



President's Report

by Elizabeth Morris Downie

I have to admit that I'm finding it hard to think or write coherently about the state of affairs in the church post-Windsor Report. Of course, the state of affairs in the nation and world does not contribute to any sense of coherence! The leitmotif of my prayer and my speaking has become, "God is still in charge," often followed by "Help my unbelief."

HOWEVER, our focus has to be on the first: God is, always has been, and always will be, in charge. Our vocation as Christians is to live faithfully in God in these perilous times, to remember that every effort counts, no matter how inconsequential it may seem.

Perhaps the greatest danger, both in the church and the nation, lies in allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed and no longer paying attention. Awareness followed by action is crucial!

End of rant. Now for some specifics: by the time you read this, the February 1 deadline for submitting names to the Nominating Committee for elections to the Executive Council, Examining Chaplains, Trustees of The General Seminary and Trustees of the Church Pension Fund will be past. I hope many of you have submitted either your own names or the names of others for possible nomination.

But don't stop now—start thinking about able progressives who could serve on the interim bodies, the commissions and committees that carry on the work of Convention under the oversight of Executive Council. Appointments of lay persons, priests and deacons are made by the President of the House of Deputies in consultation with the Presiding Bishop; bishops are appointed by the Presiding Bishop. The 2006 General Convention will see the election of new persons in both positions. It seems especially important that we lift up many good names for consideration.

Almost all dioceses have elected their deputies to General Convention 2006. Pay attention! Contact the deputies from your diocese and let them know

your opinions on the issues which will be coming before the Convention. Deputies receive a lot of mail from the "conservative" organizations of the church; we progressives haven't made our voices heard as well in the past, and doing so this time is critical.

And then there is the Windsor Report (WR), with all the discussion surrounding it. Here I speak only for myself; the EWC Board has not officially taken a position or issued a statement, though you can be sure we've talked about it. I don't think WR bodes at all well for women in the church.

There is a somewhat flawed account of the ordination of the women to the episcopate in paragraphs 12-21, quoting the resolution from Lambeth 1988 which calls for respect and the highest possible degree of communion between provinces that differ on whether women can be bishops.

Well and good. But then there is language such as, "What is done in one place can and does affect all" (§ 23), which is already being cited as reason to stop whatever it is that some persons or provinces don't happen to agree with.

The Anglican Communion is just that, a communion, not a world-wide church, and any attempts to impose a legalistic structure or uniformity across provincial lines is both contrary to our historical nature and dangerous to Anglican women and GLBT persons everywhere.

Jesus did pray for us all to be one, but one in him/God, not one held together by whoever claims power. It's quite obvious to most observers that the current controversy is about power and authority, not gender and sexual orientation. The Episcopal Women's Caucus must remain alert, aware, and active—and we as individuals must deepen our lives in Christ Jesus, so that we may effectively speak truth to power.

Peace,
Elizabeth

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From the Editor's Desk.....

Are we ready for 2005? Perhaps not—but here it is anyway, another ten months of it, waiting to be dealt with in all our various and creative ways. So it seems fitting that in this time after the Feast of the Epiphany, as we move through the gentle, sad days of Lent, we should celebrate the wise women—past and present—who have sought God and offered their gifts.

In this issue, we have Joan Holmes article, “The Girl Child,” a powerful indictment of global discrimination against women that redirects our attention to conditions that, unless corrected, will impact all of us. And we tell again the story of Li Tim Oi—celebrated in January in the United States and in February in Canada—so we may always be reminded of the great beauty that can come out of the dark places of a troubled era.

For the literary among us, Michael Tan Creti offers a thoughtful essay on the 21st century pilgrims who still seek the Holy Grail—sometimes in surprising places. And Mark Harris finds William Blake’s Tyger is still burning bright in the forest of the Anglican Communion’s night.

In this issue we celebrate gains—ECUSA’s first Latina bishop, Nedi Rivera, has been ordained. And mourn loss—a priest in Maine. Few ever heard of her, but after reading +Chilton Knudsen’s moving requiem homily, you will know the world is poorer, and far less interesting, without her.

And finally, The Almost-Last Word (the page we think of as Ruach’s rich, special-treat dessert) features a don’t-miss essay by Tom Ehrich.

A reminder: *Ruach* welcomes your submissions: essays, sermons, poems or thoughtful articles on current issues. In our next issue we’ll be looking especially for creative understandings of the theme “Resurrection and Empowerment.”

The easiest way to submit is to copy/paste into your regular email—**no attachments please!**—and make sure the word “Ruach” appears in the subject line.

Visit Our Website
at
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or
<http://www.ewc-ecusa.org>



The Girl Child: the future depends on her

by Joan Holmes
President of The Hunger Project

Ruach is pleased to bring to your attention this important
and powerful vision of a problem, a solution, and the promise
of a better future for all the world

The treatment of women and girls is the greatest violation of human rights in our world today.

Ninety-three million women and girls are “missing” from the world population because of sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, malnutrition, abuse and neglect of girl children. This is roughly equivalent to all the deaths in all the wars of the 20th century—the most violent century in human history. This is a holocaust many times over.

So why don’t we as citizens of the world hear of this tragedy?

What kind of world are we living in where 93 million lives can be extinguished just because they’re girls? Where’s our shame? Where’s our moral outrage?

Gender discrimination is the greatest moral challenge of our age. And, we will be judged by history on how we respond to this challenge.

Basic issues

The developing world faces problems that affect the entire global community: hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDS and population growth. The developing world also has the most severe discrimination against women and girls.

These facts are *not unrelated*. This severe discrimination against women and girls is a primary cause of the persistence of these problems.

Let’s look at the facts.

The vast majority of the world’s poor are women and girls.

Women and girls are 80 percent of the world’s refugees.

Two-thirds of the world’s illiterates are female.

And, of the millions of children kept out of school—two-thirds are girls.

India has the 12th largest economy in the world. Sixty million tons of grain in storage. And it has one of the highest rates of childhood malnutrition. When this inexplicable phenomenon was studied by UNICEF, it was found that “the exceptionally high rates of malnutrition in India are rooted deep in the soil of inequality between men and women.”

Africa has the highest rates of HIV/AIDS transmission in the world. This is a pandemic and there are two reasons for it: men have unsafe sex with multiple partners, and women lack the power to negotiate if or how sex takes place.

And, while it is well known that women and girls are the most affected by society’s problems, what is less well known is that the empowerment of girls and women has the greatest overall positive effect on the entire society.

Recent analysis by the World Bank and other institutions indicates that when
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*“...when
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The Girl Child: the future depends on her

women and girls are empowered, the overall health and well-being of a society is greatly improved. There is:

- Decreased population growth
- Faster economic growth
- Less corruption in governance
- Increased agricultural production
- More children going to school
- Reduced health hazards

And there is lower childhood malnutrition and lower child mortality

Today's girls are tomorrow's women. Girls cannot advance without the advancement of women. And no improvement in women's lives will be sustained unless girls have education, good health and the opportunity to achieve their potential.

The Life of a Girl Child

As a human family, we are doing a really terrible job of taking care of our girl children.

While there are many countries where little girls are cherished, loved, and cared for, the vast majority of girls live in countries where this is *not* so. It is the condition of girls in these countries that is so critical to our future.

This is not to deny or diminish the desperate lives led by many of the world's boys. Boys are conscripted as soldiers, trafficked in the sex trade and 40 million boys worldwide are without access to basic education. As appalling and unacceptable as these facts are, they in no way compare to the tragic conditions and mistreatment of our girls.

A little girl eats last and least and is up to three times more likely than boys to suffer malnutrition.

She is often not taken to the doctor when she is sick and she is less likely to be immunized.

Girls are often kept out of school and put to work. Whether at home, in factories, or in the field, little girls are at work. She starts work at a very young age, and works from dawn to dusk, proving the adage "A girl is never a child."

If she does go to school, she's still at risk. Rather than being a safe refuge and a source of empowerment, the school is often dangerous. A recent study showed that 32 percent of reported child rapes in South Africa were committed by school teachers.

This is the life of a girl in the developing world, if she is allowed to live at all. Each and every year, millions of sex-selective abortions are performed, virtually always on female fetuses.

If you go to one of the poorest states in India and take a car from the capital to the most remote village, you will not find health clinics, sanitation or clean water. What you *will* find is the latest technology to determine the sex of a fetus.

It is estimated that annually 1 million female fetuses are aborted in China and 5 million in India, even though laws have been passed to stop this despicable practice.

In addition to feticide, there is female infanticide—babies killed at birth—again, just because they are girls.

Infanticide occurs in 17 countries. In India alone, more than 10,000 girl babies are victims of infanticide each year. Many people feel that the actual number is much higher. This is nothing short of murder.

In China and India, there are growing disparities between the number of men and the number of women. In some areas, the disparity is as great as 710 women for every 1000 men.

If it doesn't kill her in infancy, violence is an ever present danger throughout her girlhood and throughout the rest of her life.

If she is a girl in Africa, the Middle East or other parts of the world, she may be subjected to Female Genital Mutilation. Two million girls, usually between the ages of four and eight, fall victim to this practice each and every year.

Early in a girl's life, she is often forced into sexual relations. Fifty percent of *all* sexual assaults are committed against girls age 15 or younger.

She is married without her consent and becomes pregnant long before her body is ready. The leading cause of death for girls age 15-19 is complications from pregnancy.

Annually, two million girls between the ages of five and 15 are forced into the commercial sex market.

By the time she is 15, a girl is most likely malnourished, unhealthy, and has little or no education. She has worked the majority of her life. And she's been mistreated, exploited and abused, probably by someone she knows.

And, with each new generation of girls who continue to be mistreated, those basic issues that face our human family continue to be perpetuated.

It doesn't need to be this way. And it can not continue to stay this way if we want a healthy, productive, just and peaceful world.

"If you go to one of the poorest states in India...to the most remote village, you will not find health clinics, sanitation or clean water. What you will find is the latest technology to determine the sex of a fetus."

Kofi Annan has said: “There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health—including helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.”

USAID has stated, “We know that girls’ education is perhaps the single most important investment a developing country can make.”

And from the World Food Program we hear “If we want to change the world—and we all do—there is one way to do that: educate girls.”

The constraints and the shackles that have been put on girls’ lives for centuries are beginning—just beginning—to be removed.

China launched a “Caring for Girls” program to combat sex-selective abortion.

Over the past 30 years, the number of teenage girls who marry young has declined both in South Asia and in Africa.

In Bangladesh, over the past 10 years, a scholarship program has resulted in doubling the number of girls in high school.

Nigeria now has a law requiring girls to remain in school to complete their education.

In Ghana, the Ministry of Education initiated a Math and Science clinic specifically for girls.

February 9, 2004 marked the first International Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation Day. And ten African countries have recently criminalized this practice.

Kenya has raised the penalty for child rape to a mandatory life sentence. Previously, this crime was rarely, if ever, punished.

And in 2004, for the very first time, Afghan women and girls competed in the Olympic Games.

We’re at a moment in history when finally a girl’s value to society can be recognized and supported, enabled and empowered.

The Hunger Project

The Hunger Project has made the empowerment of women its highest priority. Through our commitment to women and the success of our work, the lives of girls are being transformed. Here’s how:

In Africa, in The Hunger Project’s HIV/AIDS and Gender Inequality Workshop, adolescent girls and women learn to protect themselves from unsafe sex.

In our African Woman Food Farmer credit pro-

gram, in order for a woman to receive a loan, her daughters must be in school.

In India, the women trained in our Women’s Leadership Workshop now stand up to their families to protect their daughters from being forced into early marriage.

Five years ago in Bangladesh, The Hunger Project created National Girl Child Day. Each year, even in the most remote corners of the country, hundreds of thousands of girls march and speak out. They are lauded in the media. The girl child is celebrated for who she is and what she means for the future of Bangladesh.

And in Latin America, at the Fourth Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women in Peru, women from 20 countries declared their commitment to train girls as tomorrow’s leaders.

We are making this issue known worldwide. I speak at international conferences, I have testified before the US Congress, and I am a member of the Hunger Task Force of the United Nations Millennium Project.

What needs to be done?

And it is clear to me that it is time for a new kind of action. It is time to change the way we do business.

Even if every country in the developing world increases its education budget, there is no assurance that girls will be educated.

If every country increases its health budget, there is no assurance that little girls will be healthier.

Unless a government takes specific actions on behalf of women and girls, increased funding will only perpetuate and widen the gender gap. And the world’s basic problems will persist.

And so I recommend the following actions to governments:

I would mandate farm extension agents to actually show up and work with the women farmers to increase their incomes and reduce their drudgery, since it is the daughters who inevitably share and inherit their mother’s workload.

I would expand the mandate of the health workers and midwives to teach mothers to breastfeed their girl babies as long as their boy babies. And ensure that their daughters are as well fed as their sons.

I recommend that governments provide scholarships for girls through secondary school, and pro-

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“There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health.”

vide incentives to parents to keep their girls in schools.

I would expand the mandate of school teachers to create equal opportunities for girls to learn and to become leaders. And there would be zero tolerance for violence against girls in school.

It is essential for governments to provide farm extension agents, health workers and teachers with adequate supplies and sufficient training.

It is also essential for governments to increase—and increase significantly—the number of women in these professions.

The developed world can express its partnership by increasing the amount of aid, and making all development aid conditional on countries improving the lives of women and girls.

We know what the world looks like with half of its population devalued—with half of its population treated as inferior and insignificant.

We truly don't have a clue what the world would look like if girls and women could express themselves and be "everything they can be." At a minimum, we would live in a more peaceful and humane world: a world with greater social justice, economic progress, lower population growth and better health.

One thing is clear, and it is unequivocally clear—the world would be a lot better place than the one in which we are living today.

Joan Holmes is president of The Hunger Project and a member of the Hunger Task Force of the U.N. Millennium Project.

UN Considers Discrimination Against Women to be a Global Concern

by Susanne Link

More time, not a new deadline, is needed for universal ratification of the convention to eliminate discrimination against women, says Feride Acar, chairperson of the U.N. committee on the convention.

The initiative to have the treaty signed by all the World's nations could get a boost from the upcoming anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979, the convention entered into force in 1981, faster than any other previous U.N. human rights treaty.

The world conference on women in Beijing in 1995 set the year 2000 as the deadline for all U.N. member states to sign the treaty, but so far, only 177 of 191 states have endorsed the convention.

Among others, the United States has not yet ratified the document. The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved it in 2002 but the decision was never voted on by the full Senate.

"There will come a time when the U.S. will also ratify the convention because there are many hardworking women's groups pushing for ratification," said Acar, who predicts that getting every country to sign CEDAW is not an impossible mission.

"Especially since Beijing, states have ratified consistently. Every couple of months you have one or two more countries ratified," she said. Pressure from non-governmental women's groups is a crucial factor pushing governments to commit to the treaty.

The legally binding convention sets out principles on the rights of women and prohibits all forms of discrimination against them. It defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or restriction based on sex to impair or nullify the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. These guarantees apply regardless of a woman's marital status, and are based on the equality of men and women.

Despite the absence of some governments' signatures on the convention, important steps forward have been made, said Acar.

The Optional Protocol (OP), an amendment to the convention, entitles the committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights and allows women to submit complaints about alleged violations of the convention.

OPs are treaties in their own rights and are thus open to signature and ratification by countries that are also parties to the main treaty. The CEDAW-OP has been ratified by 62 of the 177 signatories.

Despite these achievements, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) give different grades to the CEDAW committee. Equality Now's Neuwirth calls it "a very productive framework for women's rights on the ground," but others want it to be more critical.

Doris Mpounu from the U.S.-based Women's Environment and Development Organization disagreed,

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Where is God?

a Ghanaian reflection

by Elizabeth Kaeton

In the is the Season of the Epiphany in which we, having been surprised by the manifestation of God in the form of a baby born in a manger, look for the other manifestations of God in unexpected and extraordinary ways.

I've just returned from a ten day visit to Ghana, West Africa, where I experienced many epiphanies—some which were startling and others deeply disturbing—that I am still trying to get my head wrapped around, take in, and understand. I want to share with you three images that are indelibly imprinted in the eyes of my soul.

The first is the notorious Slave Castle at Elmina in Cape Coast, Ghana. It was first built by the Portuguese, and then taken over by the Dutch and then the British and served as the detention center for all captured Africans before their trip to the slave markets in the West Indies, Brazil, Cuba and America.

All around, evidence of the human capacity for evil abounded, while in the very center of the courtyard sat the Portuguese Church. The Dutch were no better; they built their church on top of the slave quarters for women. Imagine! Worshiping God while just beneath your feet, or just a few steps from the church, human beings were tortured and kept in subhuman conditions only to be sold into a life of slavery.

The second is the image of two small children in a desperately poor village in Tamale, in the northernmost region of Ghana. About two or three years old, one was trying to help the other who had her plastic flip-flops on the wrong feet. There were only two Caucasian people in our group, and when we walked by

there was no mistaking the fear that crossed their little faces.

Now, I've never met a baby or a small child I could resist, so I left our group and went over to visit with them. As I moved closer to them, fear folded itself into panic and they wailed and screamed for anyone to come and rescue them. It wasn't until the women from the village began to apologize for the children's behavior that it finally registered—these babies were afraid of me because of the color of my skin. They had never seen a white person before and it scared them half to death.

The final image is that of being at the Cathedral at Cape Coast where I was invited by Bishop Daniel Allotay to concelebrate at the altar. In doing so, Bishop Allotay was in direct defiance of the decision of the Bishop of Accra and Archbishop of West Africa, Bishop Justice Akrofi, who had told me directly just three days before that he could not license me to practice my priesthood while in Ghana.

However, it seems that, in 1987, the Province of West Africa had passed a resolution allowing the ordination of women but no one has ever acted upon it. After a brief investigation to assure that I was, in fact, ordained, Bishop Allotay, incensed at the injustice, looked me in the eye and declared, "I am in communion with you."

And so it came to be that on Sunday, January 9th, the Sunday of the Epiphany, I participated in a small part of history and became the first American woman to officially concelebrate at the altar in Ghana.

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"The children of God who live in the Global Village have a responsibility... to help ourselves and each other to move beyond basic human fear and into the kind of love which respects the dignity of every human being."

A Ghanian Reflection

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It is the Year of our Lord, 2005, and yet the evidence of the potential for human evil continues to abound. We may no longer be selling human beings into slavery, but we have made little or no progress in the “War on Poverty” which enslaves and dehumanizes and robs one’s soul of hope. Neither have we won the “War on Drugs” which shackles so many human lives to the bondage of drug abuse.

We are five years into the Third Millennium, and we have not yet reached the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., that his “children and his children’s children” would not be “judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

To fear what we do not know is a basic human experience. I saw that in the eyes of those small children in that village in Tamale. The children of God who live in the Global Village have a responsibility, like the women in that village with their children, to help ourselves and each other to move beyond basic human fear and into the kind of love which respects

the dignity of every human being—black or white, young or old, gay or straight, male or female

Ever since the tsunami, people have been asking, “Where is God?” That is the central question of the Season of the Epiphany. The answer lies buried deep within the question. It can be found, as the Three Wise Men discovered, in the active search to seek and find God. It can be found by looking past the potential for evil and the fears, which are basic to the human condition, and risking the possibility of love and justice.

These are the days of miracles and wonders. Evidence of evil continues to manifest itself. So, too, does God’s presence among us. The epiphanies of our lives begin by asking, “Where is God?” All we need do is follow the question. No matter where it leads us. No matter how far it takes us. No matter what unbelievable things we see with the eyes of our soul.

The Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton is rector of St. Paul’s Church in Chatham NJ, Diocese of Newark; she also serves on the Board of the Episcopal Women’s Caucus.

Episcopal/Anglican Women Celebrate the U.N.’s 10-Year Review of the Beijing Platform

In February and March 2005, Episcopal and Anglican women from around the world will gather in New York City for a series of workshops, special events and lobbying efforts to support the 49th Session of the United Nations’ Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW).

“We are expecting women from Anglican provinces around the world and Episcopal women from the United States to attend this Session of the UNCSW,” says Margaret Rose, Director of the Office of Women’s Ministries of the Episcopal Church Center.

The UNCSW was formed in 1946 at the request of the United Nations’ Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) so that women’s rights and emerging issues affecting women could be tracked by the United Nations.

The 49th UNCSW meeting in New York City in 2005 is of great importance to women around the world as a milestone in the movement for promoting human rights for women. This session will mark the 10th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women which took place in Beijing in 1995. There will be a review of the Beijing Platform of Action

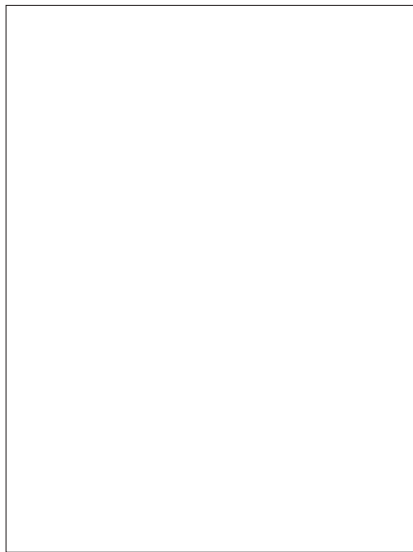
(BPA) and Beijing +5 Outcome Documents. These documents, along with the UNCSW itself, work towards promoting the implementation of equal rights for women and men. According to Carolyn Hannan, the Director of the U.N.’s Division for the Advancement of Women, “The political climate for gender equality has gotten worse. Women have better health care, but not reproductive rights. Women are more educated, but that has not turned into enough employment opportunities, and there is a huge income gap between men and women around the world.”

Delegates from the Anglican Communion fall under the auspices of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Anglican Observer’s Office to the United Nations led by Archdeacon Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuatagaloa-Matalavea. The Anglican women join with other women of faith through the Ecumenical Women 2000+ which include United Methodist women, Lutheran World Federation, Presbyterian UN office, National Council of Churches of Christ and the Young Women’s Christian Association.

For further information contact Kim Robey by email at krobey@episcopalchurch.org or call 212-922-5346.

“Fighting for right is the greatest sport in the world”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



The Long Journey of Li Tim Oi

by
Anne McConney

The story of
Li Tim Oi is not only the
story
of an historic
ordination but of a vocation
tested and retested in
adversity

Li Tim Oi. First woman ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion. Commemorated in the United States on January 24, the date of her priesting, and in Canada on February 26, the date of her death. Most of us are still learning about her, still, as it were, getting to know her.

And as we learn we are discovering that, while need and circumstance may have made her a priest, it was her own gentle determination and her faith in appalling circumstances that made her a role model for all of us.

Little is known of her early life. She was born in 1907, into a culture that so markedly favored sons that her father named her Tim Oi (Beloved One) so she might always be reminded of how welcome and cherished she was.

We know little of her girlhood, only that at the time of her baptism she was a student and old enough to choose her own baptismal name, old enough to have already formed a strong bond of admiration for Florence Nightingale. Her choice of Florence for her baptismal name was inadvertently prophetic: Nightingale had been ignored, misunderstood and frustrated by the church in the 19th century, just as Tim Oi would be in the 20th.

We know too that she attended the ordering of a British woman as a deaconess in Hong Kong Cathedral in 1931: Tim Oi would then have been 24 years of age. During the service the bishop expressed the hope that Chinese women might also consider being “set apart”—the terminology of those days—as deaconesses. Typically, Tim Oi said nothing, but went home and thought long and carefully, wondering if she too might be called to such service.

She consulted with her family. In later years she would remember, with the affection we have for something long in the past, how

her sister teased her: “So...you want to become a Bible Woman?”

Indeed she did. She attended a four-year theological school in Canton and in 1941 was made a deacon—it had taken her ten years from that moment in Hong Kong Cathedral to achieve her goal. Even as she was ordained, China was in the midst of a brutal invasion.

With Hong Kong and much of mainland China taken over by the Japanese, the Portuguese colony of Macau remained neutral and was quickly flooded with refugees. Brand new deacon Li Tim Oi was charged with their pastoral care, a duty that she apparently fulfilled with grace and compassion.

It was soon evident that Anglican priests could no longer travel from Hong Kong to Macau to provide the sacraments. Bishop Ronald Hall began making plans to ordain Tim Oi to the priesthood.

There is some evidence that Bishop Hall had begun thinking along these lines even before the refugee crisis became severe in Macau, and had discussed the issue with his friends Reinhold and Ursula Niebuhr; the three of them had met in 1942 and in the course of their conversation, had agreed that, if women were ever to be ordained in the episcopal traditions, someone would need to take the first step; someone would have to “simply do it.”

Shortly afterward, Bishop Hall wrote to his brother bishops in China, telling them of the deacon in Macau he planned to ordain in order that the refugees—a large and

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still growing number—might receive the sacraments. Even so, it was 1944 before Li Tim Oi and her bishop could meet—after a long and dangerous journey—in Guangdong province in unoccupied China. There, in the Anglican church in the town of Hsinxing, Li Tim Oi, through the laying on of hands by Bishop Hall, became a priest in the church of God.

There is little doubt that both Bishop Hall and Li Tim Oi were aware that they were breaking tradition—yet later Tim Oi would recall that they spoke only of the meaning of priesthood and of its lifelong, even eternal, commitment.

The fog of war can be very thick; most of the world neither knew nor cared to know what had happened in a small church in Hsinxing. After the war, however, what had been done became known and there was an explosion of anger and outrage. The Archbishop of Canterbury denounced the ordination. Bishop Hall was censured and there were calls for his resignation.

To his great credit, Bishop Hall never pressed Tim Oi to relinquish her Holy Orders, insisting throughout the rest of his life that in ordaining her he had only affirmed what the Holy Spirit had already done. It is thought, however, that it was in an effort to diffuse the attacks on Bishop Hall that Tim Oi agreed to give up her license to function as a priest—though she always insisted she had surrendered only her license, not the priesthood that was hers forever. She continued to serve the church in a small congregation in Hepu until the Communist takeover in China.

Under the Maoists, religious practices were forbidden, churches and temples were closed and clergy were imprisoned or sent away for what was called “re-education,” an experience so terrible that Tim Oi later confessed she had seriously considered suicide.

Later, however, she would remember not the darkness of those days but the light that shone through them. It seemed to her, she later wrote, that she heard the voice of God speaking in her mind, saying “Are you a wise woman? You are a priest,” and that afterward she never doubted that God was with her.

Later, when she was asked how she had managed to pray under such circumstances, she replied, “I went up the mountain. Nobody knew.”

For the next 35 years, as she worked in a factory and later on a farm commune, she was sustained by her belief in the God she met on her—perhaps real, perhaps metaphorical—mountain. At last, after a long wait, she was able to obtain a visa to visit her sister, who had emigrated to Toronto.

She was then 76 years old, and when her family suggested she remain in Canada, she agreed. In 1984, 40 years to the day after her ordination in Hsinxing, China, she was reinstated as a functioning priest in the Anglican Church.

By this time her story was becoming known, and Tim Oi found herself becoming a rather reluctant celebrity. She received honorary doctorates, her return to visit Hepu in China was filmed and released as a video, *Return to Hepu*, and her biography, *Much Beloved Daughter* by Ted Harrison, was published. Her reinstatement to the priesthood was celebrated not only in Toronto but in the rest of Canada and in England as well—despite the fact that England had not at that time moved to ordain women.

Amid this growing recognition, Tim Oi gently continued her ministry as associate at St. Matthew’s parish in Toronto. “I am only an earthen vessel,” she said, “but an earthen vessel with God’s light inside.” She died, as quietly as she had lived, in 1992.

Resources

AFTER LI TIM OI’S DEATH in 1992, an English translation of her memoir, *Raindrops of My Life* was published and a second video, *Beyond Hepu* was produced featuring the memories of those who had known her personally. She has been commemorated in stained glass, in paintings and in icons. Renison College at the University of Waterloo has established the Florence Li Tim Oi Memorial Resource Centre and Archives, which include many of her personal papers. In 1994, Archbishop Donald Coggan announced the formation of the Li Tim Oi Foundation, made possible by an initial grant from her sister Rita.

Since that time, the Foundation has helped well over 130 women in developing countries to realize their vocations.

For further information about these resources and about the Li Tim Oi Foundation, please contact <http://www.litim-oi.org>

Rewriting History

The Windsor Report and the Story of Li Tim Oi

by The Rt. Rev. Ann Tottenham
Bishop Suffragan of Credit Valley,
Diocese of Toronto

The Windsor Report on the nature of the relationships among the different national church provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion makes interesting reading. I commend it to your interest and attention and suggest that there are parts of the report, particularly in the sections A and B, which would lend themselves well to parish Lenten study groups.

Having said that, I also need to say that there are a number of controversial parts of the report that are likely to be the matter of much discussion in the months ahead. There is also one section that caught my attention and which is not likely to be the subject of much further discussion. It deals with an issue that is important to me and to many other clergy of our church and diocese.

Section A deals with background material and sets the scene for the principles and recommendations which follow. One of the topics, "Recent mutual discernment within the Communion" is presented to show that the Anglican Communion has dealt successfully in the past with controversial issues.

Its thesis is that existing Anglican Communion "Instruments of Unity"—the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting—provide the structure for dealing with major changes in the Anglican tradition. "The story of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate provides us with a recent example of mutual discernment and decision-making within the Anglican Communion" [WR A.12]. In

fact, this section is a breath-taking re-writing of Anglican history that few women would recognize as either helpful or appropriate.

The story begins with the ordination of Florence Li Tim Oi in Hong Kong in 1944. The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong during World War II meant that Anglican priests were prevented from crossing to the unoccupied colony of Macau to bring the sacraments to the people there.

Faced with this pastoral crisis Bishop Hall decided to ordain Tim Oi who was already serving as a deacon in Macau.

It should be noted that Bishop Hall was in no position to consult any of the "Instruments of Unity" before making this decision and, in fact, was later roundly condemned by them. After the war, despite censure and pressure from the 1948 Lambeth Conference and two successive Archbishops of Canterbury, Bishop Hall did not require Tim Oi to renounce her ordination. She surrendered her licence to practise as a priest and continued her faithful service to the church in China as far as she could through terrible years of suffering during the Cultural Revolution.

Finally, in 1971, the newly formed Anglican Consultative Council, which included lay people as well as priests and bishops, met in Kenya and voted by a narrow margin to allow the diocese of Hong Kong to ordain women. Tim Oi, now in her 70's, was able to resume her priestly ministry and we were honoured to

continued on next page

"This section (Windsor Report A.12) is a breathtaking re-writing of Anglican history that few women would recognize as either helpful or appropriate."

“The real lesson derived from the story of the ordination of women is that when unity and fellowship become the first priority of the church, the result is the endless postponement of decision-making”

have her spend her final years in Canada. In light of her lonely suffering and rejection by the Anglican Communion, the use of Tim Oi’s experience as an example of the effective working of the various “Instruments of Unity” shows, to say the least, disrespect for a courageous woman.

The real lesson which Anglicans can learn from the on-going struggle over the ordination of women is not the one cited in the Windsor Report (A.21) which

says that “decision-making in the Communion on serious and contentious issues has been, and can be, carried out without division, despite a measure of impairment”. The real lesson derived from the story of the ordination of women is that when unity and fellowship become the first priority for the Church the result is the endless postponement of decision-making and the inequitable treatment of those most closely involved with the issue.

Later in the Windsor Report (D.126) the statement is made that a common mind about the ordination of women bishops has been reached and that the “Instruments of Unity” have decided that the current degree of impairment is one “which the Communion could bear”.

The “impairment” referred to is that various national churches, including the Church of England, do not recognize either women bishops ordained elsewhere in the Communion or the priests of either gender that these women have ordained. This, to my mind, is not an acceptable level of impairment for a body which refers to itself as a “communion” whose unique source of unity is our common identity in Christ.

In fact, the ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopacy became possible only because individual provinces, like Canada, exercised their autonomy in the face of the various “Instruments of Unity” which exhorted them to delay, to exercise caution, to do nothing that might offend any other province in the communion.

As I reach the end of almost twenty-five years in active ordained ministry as both priest and bishop, I realize that without the actions of courageous individuals and autonomous provinces this ministry would not have been possible in my lifetime.

Whalespit

I have friends who say
Be careful
What will people think?
Take your time
Discernment takes time
Most particularly discernment to affirm
Not doing what you’d rather not do.
That takes a lot of time
Take your time
Maybe it will become unnecessary

In the spaces left
When no one is speaking
In the dark of dreams
In the light of days alone in prayer
I know I’m hanging out
In the guts of a whale
I know there’s a time limit
I know the whale is swimming
I know tomorrow
I’ll be hanging out on the beach
Cleaning off whalespit.

Catherine Phillips
January 24, 2005

*Are you interested in volunteering at
General Convention
June 13-21, 2006
in Columbus Ohio?*

*if so, email name, address and telephone number
to Jane Dupke Curry at
gc06volunteer@aol.com*

Seeking the Holy Grail: a meditation on myth

by Michael J. Tan Creti

The ancient myth of faith, trust and service still calls us,
though we follow many ways and search for many Grails

Last Tuesday, after spending the morning mucking around the English countryside in search of the Holy Grail with the Tuesday Morning Discussion Group (and various knights of the Round Table) I went to lunch in the new Durham Research Center for a lecture and a tour. The group of clergy I was with were being brought up to date on the amazing cellular research going on in this new, state-of-the-art laboratory.

Stem cell research, we were informed, had some of its beginnings at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, along with the Center's long-established cancer research. The switches that cause an embryonic stem cell to become a particular kind of cell in a body, we were told, are the same switches that are not working when cells become an undifferentiated mass. There is an application in process, for use by a researcher who has had promising results on the animal level in treating emphysema with embryonic stem cells.

The tour continued into the core labs where custom testing is done on machines too expensive for individual researchers. At this last stop, our little group stood in front of the \$250,000. cell sorter. This machine, which takes up a whole room, streams a line of individual cells past deflector plates, sorting them into various collections that can be used for specific research. It was a strange sensation standing in front of a stream of life—as if one might dissolve into such a stream. The collection in progress was to be used to try to understand why cells grow a certain way after receiving some kind of signal.

“What gives the signal to the cell?” one of our group asked the young woman in charge of the machine.

“That,” she said, “is what scientists consider the Holy Grail.”

Now I suppose if you had pressed her, she would have denied that she had meant anything mystical by her comment. Yet there was a flash of light in her eyes as she said it that might have caused you to mistake her for the Lady of the Lake, Nimue herself. And, if she was not all that serious about the myth, we might remember that myth has a life of its own; that young scientist might be more subject to the myth than she is prepared to accept.

Certainly the stream of cells, going on before us, forms the chalice of life. Life is not matter but life is held in matter as fine wine is held in a chalice. And how intricately crafted is this chalice of cells that holds life! Certainly it is the fitting place for a quest. Like the ancient quest, this quest seeks to unlock the abundant life constrained by disease and infertility.

And if this stream of cells is the chalice of life, it is also the Grail, the Holy Chalice, in which God has chosen to dwell, to be chalice. Coming into the world, God became incarnate of the cells in the womb of the Virgin Mary and, as the Creed says, “was made man.”

The scientific quest is not without its peril. Many obstacles are being put in the way of this quest by imagined fears. There are fears that those on this quest will unleash monsters. There are fears that it will raise questions about life that will cause religious doubt. And, no doubt of it, the quest itself has the potential to violate life in the apparent service of life.

In the ancient mythic quest, success required that the right question be asked. In the same way, the thing to be feared in this new quest is not what we will find, but that in finding it we will not ask the right question. The knights failed in the end because they did not ask, ‘Who serves the Grail?’ the famous question that must be understood in two ways. And the answer to those who asked the proper question was that “The Grail serves you and you serve the Grail.”

This is the secret of the Grail, this covenant of mutuality and service that can only be heard by those who ask and hear the answer: “The Grail serves you and you serve the Grail.”

If the scientists fail, they will fail not by what they discover but by failing to ask the right question in the face of what they find. As the chalice of life stands disclosed before them, must not they too ask the same age-old question: “Who serves this chalice?” Must they not hear the obvious answer: “The chalice of life serves you and you serve the chalice.”

What future can we not be ready for, what fears can stop us, when we are prepared to meet it within a holy bond of mutual service?

The Rev. Michael Tan Creti is rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Omaha Nebraska.

I have come to see over the years that the greatest obstacle to prayer is fear. We still seem to think that God is watching us. But this is the God who calls to us in utter love, "Come...come into greater life, come into fuller wholeness." It is hard for us to hear the good news.... God is happy with us, God is pleased with us, God is delighted with us. If we could really believe this, would we not do anything for God, not out of submission or fear but in love? If we could really believe that ours is a God who says "I call you not servants but friends"—how free we would be!

MARGARET FARLEY

Sin strikes me as...not the rather fiddling obsession with envy and anger and small untruths that we often make of it, but something much more terrible—a determined, obstinate choice of unreality and obsession which has become a whole life style.

MONICA FURLONG

All our travail and all our woe are naught but the failing of love on our part.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

One might lay it down as a postulate that all conceptions of God which are incompatible with a movement of pure charity are false. All other conceptions of God, in varying degree, are true.

SIMONE WEIL

If stock exchanges buy and sell around the world, surely that same technology can be used to shift food around as needed.

ANTONIA FRASER

If you ask me what is this pattern which I recognize as the true law of my nature, I can only suggest it is the pattern of the creative mind—an eternal Idea, manifested in material form by an unresting Energy, with an outpouring of Power that at once inspires, judges and communicates the work; all three being one and the same in the work. And this, I observe, is the pattern laid down by theologians as the pattern of the being of God.

If all this is true, then the mind of the maker and the Mind of the Maker are formed on the same pattern and all their works are made in their own image.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

Upon hearing a fellow worshiper praying that Allah might open wide the door of the spirit and allow him to enter, Rabi'a exclaimed, 'O foolish one—who said the door was shut?'

RABI'A

(8th century; sometimes called 'the Muslim St. Teresa')

All things are at odds when God sets a thinker loose on the planet.

EDITH HAMILTON

History, despite its wrenching pain
Cannot be un-lived, but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

MAYA ANGELOU

I would like to be a fool. I would like to say hello when I am leaving, good-bye when I am coming. In this manner, I would remember, from the beginning, the potential of loss, and so might learn to treasure before losing: as I bid farewell, I would remember the potential for return, all things circling as they do, into something like fullness, small moments of completion...

I would like to be a fool, to keep the unnameable word in my heart, to speak in silence, in silence to speak, to move in stillness, to be still in movement, to end at the beginning, to begin at the end.

I would like to be a fool. I would like to be a fool. I would like to be a fool.

BK LOREN

Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict.

DOROTHY THOMPSON

To understand the world beyond the narrow self...it is necessary to expose that self to the unmapped and uncontrolled, to be touched by it and transfigured.

JANE HIRSHFIELD

When we see God in each other, we will be able to live together in peace.

MOTHER TERESA

I return from one walk knowing where the killdeer nests in the field by the creek and the hour the laurel blooms. I return from the same walk a day later scarcely knowing my own name. Litanies hum in my ears, my tongue flaps in my mouth. Ailinson, alleluia! I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam. It is possible, in deep space, to sail on solar wind. Light...has force: you rig a giant sail and go. The secret to seeing is to sail on solar wind. Hone and spread your spirit till you yourself are a sail, whetted, translucent, broadside to the merest puff.

ANNIE DILLARD

Of all that God has shown me, I can speak just the smallest word, no more than a honeybee takes on her foot from an overflowing jar.

MECTHILDE OF MAGDEBURG

When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I wish to live because life has within it that which is good, that which is beautiful, and that which is love. Therefore, since I have known all these things, I have found them to be reason enough and—I wish to live. Moreover, because this is so, I wish others to live for generations and generations and generations and generations

LORRAINE HANSBERRY

A good soldier does not fear battle. And haven't I said I would die fighting?

THERESE OF LISIEUX

The words I first used, perfection, purity and the like, seem to me now mere lies in the presence of truth. Nor can I any longer say, 'my God, my all.' Everything is mine for all that is God's seems to be wholly mine. I am mute and lost in God.

CATHERINE OF GENOA

Eternity is not something that begins after you are dead....We are in it now.

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

Do not come to me when something terrible has happened saying 'It's God's will.' No! Death, disease, murder may be man's error but never God's will. In the face of suffering and tragedy, we have faith that somehow, ultimately, in God's time all wounds will be healed

MADELEINE L'ENGLE

I don't just get up in the morning and start making potteries. First I go and talk to Grandma clay...to make good potteries you have to do it the right way, the old way, and you have to have a special happy feeling inside.

HELEN CORDERO

Native American potter

To the crowd gathered around the tomb, Jesus says, "Unbind him. Let him go free"...the command of Jesus comes to us... Unbind them. Unbind all your brothers and sisters. Let them go free. This your brother is bound, this your sister is unfree. Come and unwind the wrappings which keep them from wholeness and freedom and new life.... Do be there when resurrection happens. God needs you to unbind the strips that keep another from walking and dancing free.

ANN ABERNATHY

Celebrating The Wisdom of Women



ECUSA's First Latina Bishop

Nedi Rivera is Ordained as Suffragan in Diocese of Olympia

The Rev. Bavi Edna "Nedi" Rivera was ordained and consecrated as the first bishop suffragan for the Diocese of Olympia during a service on Saturday, January 22, in Bellevue, Washington.

Rivera is the first Latin American woman bishop and only the 12th woman bishop to be ordained in the historic episcopate of the Episcopal Church.

Nedi, as she prefers to be called, was rector of St. Aidan Episcopal Church in San Francisco since 1994. She has served at several churches in the Dioceses of California and El Camino Real and as a member of various committees and boards since her ordination in 1976.

Rivera's father, Bishop Victor Manuel Rivera, who served as the Bishop of San Joaquin, California, from 1968 to 1988, was an opponent of women's ordination. For years, father and daughter agreed to disagree about the issue. However, Bishop Rivera will be participating at his daughter's ordination service.

In electing Rivera, the diocese sought out a bishop who would

lead the church in its efforts to expand ethnic ministries, evangelism and the work of faith formation. The service highlighted these areas of ministry.

Invitations were printed in Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Khmer and Arabic, the languages of the ethnic congregations of the diocese. A children's choir and a festival choir were drawn from congregations throughout the diocese.

Music was chosen from resources old and new, including two local composers. In each element of the consecration, Rivera and the service planners were intentionally inclusive of all ages and ethnicities. "How often can the church model what God's world is supposed to look like?" Rivera asked.

Born in 1946 to a Puerto Rican father and Anglo mother, Rivera is married and has training and experience in ministering to the terminally ill, gay and lesbian ministry, multicultural ministry and the lay caring/calling ministry.

Rivera becomes the 16th woman bishop in the history of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

New EWC Chapter is Launched in Connecticut

On a lovely recent Saturday, twenty folks gathered to hear Rt. Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon, retired Bishop Suffragan of Washington talk about the history and relevancy of the Episcopal Women's Caucus. Small groups met over lunch to discuss how the mission and work of the Episcopal Women's Caucus relates to us in Connecticut.

Areas of interest and concern identified by group members were:

- increasing the use of inclusive language in worship services
- supporting each other's passions
- supporting women in finding and getting comfortable making their voices heard
- advocating for a broad vision of inclusiveness in our church and in our communities

- establishing an effective network for support
- promoting education and awareness about women's issues in the church
- creating ways to be informed and to promote understanding of important church issues

At the conclusion of our discussion there was a consensus to formally organize a Connecticut Chapter of the EWC. Rev. Ellen Adams (St. David's in Gale's Ferry), Rev. Barbara Cheney, Gwen Heuss-Severance, Joan Linley and Jill Strawn (the last 4 from St. Paul and St. James in New Haven) volunteered to be on the Steering Committee

The topic for the next meeting will be *How Things Get Done In Our Diocese*. This will include Information about committee and commission membership and statistics regarding women in leadership positions.

TYGER !

Anglicanism and William Blake

by Mark Harris

There have been demands that the Episcopal Church give an accounting of itself before the bar of that strange yet beautifully elusive entity called the Anglican Communion. These come primarily in the form of a request for a rational theological justification of General Convention's consent to the election of Bishop Robinson of New Hampshire and for that same convention's passage of legislation affirming unbroken community with those dioceses and clergy who have gone before the rest and blessed same-sex relationships.

Contrary to some critics' suggestion that such theological work has not been done, a good bit of theological conversation has taken place and considerable debate has been engaged. Edifying essays, books and discussion resources have been produced. More are likely to come.

But there has been a widely felt and deep dissatisfaction with the results, for no amount of reasoning by those who voted for these measures or approved of them and by those who voted against or disapproved seems able to persuade across the divide.

This may simply mean that the disputed matters are not subject to resolution or, more implausibly, that the key propositions that would convince one side of the truth of the other have yet to be found.

But another possibility exists, namely that the arguments have taken place in an artificial context, in a court established by those dissenting from the majority opinion, and that the assenting majority have simply allowed themselves to be drawn into a conflict unrelated to the values out of which they formed their decisions.

As one who took part in the 2003 Convention and voted with the majority in the disputed legislation, I believe many of the deputies and bishops who voted in favor knew precisely that this was a momentous break with the past and that it challenged the theological thinking that heretofore had held. I believe many of us were

quite aware that these resolutions were not at all business as usual—the same dull round. Contrary to those who charge us with acting foolishly and with abandon, many of us saw our decisions as small movements towards a future to which we are being drawn, drawn by the light of Christ.

The assertion that the majority opinion of General Convention on any given piece of legislation reflects, even dimly, the mind of Christ, the light of Christ, is not to be taken lightly. Legislation seldom has that weight. Yet I believe the tenor and weight given the decision-making, and the careful discussions that preceded the voting, are indications that we knew full well that finding the mind of Christ was precisely the issue. If these decisions reflect an effort to know the mind of Christ, their proponents are accountable to that mind, and are not finally accountable to the workings of previously established theological understandings. They are not to be judged by the past, but by the future when all things are revealed.

It is the contention of this essay that these two decisions of General Convention are indeed attempts to reflect the mind of Christ and are to be judged as prophetic in intent rather than systematic reflections of a known science, in this case theology.

This essay takes its title from William Blake's poem, "The Tyger," which begins:

*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?**

We Anglicans are deep in the forest of the night, and the disputed actions of General Convention seem much like the Tyger burning bright, but sensed with terror by those of us sharing the comfort of the fire with the forest all around. *continued on next page*

* (p. 109, *The Portable Blake (TPB)* Viking Press, N.Y., 1946. All subsequent citations of Blake are from this edition.)

Tyger! Anglicanism and William Blake

And surely, we can ask of these actions, as we do of the subjects of the legislation, as did Blake of the Tyger:

*Did he smile his work to see,
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

Are these decisions regarding ordination and blessing in some final way the work of the same One who caused the Incarnation? And are the ones to be blessed?

William Blake: Poetic and Prophetic

William Blake is no one's idea of an easy poet. He is not theologically manageable. He informs on difficult levels and from a seemingly wild agenda. Yet his insights are at times profoundly Anglican, and I believe he is a prophet for our times as much as for his own.

In a highly condensed argument published in 1788 titled "There is No Natural Religion," Blake concludes the First Series (or Argument) by stating, "If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character, the Philosophic and Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again." He ends the Second Series by saying, "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only, sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" (*TPB* pp.77-78).

Much of the argument between those who dissented from the legislation and those who assented consists of charges by one that the other is doing bad theology, and by the other that the first is ignoring matters of justice. Both are stuck in what Blake calls the ratio: the limitations of modernity in which theology and practice are bound to the empirical world, to the world of the senses.

The "Philosophic and Experimental" are closely related to the typology of the discussion that is currently taking place in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

"The clear sense of scripture" is no less a matter of dogged empiricism than is the clear sense of right action. The reality is that there is nothing empirically clear about either scripture or right action, save for the dogmatic assertions of "orthodox" theology. The plea

that "we be reasonable," and that we provide a rationale for our actions is derived from this sense that something is only justified if it "fits" the ratios we have come to believe constitute sound philosophic and practical theology.

The reason, then, why the arguments for and against the justification of the actions of General Convention do not satisfy is because they are based on the false premise that the arguments for the new can be encompassed in the typology of the arguments of old. Put simply, why should we expect that new insights into the matters of Christian living be judged by the "same dull round"?

In another short essay, "All Religions are One," Blake warns us all: "As none by traveling over known lands can find out the unknown, So from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more: therefore an universal Poetic Genius exists" This Poetic Genius "is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy" (*TPB* pp.79-80). It is this Spirit of Prophecy that undergirds the argument for doing a new thing in the theology and practice of the church, and the appeal to that Spirit is our only real defense, if defense we must have.

The better argument before the world, and certainly before the member bodies of the Anglican Communion, is perhaps this: What we experienced and responded to in General Convention 2003 was the universal Poetic Genius working its way through our decisions, and the validity of our actions must be judged, not by their conforming with the various opinions of biblical theologians and social activists of the moment, but by the extent to which these actions concern the affirmation of a new insight in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Invoking the Spirit of Prophecy

When we look at the two controversial decisions made at the convention, they do not seem on the surface to concern matters of prophetic utterance. They are viewed as matters for rather more traditional discussions concerning the received faith and church order.

The marshalling of evidence for these actions being within the permissible boundaries of the received faith and order or outside those boundaries has occu-

"The reason the arguments for and against... do not satisfy is because they are based on the false premise that arguments for the new can be encompassed in the typology of the arguments of old."

pied the energies of these days, often to the delay of attention to other matters of significance and concern. Still, the constant demand of the detractors is for those who approved to justify themselves.

To the extent that we who voted for the actions of General Convention feel the need to justify ourselves by the reasoning of the church's constructs, to that extent we will fail to satisfy either our opponents or ourselves. There can be no return to reuse the old wine-skin. What we did will rip the hardened leather open.

Anglicans, both in the U.S. and worldwide, believe that the matters of consenting to the specific election of Bishop Robinson and the passage of legislation regarding the issue of same-sex blessing carry important consequences. They do, but not for the reasons supposed. The actions themselves were entirely normal for a General Convention. What was not normal was the thought that they signaled some new understanding. The real issue, then, is whether this understanding derives from the Spirit of Prophecy, for if it does its justification is not to be found in a better argument before the bar, but rather in the bold proclamation that God is with us.

I believe that when we who voted for these resolutions come before the Anglican Communion for scrutiny, we ought not attempt to justify ourselves on the basis of received theology, biblical or otherwise. Rather we should gather our strength and support from the One source who calls us to do a new thing.

Blake says, "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy" (TPB pp.79-80). We find ourselves in the Episcopal Church in the United States living out the Spirit of Prophecy in ways different from that found in some other parts of the Communion (other 'nations'). If our decisions are claimed to be about issues of universal right or wrong, we might well be damned, but they are not. Our decisions should be thought of as the result of the reception of the prophetic spirit, whose fullness is known in the End, and not now.

One can see the danger, of course. By focusing

our justification forward into the hands of the Spirit of Prophecy received, we might be accused of stating that the theology or moral law of the past has no merit.

Such an accusation did not leave Jesus untouched. The New Testament witness recalls that he was accused of discarding the Law and the Prophets. The New Testament is not clear about how the church actually dealt with that accusation, for Jesus, while among us is reported to have said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17).

But, referring to the Christ at the end of time, The Revelation of John reports, "He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (Revelations 21:5). By the time the Revelation is written, the church seems to have been more interested in God's future and its formation than the past and the regulations that sprang from the old dispensation.

What is at stake here is whether or not the General Convention in these actions was in reception of the Spirit of Prophecy. To deny that it might be so is to take away any hope we have that the church will move beyond "the same dull round" which condemns and does not give life. The answer to the demand that we present ourselves at the bar is to either go believing in our hearts that we have been receptive to the Spirit of Prophecy or to stand condemned for having made the decision without warrant, for without faith in the presence of the One who pulls us forward into the light there is no vision, and finally nothing new at all.

Revisiting the matter of an agenda for Anglicans and the matter of Poetic Sensibility: in 1998, I suggested that an agenda for Anglicans in the 21st century might include the following:

Anglicans ought to practice a mutuality that does no violence and that is not arrogant. We must practice incarnational awareness, seeing in others and in all creation the presence of God.

Anglicans ought to practice compassion that does not avert the eyes, but sees the suffering, and in that responds with the heart of Love. We must practice compassionate presence.

continued on next page

“...in the forest of our night, the Tyger burning bright
has come...the Episcopal Church has moved
beyond the dance of rationality and into the prophetic
and poetic moment.”

Tyger! burning bright

Anglicans might serve the faith well if they were to become a community of poetic sensibility.

By an agenda of “poetic sensibility,” I envision Anglicans as having a Christian vocation to understand the Word, biblical and otherwise, and compassionate action, from a poetic standpoint, in which we expressed their meaning in ways that open our imagination to the new world for which they are the signs. The poetic sensibility is vital to the project of carrying the Good News in Jesus Christ into a world beyond the edges of western enlightenment thinking, in which the same “dull round” of theological debate continues *ad nauseum*.

For us as Episcopalians and Anglicans, in the forest of *our* night the Tyger burning bright has come: action beyond the edges of rational biblical theology has been engaged. With small hesitating steps, the Episcopal Church has moved beyond the dance of rationality and into the prophetic and poetic moment. It is, I would suggest, our agenda, and perhaps our vocation.

continued from previous page

We may not indeed be in step with others in the Anglican Communion. But the vocation to poetic sensibility can be a source of strength even for those who disagree with the decisions we make.

If the Episcopal Church can manage to get out from under the feeling of being ashamed, or scared, or nervous about it, we can be the light we are called to be, knowing that to the question,

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?”

as regards the Episcopal Church, its collective action in General Convention, and its gay and lesbian members blessed in relationship and ordination—the answer is YES.

The Rev. Canon Mark Harris is author of The Challenge of Change: The Anglican Communion in the Post Modern Era. “Tyger!” was first published in The Witness Online, <http://www.thewitness.org>

UN Gives High Priority to Women’s Rights

continued from page 6

saying that the committee should ask member states more specific questions in some areas, for instance, on the relationship between women and development, an issue only indirectly covered in the convention.

Acar disagreed. “All we can do is put pressure on countries,” she said.

According to the chairperson, reservations by member states to articles of the treaty are the major problem facing the committee. For instance, most countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa that have signed the convention have registered such strong reservations—official disputes that leave them free of a contractual obligation to the United Nations—that the very purpose of the CEDAW, total elimination of discrimination against women, is nullified.

Virtually all of those nations say they will not implement provisions of the convention that conflict with Islamic law, or Shariah. Most of the reservations are related to provisions that deal with equality in laws of marriage, family, divorce, inheritance and choice of spouse, and also concerning relationships within the family.

Thirteen states and dependent territories, among them Bangladesh, Singapore and Morocco, have made reservations to CEDAW’s article 2, which deals with policies and measures to eliminate all discrimina-

tion against women and is often referred to the heart of the convention. In total, 53 member states have made reservations to one or more articles.

”But even if it is with reservations, it is better to have those states talking to the international community,” Acar said. “I have never seen a country saying to the committee ‘we do not answer questions dealing with a reservation we have made.’ They all do engage in discussion.”

Asked the most important achievements of the last 25 years, Acar said it would be that governments have committed to make women’s human rights an essential part of their agendas and now use the language of women’s human rights, such as “nondiscrimination.”

”Perhaps the greatest impact can be seen in the developing countries, where civil society was not all that developed 25 years ago, in countries that have not necessarily a democratic culture or civil society.”

The challenge now is to make the convention not only known to each and every woman, but also to ensure that women know how to use it.

Doris Mpounu agreed that because many women do not know the CEDAW exists, its effect has been limited. “Overall, the convention is extremely useful because it has such a great potential but this can only be used if it is going to be domesticated.”

Visit Our Website

<http://www.episcopalwomenscaucus.org> or <http://www.ewc-ecusa.org>



Newsbriefs

Aid Groups Reported to be Using Disaster Relief for Proslytization

Following the devastating tsunamis that left some 160,000 dead in southeast Asia, disaster relief teams, both secular and faith-based, poured into the area to offer desperately needed help. Now some of those groups are voicing concern that certain relief teams are actively using aid efforts to evangelize tsunami victims.

“We feel it’s imperative to provide agencies and individuals with signs of hope and comfort,” said Dan Southern, president of the American Tract Society, which has released a new tract—“When Disaster Strikes”—for donation to Victim Relief Ministries. “We’ve been responding to

hurting people throughout our 180-year history.... We hope that many will respond to Christ.” A spokesman for VRM, however, insisted that the teams will be sensitive to missionaries on the ground as to when and to whom the tracts will be given.

Others remained concerned. “In times like these, victims seek reassurance and comfort,” said Dr. Mihir Meghani, president of the Hindu American Foundation, an emergency physician and expert on disaster management. “I know from experience with disaster victims that the worst thing for them is to be pressed into giving up their greatest source of strength—their faith.”

Washington Bishop Turns Rock Star to Fund Mission Trip

The Rt. Rev. John B. Chane, Episcopal Bishop of Washington (DC) has found a way to turn rock music to the work of the Lord.

Chane, a former rock and blues drummer, has released a compact disc featuring the reunion concert he and five one-time band mates played at a Washington-area hotel. Proceeds from the sale of *The Chane Gang: a Bishop, His Band and the Blues* will enable diocesan youth to work

this summer among native people in the Arctic Wildlife Reserve.

Youth on the mission trip will work, in cooperation with the Diocese of Alaska, among the Gwich’in; over 7,000 Gwich’in live on the Reserve and almost all are Episcopalians. The disc, composed of 13 rock and blues classics, is available through the diocesan website www.edow.org or at the National Cathedral gift shop.

Diocese of Polynesia Elects First Bishop for Aotearoa New Zealand

The Anglican Diocese of Polynesia has elected its first Bishop for Aotearoa New Zealand. The Venerable Dr. Winston Halapua is based in Auckland where he has served as Principal of the Diocese of Polynesia Theological College and Archdeacon since 1996.

Halapua has a Tongan background and is a Fijian citizen but sees himself as a “multicultural person.” He has studied Christian mission and ministry in Tonga, Fiji, England, Israel and Aotearoa New Zealand.

As bishop for the Polynesian Anglican community, Halapua will assume pastoral oversight for all the peoples of

Polynesia in Aotearoa. Halapua expressed excitement about his appointment. “My passion is the zeal for mission,” he says. “There is a huge opportunity here to build a unique mission for Pacific people—grounded in this country.”

A scholar in sociology, Halapua highlighted the importance of culture and context in the task of Christian mission. “We have to make the mission of God more effective here,” he said. Halapua will continue as Principal of the College of the Diocese of Polynesia, and as a lecturer at the School of Theology, University of Auckland.

News from
Around the
Communion
and Around
the World

Archbishop and Cardinal Celebrate Christian Unity Week at Westminster Cathedral

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Rowan Williams, attended solemn vespers on January 14 at the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral and preached at the service at the invitation of the Cardinal Archbishop, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, to mark Christian Unity Week. It was his first official visit to the cathedral.

Before the service, Archbishop Rowan opened and toured an exhibition being held in the cathedral on Anglicanism. "Anglicanism and the Western Tradition"

was previously on show at the Vatican but has been exhibited since at several cathedrals across the UK. Charting the history of Anglicanism, it highlights important ecumenical initiatives, such as ARCIC (Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission) and the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission.

The Archbishop and Cardinal also prayed in the Chapel of Holy Souls for the victims of the Asian tsunami.

Former Journalist Named Director of Anglican and Global Relations

Margart Larom, a former journalist whose experience in international affairs spans 25 years, has been named as the new director of Anglican and Global Relations for the Episcopal Church. The announcement was made recently by the Rev. Dr. James B. Lemler, Director of Mission for the church.

Larom has served as World Mission Interpretation and Network Officer for ECUSA since 1995. She began missionary service in the Church in Uganda in 1980 and since that time has worked to ensure the partnership of the Episcopal Church with other provinces of the Anglican Communion.

Diocese of Niagara in Canada Votes to Affirm Same-Sex Blessings

In November 2004, the Diocese of Niagara became the second Canadian diocese to approve blessing ceremonies for gay couples. Bishop Ralph Spence, however, declined to endorse the action, saying that the diocese needed to discuss the matter further.

According to canon law of the Anglican Church of Canada, the bishop must give consent to motions passed by synod.

The motion asked that the bishop "grant clergy permission to exercise their discretion" in blessing gay couples who have already been married in a civil ceremony. It would also require that each congregation petition the bishop in order to be designated as a "blessing community."

In refusing to endorse the motion, Bishop Spence declared himself "inwardly torn" but that he must function as bishop "for all the people." He added that the motion will almost certainly be made again at the next synod.

Shortly after the vote of the diocesan synod, the Canadian Supreme Court declared that the federal government has the exclusive authority to define marriage and further stated that a proposed law to allow same-sex marriages is constitutional.

The court also ruled, however, that Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects religious groups from being forced to perform same-sex marriages if doing so would violate their religious beliefs.

Women's Rights Prize Awarded to ERD-Supported Program

In December Sakena Yacoobi, educator and founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning was honored at the United Nations with the Women's Rights Prize of the Peter Gruber Foundation.

Yacoobi's organization, which works with displaced women and girls in Pakistan, was supported by Episcopal Relief and Development, empowering refu-

gee women and children to improve their lives through education and health services.

Working with ERD, the Institute expanded its services to over 300,000 Afghans through teacher training, academic classes and mobile health clinics and by providing skills training to allow women to earn their own incomes and protect their human rights.

Aeveternitas

The Rev. Janet Elizabeth McAuley 1925-2005

A Requiem Homily
by the Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen,
Bishop of Maine

ANGLOCATH DEAC W VARIETY
SKILLS & EXPERIENCE SEEKS PAR-
ISH PASTORAL POSIT OR OTHER
MINISTRY OBJ LOVE AFFAIR W GOD
EACH OTHER & ALL CREATION.

So reads the Personal Ministry Statement—a small box on the Clergy Deployment Office Personal Profile, limited number of words allowed—for Janet Elizabeth McAuley in 1983. I quote exactly. It says it all

The sequence is important here: first, Love Affair W God. Janet's love affair with God was all-consuming, ecstatic, intimate and real

Like all genuine love affairs, it had stormy moments, feisty pushings and pullings, seasons of disillusionment, and the fullest, most absolute fidelity of which we flawed humans are capable, responding to the total fidelity of God.

Janet taught us that passionate God-lovers are not sweetly pious people driven by the need to keep everyone happy, to compulsively smooth every ruffled feather... God-lovers are not always nice, but they are *real*. And Janet was one of the real-est people I have ever met.

Janet rarely spoke directly of her primal bond with God, although most of us—if we were paying attention—were exquisitely blessed by rare but profound occasions of transparency when Janet told us—in her typical plain speech—of the Most High in whom her life found its center.

But though she spoke of it rarely, this love affair was evident in everything about her life. And we were the direct beneficiaries of that love affair—it gushed forth and spilled over onto all of us. In her trib-

ute to Janet, The Rev. Anne McConney writes:

Yet if one could say only one thing about Janet, It would be that she was a lover, a blunt, practical, downright and sometimes peppery lover, whose love ran in deep channels, not for display.

She knew in the core of her being that Love is no more and no less than the commitment brought to it, and her commitment was as solid as it was unfailing.

She loved her church, loved the spirit that informs it, loved its global reach, loved its national polity. And for her this all centered and found its reality in St. Martin's, the church she helped build into a force for good in its community.

A force for good in the community. And how. In 2001, a Lilly Endowment-funded study identified 25 Episcopal churches among the 300 outstanding congregations in the United States. One of them was St. Martin's. When I called Janet to tell her of this wonderful tribute to her and to all St Martins' folks, her response was unforgettable and utterly characteristic:

"Well, what the hell is this all about? I didn't know anything like this was going on!"

Then, equally characteristically, she deflected the credit: "the people of this congregation work hard and are very committed to ministry here...they are the ones who earned it. I can hardly wait to tell them."

She loved us all...so passionately, so feistily, so tenaciously. She loved the precious people of St Martin's. Her love was about just plain sticking together through ev-

continued on next page

Born of the
sun, they
travelled a
short while
toward
the sun,
and left the
vivid air
signed with
their
honor.

Stephen Spender

ery kind of challenge: frozen pipes, broken toilets, tragic fires, dreadful human losses, frightening financial struggles—broken well-pumps and broken lives—of unemployment, of failure and triumph.

Her complete love drove her to be God's advocate—drove her to be your advocate, so that we would never ever ignore or forget those of us “up here in the willy-wags.” Janet was pastor, advocate, agitator—for the entire community and for all the small rural churches with which Maine is so very, very blessed... Janet, you put the willy-wags on the map!

This spilling-over love affair which Janet had with God was the fountain from which her tenacious love of each of us flowed and overflowed.

We need more of this love in the church: this love which dares to take a position, which gets “into it”, which wrestles with feisty candor, which hangs in until reconciliation, and justice and new life emerge, however long and bumpy that road may be.

For God is Love, and love is about truth. Janet not only knew this in her head, she lived it in her life.

I read from greetings sent to us all on this occasion by the faculty of Bangor Theological Seminary:

The Rev. Dr. Janet McAuley has been a feisty friend of Bangor Theological Seminary. Since her move to Maine she has supported and assisted us in a variety of ways. Her mentoring of students has been invaluable. Whenever she came to meetings—formal or informal ones on the Bangor campus—her blunt, insightful and faithful witness enriched our lives. We expected that she would “speak the truth in love” and we were never disappointed on either count.

The amazing thing about love affairs: they take us where we would never have chosen to go. And there, we find our true peace. For a multiply-degreed scholar like Janet (who at one point in her career knew more about the contractile filaments in a muscle cell than any other person), who loved the formality of high Anglo-Catholic liturgy...for this love affair to take her to rural Maine is the strongest evidence of the immense power of love which, as Jesus said, and St. John's Gospel spoke it: “Follow me.” Janet followed, and found her true peace, here in the heartland of rural Maine.

In love affairs, we are always longing to communicate with our beloved. About everything, big or little, simply to be in touch.

A sunset, a special moment with a beloved person or animal, an insight, a lament, a word of comfort, a question which begs an answer, a summons to shared work on the Divine Lover's behalf.

Janet was a prodigious communicator. One of our diocesan staff remembers fondly the weekly Mon-

day-morning phone call. All of us have received emails and notes and phone calls, because Janet knew that love drives us to communicate. As God communicates with us in so many ways—consummately and ultimately in the Word made Flesh, Jesus our Brother and our Saviour—Janet was always in touch...in the dailiness of life, as Christ is.

Her communications might be pithy [I quote here from actual communications I have seen]:

“I think that *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* should be required reading for all Americans.”

Or newsy: “V is visiting her grandchildren, X is home from the hospital, Y is awaiting the results of his tests, Z is finally back in church after her snit.”

Or philosophical: “I think, given some time, A might make a fine priest, as soon as he gets through this patch of difficulty...whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger.”

Or cranky: “B needs to remember that we are NOT Portland up here. We aren't going to function like Ivy-league people from Cape Elizabeth.”

Or supportive: “You are doing a great job in a tough situation...and people really appreciate your presence...your efforts...”

She was always in touch. She watched over us, paid attention to us, came around to see us, spoke the truth to us. Just like God does. I loved to make pastoral calls with Janet, riding with her in that VW Golf filled with dog and cat hair, and old paperwork and bags of whatever she was getting ready to take to wherever. On the way she always told me each person's story. On the way back, she told me the rest of their story, as the recent visit may have elucidated it. In touch. She was always in touch.

Out of that love affair by which Janet and God and we and all creation (including the animals!) are really *one*, Janet stood by us, watched with us, shared joy and sorrow with us, fussed at us, cheered for us, ...and broke the Bread of Life with us.

Most every email we received from Janet—and I received many, and I know many of you have too—ended with these exquisite words:

More Later. Love, Janet+.

OK, Janet, you feisty lover, you...you have left us for the arms of your first love...

But we are counting on you for “more later”...as each day passes.

Stay in touch, will you? And keep loving us, please? From wherever you are right now, we hold tight to your promise, in our grief:

MORE LATER. LOVE, JANET+.



Intense Work Shelves Legislation Slated for Easy Passage

by Nancy Jenkins

Virginia's SB1305 seemed unopposed—until many faith communities rallied in a classic use of 'advocate, educate, demonstrate' to turn it around

Virginia churches of many denominations found themselves in a mad lobbying dash at the beginning of February, trying to forestall a bill that sought to change the state code related to property disputes in connectional churches, including the Episcopal Church, in the event of a division.

Senator William Mims (R-Loudoun) patroned Senate Bill 1305 on the last day that bills could be introduced into the Virginia General Assembly. The measure would have altered the Virginia code in such a way that departing members of congregations might be enabled to take possession of church property in the event of division within their diocese, judicatory, or other governing institution.

But the leaders of Virginia's faith community were not consulted or given opportunity to comment during the drafting of the bill.

"When held up to the First Amendment test, this bill fails miserably," said the Rev. Doug Smith, director of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP). "The First Amendment is intended to ensure that the state doesn't become so entangled by one faith that it begins to command how that church or faith should work. Conversely, it ensures that no church or faith takes over the state and sends us back over 400 years to where our ancestors were trying to escape religious oppression."

Presbyterian, Methodist, and Lutheran judicatories were key players in the fight against this bill. "It had nothing to do

with the schism in the Episcopal Church," said Patrick Getlein, secretary of the diocese. "It had everything to do with the First Amendment of the Constitution and in that situation what affects one of us affects all of us."

The VICPP, of which the Diocese of Virginia is a member, led the weeklong fight to defeat the bill. The Center acts as a professional lobbying firm for the concerns of the faith communities in Virginia. VICPP discovered the bill and notified the diocese the day before Diocese of Virginia's annual council. A resolution submitted from the floor opposing the bill was adopted by the council.

While Bishop Peter James Lee was in the hospital recovering from triple bypass surgery, Bishop Suffragan David Jones and Assistant Bishop Francis Gray joined the VICPP and their ecumenical partners in meeting with over a dozen senators to express opposition to the bill. The Rev. Caroline Parkinson, president of the Standing Committee, was by Bishop Jones' side for most of the week on Capitol Hill. Clergy and lay leaders from across the diocese made an important physical presence at the Capitol, letting lawmakers know that the issue was strongly opposed by churches. Hundreds of clergy and lay leaders were contacted to write their legislators. Diocesan legal counsel worked the case throughout the week in constant contact with the bishops.

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"[SB1305] had everything to do with the First Amendment to the Constitution, and in that situation what affects one of us affects all of us."

Though in recovery from surgery, Bishop Lee wrote all 40 senators, saying, “SB 1305 grants congregationally governed churches the privilege of state-approved preference, exactly the sort of favor banned by our Constitution.”

Although the bill was opposed by nearly a dozen denominational judicatories, secular media consistently headlined controversy over the place of gays and lesbians in the Episcopal Church as an underlying motivator for the bill, pointing to Senator Mims’ membership at Church of the Holy Spirit, Ashburn, a former mission of Truro Church that lists itself as a member of both the American Anglican Council and the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes (NACDP). Mims served as an alternate delegate from the parish to the diocesan council meeting.

“This was both a frustration and a blessing,” said Smith. “It was frustrating because we knew the wider effect would be destructive for more than just the Episcopal community and the media was not recognizing that fact. This was not an Episcopal bill. Not from the beginning.”

But the headlines relating the bill to the Episcopal Church also had a positive effect, said Smith. “The more people thought it was a punitive bill directed at Episcopalians, the more obvious it became that this kind of bill has no place in the legislature.”

Smith said that the reversal of legislators’ positions on this bill as a result of the grass roots lobbying effort was unprecedented. The bill came out of committee with unanimous approval and was on the uncontested list. Over the week it was pulled from the uncontested list. “To take a bill like that by a senior senator who is very well respected and to flip the vote on the floor of the senate the day before crossover is dramatic.”

Sensing that the bill would fail if put to a vote, Mims asked the Senate on February 7 to refer the bill back to committee, where it would not come up again until next year. The VICPP believed they had 27 votes of opposition out of a total 40 if the bill had gone to a vote.

“When presented with new information, the Senate Committee understood what the real issues were.

When they heard from the faith community, they knew they needed to be against SB 1305,” said Smith.

Smith said that the bill was originally submitted with the intention to limit input and discussion from the faith communities. “Quite frankly, that backfired. Senator Mims grossly underestimated the faith community’s response and the unity of the faith community, even those corners that were not affected,” Smith said. Leaders of the Jewish community also wrote in opposition to the bill, as did those of several Christian congregational churches.

Smith added, “I cannot overstate the importance of having Bishop Jones and Bishop Gray present at the capitol and Episcopal clergy and lay people as part of a vigil day in and day out on this bill.”

Although Mims referred the bill back to committee, he made it clear to the Senate that he intends to bring the bill up again next year. Recent cases, he said, “raise questions about our ancient church laws,” and parts of the civil code contain antiquated language and even address the long-abandoned practice of pew ownership. He warned that if the General Assembly did not deal with the issues raised by the bill soon, “it will come back to us in an emergency fashion.”

Looking ahead to next year, Smith said, “Now the faith community is exactly where it wants to be. If someone like Bill Mims says there is a problem with the code, we have to trust him and say ‘there probably are some issues.’ This gives us the entire year to help him craft responsible legislation that does not negatively impact the faith community.”

Nancy Jenkins is the Director of Communications for the Diocese of Virginia.

FYI, Ruach’s new occasional feature, is geared to making available materials of use to all who are interested in having an informed voice in the church. It will present the stories, now often relegated to the back pages, that may eventually impact us all. And FYI will also gather and print useful background information—historic or contemporary—that sheds light on current issues in the Anglican communion or in the church at large. As always, Ruach welcomes your suggestions, comments and contributions.

What is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme but that they are intolerant. The evil is not what they say about their causes but what they say about their opponents.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY

THE ALMOST–LAST WORD

Now it was Mary Magdalene,

Joanna, Mary the mother of James,
and the other women with them
who told this to the apostles. (Luke 24:1)

by Tom Ehrich

All around me are signs of other days.

Coffee mug acquired in Cornwall. Globe given when my mother was healthy. Pensive photograph from a grateful parishioner. Watercolor commissioned to remember the family farm in New Hampshire. Books, artwork and trinkets from days that made me what I am.

I also glimpse the future—projects, opportunities, dreams, challenges.

What would happen if a chunk of this treasure were cast aside? Not just lost, as mementoes tend to get lost, but rejected, treated as never having happened? Not just reconsidered, in the way we revisit memories and see more in them, but erased from memory?

How could I ever know myself? How could I remain connected to my parents, and through them to my grandparents, and through them to my heritage as a citizen? How could I know the heartache, adventures, family suppers, walks, love, dreams, learning and worrying that shaped my character and my faith? What kind of future could I build on selective blankness?

Such a tragedy happened in the early years of the Christian movement when women were cast aside. A few names were remembered, but the tradition-shattering way that Jesus treated women was erased, rejected, as if it never happened.

Mary of Magdala, apparently a woman of means and close friend of Jesus, was recast as a harlot. Mary the mother of Jesus, apparently a sturdy leader, was recast as a marble virgin, to be venerated in ways that would become increasingly maudlin. Women were evicted from the inner circle, shoved into an invisibility that presages the Taliban.

Jesus wasn't like that. His circle included men and women on equal footing. They traveled together, learned together, served together. Just as Jesus looked beyond artificial barriers separating Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, so he moved beyond the historic chasm separating male and female.

We don't know why the early Church reinstated that chasm. Guesses abound, some backed by

scholarship, some expressed in imagining. But it seems clear that a primary thrust of Jesus' being was deliberately cast aside.

We have spent the past forty years arguing about women's roles in organized religion. We have fought over every detail, every rule, every word of liturgy, every hiring practice. We have worn ourselves out debating who gets stature. Then Southern Baptists revisit the 1930s and Mel Gibson trots out the legend of Mary Magdalene as harlot.

A reader asks for information about Mary Magdalene and other women. I wish we had some. Not just for reasons of justice, but because our faith is impoverished. How can we know God if an entire dimension of God's being is denied? How can we know the full meaning of creation, exodus, covenants and promises unless we see God weeping over Jerusalem, loving in that fullness which comes when both parents love the child?

This isn't a contest to see who gets the prizes. This is about the very foundation of our faith. If we insist on God as male, disciples as male and authority as male, we make God too small and our faith too narrow.

I remember the day Henri Nouwen told an assembly of prosperous church folk about viewing Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal." Nouwen had been broken. Now he studied a broken son kneeling before a forgiving father. The father laid hands on his shoulders.

One hand, Nouwen saw, was the gnarled hand of a workingman. "The other was the tapered hand of a woman."

Nouwen paused, and the audience gasped. For that, we suddenly realized, is the God before whom we all kneel.

"On a Journey" meditations are part of an ongoing ministry and are e-mailed six days a week to interested readers. They may be accessed at www.onajourney.org or by emailing tehrich@earthlink.net



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