We don't want to hear that we are in danger of terminal decline.

In *The Prophetic Imagination*, Brueggemann writes of a "royal consciousness" as he describes the conflict between the prophets and the government of Israel that had solidified royal power in Solomon. He uses Jeremiah as an example of a faithful prophet and talks extensively about the Solomonic regime, naming it the dominant or royal consciousness.

The prophets were continually calling Israel back to faithfulness. Their job was to remind the people of their death and the end of an age. They grieved the end of the age, the death of their people, and that what was so transparent to them was not so clear to anyone else.

Brueggemann describes the royal consciousness as "numbness," "denial," and "self-deception." The task of the prophet is "to cut through the numbness, to penetrate the self-deception, so that the God of endings is confessed as Lord."

The Need for Urgency

Contrast the royal consciousness with John Kotter's counsel regarding how to transform an organization. Kotter is a professor in the Harvard Business School and widely regarded as the world's foremost authority on leadership and change. In a seminal article he wrote for *Harvard Business Review*, "Leading Change: Why

Transformation Efforts Fail," Kotter presents an eight-step process for leading successful change in an organization. The first and necessary step, without which any attempt to transform the organization will fail, is to establish a sense of urgency. A high level of complacency and a low sense of urgency, Kotter asserts, constitute the two most significant impediments to change.

Kotter gives several sources of complacency. Some of them are the absence of a major and visible crisis; too many visible resources; low overall performance standards; a lack of sufficient performance feedback from external sources; and a kill-the-messenger, low-candor, low-confrontation culture.

So, where is our sense of urgency in the Episcopal Church? Consider this: in 2007-08 our average Sunday attendance declined by 60,000 people. Ponder that reality: 60,000 people who were worshiping in Episcopal churches in 2006 were no longer there two years later. That represents losing the combined dioceses of Atlanta, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Upper South Carolina.

Or, to place those losses in the Western part of the United States, those losses represent the combined attendance of the dioceses of Alaska, Arizona, California, Eastern Oregon, El Camino Real, Hawaii, Idaho, Navajoland Area Mission, Nevada, Olympia, Oregon, and Spokane.

Gone. Buildings might remain, but no real churches. Imagine all those people, the equivalent of eleven whole dioceses, walking out of church one day and not returning. That is what has happened in the Episcopal

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Church in the space of two years.

Several of our dioceses face questions concerning their future viability as independent, self-sustaining dioceses. Of course, we know that the dioceses of Ft Worth, Pittsburgh, Quincy and San Joaquin need financial support as a result of departures from the Episcopal Church of the majority of their churches and leadership. In addition, the dioceses of Eau Claire and Fond du Lac have discussed merging; the Diocese of North Dakota is lending its bishop to the Diocese of Louisiana as an assisting bishop for one week per month to help pay his salary; and the Bishop of Western Kansas has resigned and returned to parish ministry partly because of the financial strain that a full-time bishop's salary places on that diocese. These dioceses represent a warning to us that more consolidations and mergers are on the way.

Killing the Messenger

During the previous triennium the State of the Church Committee told the truth about the condition of our church. It did an excellent job of reporting the difficulties of an aging, financially challenged denomination. It acknowledged further losses due to conflict in our churches, particularly over sexuality issues that have exacerbated the decline in attendance and membership. The committee made recommendations for addressing these challenges.

Were their recommendations heeded? No. Our General Convention had no real strategy in its decisions. The cuts in the triennial budget were hailed as "fair" and "across the board." But they weren't strategic. Seemingly strategic staff positions of three years ago and even one year ago were eliminated with little dissent. The convention passed all evangelism-related resolutions while at the same time eliminating the church's evangelism officer.

So many of our dioceses are in financial difficulties. Some of the financial shortfall in diocesan income is due to the recent recession. But remember, giving to the Episcopal Church by the dioceses is based upon previous years' income. The most recent financial shortfall for the Episcopal Church is attributable, not to the recent recession, but to decreased income to our collective dioceses in the past three years.

With ever-increasing decline in attendance and giv-

ing, and ever-increasing costs of doing business at the congregational level, assessments paid to the Episcopal Church by our dioceses will likely decrease even more within the next six years. In other words, this current financial shortfall was a long time in the making, and it will likewise be a long time in the remedying.

As a denomination, we need transformational change, not incremental change. Incremental change represents business as usual. Incremental change represents "just trying a little harder." If we continue doing

things as we have done, we will continue our decline, continue bleeding off the endowments of previous generations, continue to congratulate ourselves on the pockets of vitality while we become a church pastored primarily by retired and part-time clergy.

One recommendation of the previous State of the Church Committee was that some members be reappointed to provide for some continuity with the previous committee. Was that advice heeded? No. Not one member of the 2006-09 State of the Church Committee was reappointed for 2009-12.

Assessments paid to the Episcopal Church by our dioceses will likely decrease even more within the next six years.

Sources of Complacency

If we look at John Kotter's sources of complacency, we can see patterns of deeper complacency within the church.

Major and visible crisis. We do have a major and visible crisis. We have had several, in fact: the conflicts over human sexuality, the significant decline in membership and attendance since 1965 and now precipitous decline as a result of the consecration of the Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003.

Too many visible resources. Yes, we are a denomination rich in resources — people, buildings, finances, and spiritual life. Yet, year after year, we see both individual churches and dioceses spending the principle of their endowments as giving to local churches diminishes. We see that our churches and dioceses are in trouble, but we spend tomorrow's resources today sufficient to keep us in denial about the urgency of the situation.

Low overall performance standards and a lack of sufficient performance feedback from external sources. As a denomination we have remained satisfied with maintenance. Do we have any measurements for what we expect of our clergy? Of our bishops? Instead,

“This church needs more than a campaign to ‘hold the line.’”

we hear, “Oh, it’s the culture that is against us” and “All mainline denominations are doing poorly.”

A *kill-the-messenger, low-candor, low-confrontation culture*. Did I mention that none of the members of the State of the Church Committee were reappointed? Did I mention that none of the House of Deputies’ members of the budget committee were reappointed?

John Kotter says, “Without an organization-wide sense of urgency, it’s like trying to build a pyramid on a foundation of empty shoeboxes.” When is the urgency level high enough? Kotter suggests it is when 75 percent of your leadership is honestly convinced that business as usual is no longer an acceptable plan.

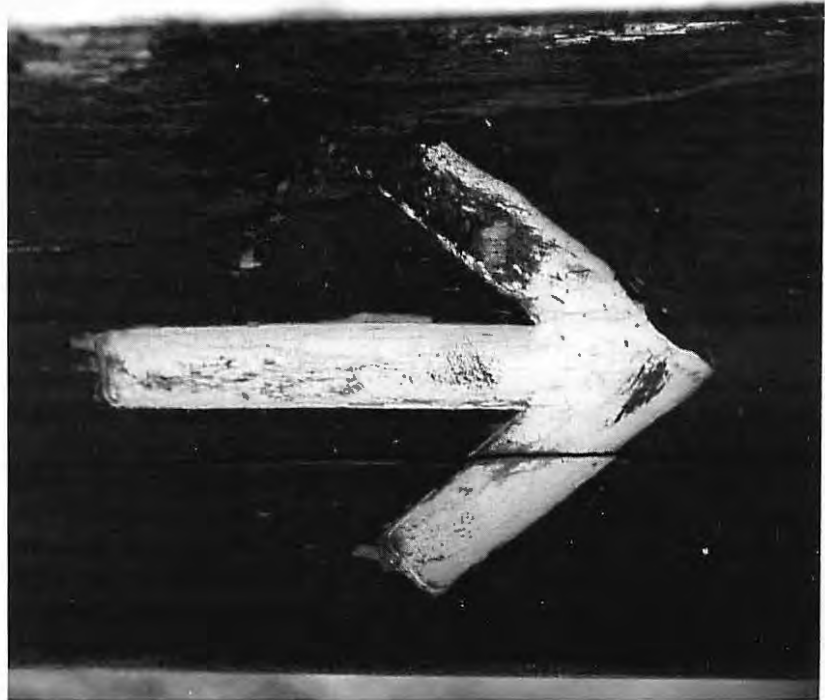
Max DePree, author of *Leadership is an Art*, says the first task of the leader is to define reality. Reality is that the Episcopal Church is in precipitous decline. Sadly, I do not believe that we are honest enough about the condition of our church to begin healthy transformation. We are too complacent about the decline in our denomination. We are too infected with the royal consciousness to get to a place of real need that will motivate us to move from our complacency and denial.

The Forward Movement Story

I pray that we may get to the place of despair that General Convention experienced in 1934 when it met in Atlantic City. From that despair emerged the Forward Movement. Weariness and resignation pervaded the air at that General Convention. The Great Depression had led to widespread distrust of church leadership. Revenues for the several previous years had fallen greatly short of projections. Programs were cut and the denomination was in debt due to heavy borrowing to pay bills.

Two wealthy laymen from Ohio, Harvey Firestone and Robert Taft, suggested a special campaign to retire the heavy debt of the church, using the theme “Hold the Line.” This campaign raised enough money to pay off most of the debt. But something else happened at that convention that did more than simply pay off the debt. One deputy said that, despite the difficulties facing the Episcopal Church and the country, the church should not retreat. Another deputy, from Tennessee, is reported to have said, “This church needs more than a campaign to ‘hold the line.’ We need to move forward.” From this unknown Tennessee deputy’s passionate plea sprung the Forward Movement.

Forward Movement held meetings and conferences to deepen the discipleship of Episcopalians across the country. It developed devotional materials for Lent in 1935 to “unite the church in Bible reading and prayer.”



It aimed to restore confidence in national leadership. Finally, it established the Forward Movement Commission to oversee and continue this commitment to discipleship.

We are being lulled into complacency by the royal consciousness. Who will loose us from this torpor that is immobilizing us? The problems facing our church are not financial or cultural. Our decline is not the result of not having the right programs in place, or that all the mainline denominations are in decline, or that the culture is against us. These are all symptoms of the underlying problems.

The problems facing our church are spiritual in nature. We have not been faithful enough disciples of Jesus Christ. We have not reached out to those around us with the Good News of Jesus Christ. We must not be content with attempting to hold the line. Simply trying harder will not be enough.

St. Paul said, referring to the gospel, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (KJV). Our sin is that we have treated our denomination as the treasure and the gospel as an earthen vessel. The royal consciousness will only drive us into a deeper stupor. We too need a forward movement.

The Rev. Dr. Neal Michell is canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of Dallas.

Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009): “God’s Cause is the Happiness of Human Beings”

By Daniel Speed Thompson

On Dec. 23, the Belgian Roman Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, died at the age of 95 in the Dutch city of Nijmegen, where he had lived and worked since 1958. His death was another sign of the slow passing of the generation of theologians and bishops who had reshaped the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Along with many others, Schillebeeckx’s earlier work helped lay the groundwork for the Council and his later work reflected the intellectual ferment and ecclesiastical tumult of the years that followed.

From his earliest writings in the 1940s to his final essays and lectures, Schillebeeckx’s theology maintains a common theme: to make available to the believer the concrete experience of salvation in Christ. In the earliest phase of his work (1940-66), shaped by a Thomism melded with the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Schillebeeckx attempted to translate the often dry and abstract language of the scholastic doctrine of grace into a vibrant language of personal “encounter” with Christ, particularly in the sacraments. Along with other luminaries like Rahner, Congar, Chenu, and Küng, Schillebeeckx brought this more pastoral

Editorial

Canterbury: Province and Providence

At THE LIVING CHURCH we have paid frequent attention to the Archbishop of Canterbury in recent months and expect to continue to do so. One wag predicts that sometime in 2010 we will publish a “five-part ‘investigative report’ ... describing the decisive strategy [by] which Archbishop Rowan Williams single-handedly rescued the Anglican Communion.”

The kernel of truth in this joke is that THE LIVING CHURCH respects the See of Canterbury. We also respect the Christian character and integrity — wisdom, courage, faithfulness, and patient perseverance — of Rowan Williams. We do not foresee any five-part series, however, for these reasons:

Basic Christian doctrine. We refer specifically to the Fall, which describes the reality of all human beings living in a state of sin and standing in need of redemption by God. A sober recognition of the Fall is the quickest antidote we know to any romantic notion that one person can single-handedly rescue (or destroy) the Anglican Communion.

Catholic ecclesiology. Because we believe that Christ himself established the Church, we are freed from checking the Church’s pulse each day to make sure it remains alive. Because we believe that the Anglican Communion is part of the one holy Catholic and apostolic Church, we can see Canterbury’s gradually developing authority as part of God’s economy for the Church.

Respect for Canterbury. Yes, we cite the same factor that prompted the joke. Proper respect for a church leader leads to a clear understanding of the office, uncluttered by the fickle emotions that drive toadyism or scapegoating. The inescapable reality of contemporary Anglicanism is that the Archbishop of Canterbury is the center and focus of the four instruments of communion.

One irony of contemporary Anglicanism is that the Archbishop of Canterbury is Rowan Williams, hailed by some as a conquering progressive hero upon his appointment but now reviled by impatient souls on the right and left alike.

Archbishop Williams will not be our savior, for we do not need one other than the Lord Jesus. The archbishop will moreover disappoint us, because we are all fallen creatures. We do believe, however, that God is sustaining — and will continue to sustain, renew, and otherwise salvage and rescue — Anglicanism in part through the instrumental labors of Archbishop Williams. In this respect, he is, quite simply, the man for the job at hand. God has placed him where he is; and under his watch many are laboring mightily to develop and defend the Catholic claim of Anglican ecclesiology.

Despite the doomsday fantasies of critics, the Anglican-Catholic claim will remain a realistic vision as long as Anglican Christians are willing to take up the cross of living in communion.

and historically minded thinking to Vatican II, where he served as an adviser to Cardinal Alfrink, the primate of the Netherlands.

In the wake of the Council and its new emphasis on critical dialogue with the world, Schillebeeckx moved away from the Thomistic style of his predecessors and instead argued that the understanding of faith and the expression of the concrete experience of salvation for the contemporary believer required a more historically and critically aware style of theology. Schillebeeckx then immersed himself in hermeneutics, critical theory, semiotics, critical biblical scholarship, and contemporary theologies from a wide range of thinkers, all in an attempt to grapple with the enormously complex problem of living a life of faith in a postmodern world.

With this shift in his theology, Schillebeeckx also shifted his language from “personal encounter” with Christ in the sacraments to a language of mysticism and politics, or contemplation and praxis, as the privileged avenues of concrete experience of God in Christ today. The fruition of this attempt to state the meaning of Christian salvation today came with the publication of his two massive works on Christology, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (Dutch 1974; English trans. 1979) and *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (Dutch 1979; English trans. 1980). These works, particularly the former, also drew the eye of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), whose correspondence with Schillebeeckx, beginning in 1976, raised questions about his methodology and Christological orthodoxy.

This process led to a “conversation” with representatives of the CDF in 1979, the results of which left Schillebeeckx uncondemned. Although Schillebeeckx criticized the procedures of the CDF (as he had done in an earlier investigation of his work on the Eucharist in 1968, and would do later when Cardinal Ratzinger questioned his work on ministry in 1984), he never rejected the need for magisterial authority, nor did he ever contemplate leaving the Dominican order or the Roman Catholic Church. Rather, following his own theological principles, he always saw himself arguing for a “Church with a human face,” a community of Jesus Christ which enacted again and again the offer of salvation from God which Jesus himself had offered and performed.

Even as he grew increasingly critical of the restorationist agenda of Popes John Paul II and

Benedict XVI (which he saw as betraying the promise of Vatican II), he nevertheless challenged the more radical elements in the post-Vatican II Church (particularly in the Netherlands) to stay connected to the wider Roman Catholic community and the centuries-long traditions of the Christian faith. For the Church with a human face, according to Schillebeeckx, required both a critical embrace of the contemporary world and the lives of the struggling men and women in it, and a critical embrace of the story and praxis of Jesus. This “critical correlation” of past tradition and present situation is at the heart of Schillebeeckx’s theological method: the way in which the contemporary believer can experience again the salvation and wholeness which the first disciples experienced in their encounter with Jesus.

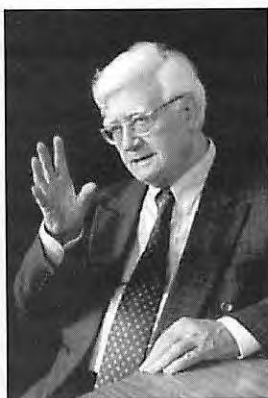
Robert Schreiter of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, the pre-eminent scholar of Schillebeeckx in the United States, once stated to me that Schillebeeckx’s theology had a “vision” but not a “system.” Over the course of his long career, Schillebeeckx himself grew more and more wary of the attempt to render the whole mystery of God and humanity,

particularly the mystery of suffering, into a single system of thought.

Schillebeeckx came rather to appreciate the fragmentary nature of theological language and the equally fragmentary nature of the human experience that it mirrored. Nevertheless, his thought does offer a vision: of a God who is pure positivity, who does not will or cause the suffering of creation; of Jesus who is God’s parable to us and our perfect response to God; of a Spirit who gives hope and courage to follow Jesus’ path; and, finally, of a humanity whose happiness and wholeness are God’s cause and honor. Unlike his colleagues Rahner, Lonergan or von Balthasar, Schillebeeckx’s theology has found no “school”; yet his legacy lies in the many theologians and believers, in many Christian communities, who have been inspired by his vision and who themselves seek to continue his task of rendering the experience of faith a concrete reality in our world today.

May he rest in God’s peace.

Dr. Daniel Speed Thompson is associate professor of theology and department chair and director of the Catholic Studies Program at St. Mary’s University, San Antonio, Texas.



Dr. Schillebeeckx

The Old Made New

"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21)

BCP: Neh. 8:2-10; Psalm 113; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Luke 4:14-21

RCL: Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19; 1 Cor. 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

"Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people ... and when he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen' ... And they read from the book ... and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." If all of this sounds quite familiar to the average Episcopalian, there is good reason. This Sunday's lesson from Nehemiah describes the institution of the synagogue liturgy, an act of worship in which God's Word is honored, proclaimed and interpreted. Elements have been added, changes have been made, but this assembly at the Water Gate stands at the head of a long tradition that we continue every Sunday in celebrating the Liturgy of the Word.

Ezra was not primarily interested in liturgical experimentation, though. He

was the spiritual leader of the returned exiles, who stand at a crucial point in Israel's ongoing relationship with God. They have seen his redemptive power. Now they must recommit themselves to the covenant and the Law of Moses, half forgotten and misunderstood during the captivity. The law must be treated with respect, as God's own voice. It must be explained; its old Hebrew locutions translated by the Levites and applied to the situations they now face.

The scene is remarkably similar in our gospel lesson: the company is assembled, the speaker stands before them, the book is opened, perhaps even the same prayers are said. But there is one crucial difference: the Word himself is doing the talking. The words are ancient, but now they take on a fresh meaning. Giovanni Papi explained it this way:

"Suddenly, the old text was transfigured, became transparent, belonged to their own time ... the words, withered by antiquity, dried up by repetition, took on life and color, a new sun gilded them one by one, syllable by syllable, fresh words coined at that moment, shining before their eyes."

The text is familiar, Isaiah's prophecy about the coming deliverer, the one who brings the great and final renewal of the covenant. He would open the eyes of the blind, set the captives free. Jesus says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled." The text is alive. The promise is right in front of you.

For all his wisdom and fidelity, Ezra can only point people back to the written word. Jesus speaks with a new kind of authority. God knows we need more than words. Jesus' life puts the message of salvation into action.

Look It Up

How is the scene from Nehemiah like 2 Kings 22-23?

Think About It

What do the two scenes suggest about the different ways in which Christians and Jews encounter God in Scripture?

Next Sunday **The Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany (Year C), January 31, 2010**

BCP: Jer. 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-17 or 71:1-6, 15-17; 1 Cor. 14:12b-20; Luke 4:21-32

RCL: Jer. 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; 1 Cor. 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

THE LIVING CHURCH

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letters to the editor

For Peace in Sudan

The article "Sudanese Bishop Calls for Independent State" [TLC, Dec. 20] by Phoebe Pettingell gives us a timely reminder that, due to incomplete implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, many Christian Sudanese continue to suffer armed violence, governmental obstruction, and the lack of food, medicine, and clean water resulting from 22 years of war's destruction, especially in Bishop Zawo's region of Equatoria and in the Upper Nile region.

Your readers should know, however, that the Provincial Standing Committee of the Episcopal Church of Sudan at its meeting in Rumbek on Nov. 27 did not call for southern independence. It carefully said:

In the case of unity, issues of national identity, power- and wealth-sharing need to be addressed. If separation, issues such as the position of southerners and churches in the north, the arrangements for resources such as oil and water, and the status of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, need to be addressed to ensure peaceful relations between the two new neighbours and to guarantee the basic rights of all people in both north and south Sudan.

There is no alternative to the CPA. It must be fully implemented by both signatories and must be fully supported by those guarantor governments who promised to do so in 2005.

Richard J. Jones
President, American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (AFRECS)

By General Convention

The Rev. Brian Crowe, in his "Catholic Voices" article [TLC, Dec. 27], demonstrates yet again the inability, or more likely the unwillingness, of non-TEC Anglicans to recognize the difference between the governance of TEC and the governance of Anglican provinces directed by archbishops, when he says, "It is, simply, about whether TEC's view of *ecclesia* is shaped by national independence or *koinonia*."

National independence and *koinonia* are beside the point. Rather, it is, very simply, General Convention and its 2009 meeting directed that ordinations in TEC would not be dependent on sexual orientation. Thus, to deny consecration as Suffragan Bishop of Los Angeles to the Rev. Canon Mary Douglas Glasspool, an eminently qualified candidate, because of her sexual orientation, would be in defiance of the expressed direction of

General Convention. It can't get much simpler than that.

(The Rev.) Kenneth S. Thom
Snow Hill, Md.

The sixth resolve of resolution D025 made no prescriptive "direction" regarding ordination in TEC. It offered an observation in the subjunctive. Ed.

Back to Basics

When I joined the national communication staff of the Episcopal Church in 1967 our baptized membership was 3.6 million in a nation of 200 million. Now, with 300 million citizens, we are hovering around 2 million. Our market share has gone from close to 2 percent to less than 1 percent. What happened?

In the press conference, following the 1967 General Convention, when we addressed the racial crisis by

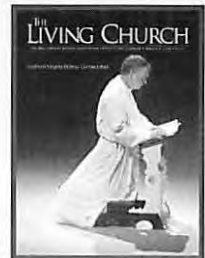
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letters to the editor

(Continued from previous page)

committing large funds to the General Convention Special Program, the Presiding Bishop was asked by THE LIVING CHURCH's editor, Carroll Simcox, "But what about evangelism?" To which Bishop Hines replied something to the effect that people would be attracted to the Episcopal Church when they realized that TEC was engaged in the vital issues of the day. He may have even quoted, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works..."

Unfortunately, this did not happen. As I reflect on the crisis, it suddenly strikes me that we have addressed

We have
addressed
every issue
with a political
solution.

every issue with a political solution. One example of this was at a General Convention when Edmond Browning was Presiding Bishop. He was asked in a television interview, "What about youth ministry?" To which Bishop Browning replied, "We're doing it right here by including young people in this convention." OK, but what about discipling our children first?

I say "we" because my wife and I, as deputies to General Convention from two separate dioceses, over a period of more 30 years, have been part of the decision-making process.

Could it be that we are being called back to the basics of our baptismal vows? First we are to commit ourselves to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and then work to bring about his kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

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

people & places

Ordinations

Priests

Lexington — **Cynthia S. Duffus**, priest-in-charge, Ascension, 48 W High St., Mt. Sterling, KY 40353.

East Tennessee — **Will Keith; Leyla King**, rector, Thankful Memorial, 1607 W 43rd St., Chattanooga, TN 37409.

Retirements

The Rev. **Robert J. Kerner**, as rector of St. Andrew's, Lawrenceville, VA. He continues as priest-in-charge of St. Mark's, Bracey, and St. Paul's, Union Level.

Br. **James Teets, BSG**, as grants and covenants officer at the Episcopal Church Center in New York.

Deaths

V. Nelle Bellamy, archivist for the Episcopal Church for more than 30 years, died Dec. 23 at the Colonial Hill Retirement Center, Johnson City, Tenn. She was 87.

A native of Knoxville, TN, Dr. Bellamy was a graduate of East Tennessee State University and Duke University. She served as the church's archivist, 1959-92, in Austin, Texas, where she also served as an adjunct professor at the Seminary of the Southwest. She is credited with developing an archival program for the church and traveled extensively to collect materials for the archive. Dr. Bellamy was preceded in death by her brother, James. She is survived by her sister, Betty Neeley of Johnson City; sister-in-law Anna Bellamy of Powell, Tenn.; a godson, Sam Palmer; and several cousins.

The Rev. **Peter Wallace**, deacon at St. Ambrose Church, Fort Lauderdale, FL, died Oct. 30 at age 76.

Born in Buffalo, NY, he attended Vanderbilt University and was a veteran of the Korean War. He was a contractor and built the main altar and organ loft at the church while serving as the volunteer sexton. He was a musician and a leader in the Cursillo movement. He is survived by his wife, Eilene, and two stepsons, Michael and Mark Tibbetts.

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4 (1S, Oct-May), MP M-F 6:40, Sat 9:40; Masses M-F 7,
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