

# NEVERTHELESS:

Volume XVIII, Number 2: Christmas, 2008

A TEXAS CHURCH REVIEW

## TEC and Covenant

As we of TEC press on in post-Lambeth Conference processes that will give much attention to the proposal of our formal adoption of an 'Anglican Covenant,' it may be wise for us to remember our history more accurately than romantically. Specifically, let us remember that the Church of England (not "the Anglican Church;" there is no such thing) was an accompaniment to the colonizing efforts of England around the world of the 17th and 18th centuries. There was no original intent to create a Communion of autonomous and autocephalous Churches. As a phenomenon the Anglican Communion is an accident of history; it is an adaptation of the former colonies of England.

When the United States won its independence from England, there was no Anglican Communion in existence. The Church in the United States decidedly did not seek to sustain communion with the See of Canterbury. Instead, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America sought only to maintain apostolic succession. Most of us know that England was unwilling to cooperate, and so our Church's first bishop was consecrated not by the Church of England, but by the Episcopal Church in Scotland.

Afterward, in reaction to our initiative, it was the Church of England who sought a cooperative relationship with the ECUSA, not vice-versa. Inasmuch as England had hopes of reclaiming her former North American colonies (war of 1812), preserving a British connection to them in the Church no doubt seemed prudent. The point being that the history of the inception of our Church fails to demonstrate any deep and abiding affection between ECUSA (now TEC) and the Church of England. It seems again rather an accident of subsequent history, especially through WW2, that our two Churches have been perceived, and perhaps have perceived themselves, as somehow especially allied.

Thus, it seems to me that TEC will be wise to resist further participating in an inaccurate mythology. The Anglican Communion, as a concept, is hardly even 150 years old. And in its modern manifestation, it dates back to no later than 1968, when the Anglican Consultative Council was formed. These realities present some hard questions that need to be asked before TEC and others participate in actions that will permanently alter the way this Church functions in the world. Harkening back to its origins, ECUSA was concerned with apostolic succession, not with communion with Canterbury. With the relatively recent formal establishment of the "instruments of communion (unity)," and with the trend toward greater mechanisms to urge, then enforce, unanimity, I think TEC will do well to revisit its inaugural choice: apostolic fidelity or fealty to England?

*NOTE: This article by the Rev. James Stockton (Resurrection, Austin) is continued in our online issue: see <http://nevertheless.tx.org>*

## *The Blessing of Fidelity*

The Church's historic sexual morality is fidelity within marriage and chastity outside it. The morality has real world results. In 1995 Bishop Sengulane of the Diocese of Lebombo in Mozambique told me that the African Church regarded sexual morality as a life and death issue. Research by Maxine Ankrah found that the historic drop in H.I.V. rates in Uganda in the late 1980s and early '90s were because "substantial numbers of Ugandans had ended affairs and remained faithful to one partner" (*New York Times*, Book Review 7/29/07 p. 16 cf. Helen Epstein, *The Invisible Cure*).

AIDS in Africa is primarily a heterosexual phenomenon. In America it has been primarily a homosexual one clearly linked to a promiscuous gay lifestyle. When I moved to Houston and began serving at Palmer Memorial Church eleven years ago, I encountered a quite different gay life style, that of devout Christians, many in long term committed relationships, active in all the parish's ministries. The Church is grateful for their presence, money and labor but cannot bless their partnerships.

Gays have been active in the Church and members of the clergy for centuries but they flew under the radar. The tacit agreement was that they would be chaste or, failing that, extremely discreet (*caute si non caste*). What has caused all the fuss is that about thirty years ago some came out of the closet and said, "This is the way God made me and I am not going to be ashamed of it any more". As Bishop Gene Robinson put it, "What most people don't realize is that homosexuality is something that I am, it's not something that I do. ...We're not talking about taking a liberal or conservative stance on a particular issue; we're talking about who I am" (*The New Yorker* 4/17/06 p. 58). He was not invited to the Lambeth Conference this year because, though The Episcopal Church has accepted his episcopate, the Anglican Communion has not. One reason it has not is that he is living with someone to whom he is not married. The catch of course is that he cannot marry him. His relationship falls outside the parameters of the sacrament of marriage as it has developed over the centuries.

Valid sacramental acts require proper intention, matter, form and ministry. The marrying couple is required to sign a declaration that they intend what the Church means by marriage viz. "a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer ... intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity..." (Canon I.18.3 (e) cf. *BCP* p. 423).

The matter is the outward and visible sign of the sacrament. In baptism it is water; in the Eucharist it is bread and wine; in marriage it is the joining of hands and the ring. The form is the words spoken – baptism in the name of the Trinity and use of Christ's words of institution at the Lord's Supper (cf. Lambeth Quadrilateral (d) *BCP* p. 878). In Holy

*Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless  
at thy word I will let down the net. St. Luke 5:5 (AV)*

Matrimony the form is the vows exchanged. In essence the couple vow to love each other as Christ loved us, that is, unconditionally (v. Mt. 5:43-48). Each says to the other, "I adore you for all about you that is adorable and I accept you in spite of all that is not. I am with you for better or worse. I will rejoice with you and be among the crowd applauding when your life's work prospers but if it fail, and the applause cease, and the crowd disperse, I will be there regardless, beside you and for you, for richer, for poorer, *semper fidelis*. I will frolic with you in the beauty of your health and youth. And when you are old and broken, I will be there still, to love and to cherish 'til death".

The proper ministers of most sacraments are priests (baptism, Eucharist, reconciliation, unction) or bishops (those mentioned plus confirmation and ordination). Matrimony is unique in that the celebrants of the sacrament are the couple themselves. The bishop or priest is there, not to marry them, but to give the nuptial blessing. I am always grateful for a clerical blessing but it is not necessary to the contracting of a marriage. The rubrics allow deacons to preside at weddings but not to give the blessing (*BCP* pp. 422, 435). No couple is married by a cleric; they marry each other. Thus validity, though John Macquarrie added this caveat: "There is validity in the sight of God and there is validity in the sight of the Church. ... It must be assumed that sometimes what is deemed invalid in the churches is valid in God's sight, especially if there is evidence of holiness of life" (*A Guide to the Sacraments*, p. 50).

If two people of the same sex exchanged vows and rings before God and witnesses with the intent of marriage, would they be married? No, because the Prayer Book defines marriage as "a covenant between a man and a woman" (*BCP* p. 422) and as the "union of husband and wife" (*BCP* p. 423). But could such a companionship be sacramental, that is, a means of grace?

The sacrament of Holy Matrimony is unique: unlike the others, it takes place over a long period of time--a process, not an event, the marriage not the wedding. Grace is found in living out the vows. I have received the grace of this sacrament by finding myself loved beyond my deserving by my partner who for more than thirty years has thus embodied the gracious love of God and made it credible. To be loved most by him who knows me best is grace indeed. Were she of my own sex the grace of the sexless God would have been mediated to me still. In this throwaway society, fidelity is a prophetic sign of God's own steadfast love (*hesed*). Such a relationship, though unblesed by the Church, were itself a great blessing.

--Sam Todd, retired rector, Palmer Memorial Episcopal, Houston.

*Keys, Anyone?* Acronyms help us avoid stumbling over unwieldy names. Here are a few from this issue: TEC (The Episcopal Church), ECUSA (Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.), BCP (Book of Common Prayer), GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference). And then there is the Lambeth Quadrilateral (1888)—which formulates four articles to standardize Anglican identity around the world: the Holy Scripture, the Creeds (Apostles' and Nicene), the only sacraments ordained by Christ himself (Baptism, the Lord's Supper), and the Historic Episcopate.

*THE EMERGING CHURCH: A Model for Change & Map for Renewal*  
Bruce Sanguin (CopperHouse-Woodlake, 2008, Ppbk, 205pp, \$16.47)

--A Review by G. Richard Wheatcroft--

The author writes that his book is for "church leaders, both lay and clergy, who are ready to act as guides on this journey of congregational renewal." At the end of every chapter is a Mapping It Out section, consisting of questions which help you see where you and your congregation have been and where you are going on the journey of renewal. Bruce Sanguin is a minister of the Canadian Memorial Church & Center of Peace, Vancouver, British Columbia. He shares that his book evolved from his twenty years of experience in ministry and his desire to offer "a model for change and a map of renewal" for the church, using some of the "principles and practices" that have helped him and the congregations he has served

The author begins by reminding us that the Church is not a building but a people. He then introduces the concept of "creative emergence" used by scientists to describe the fundamental dynamic of life and applies it to a "congregation that is meeting the challenges of the postmodern world with creativity and vitality." He declares that "As a scientific principle, creative emergence is defined by three dynamics. They are novelty, self-organization and transcendence/inclusion. Applied to the church these dynamics would mean that people who come together as church are unpredictable, open to new ways of organizing, and trust that they are evolving in a "way that transcends yet includes previous forms." He declares that "The church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will come back to life by mimicking the Spirit-infused dynamics of the evolutionary universe."

The author then turns to explaining the map of renewal he has used with his congregation. The journey begins with the pastor "hand-picking a think tank" to undertake a "visioning process" to distinguish between what he calls "form-fetish to function-first." The task of the think tank is to evaluate all forms of the congregation such as "the current organization model, the role of clergy and lay people, the way we worshipped, even our location" to judge if they are still functional in the light of the changing, political, economic and social culture.

All of the following, illuminating and provocative, chapters of the book provide guidance for this evaluation. They begin with the one non-negotiable, "the heart and mind of Christ." On that foundation there are chapters on mission, values systems, the nature of Christ, congregational life, theological issues, clerical and lay leadership, pastoral visitation, the ministry of hospitality and "organizing for emergence." In three appendices the author offers a Canadian Memorial Values Statement, an Organizational Chart and a Sample Board Agenda.

In conclusion he writes, "Jesus' life, death and resurrection informed a movement of spiritual pilgrims that continue to this day through gatherings we call congregations. But our calling is not to "be like Jesus," mimicking what he did 2000 years ago. We're not here to copy. We're here to co-create. We need to recapture the sense of being a movement, not a static church to perpetuate structures and beliefs that my have served us well in the past." This tested model and map for change is for Christians who want help shape the emerging church in the twenty-first century.

# A Basket of Carp

*Some Thoughts after Lambeth.* From all the comments and anecdotes filtering out to those of us afar off, it appears that Lambeth was a good meeting, all things considered.

Anglican hierarchies and the structures at the highest levels seem snarled, either in trying to deal with conflicts for which they are not equipped or simply in carefully nurtured hostilities. And if the failure of the famous “bonds of affection” is an accurate description of what has happened to us, then starting to rebuild those bonds bishop to bishop, stranger to stranger, seems both a long shot and the only one likely to work over time. So it was probably wise to start over, as it were, with individual bishops spending time with bishops whose places were far away and very different. The Bible groups, and the “indaba” meetings clearly fostered such encounters. The drawback, of course, is that such a method won’t do a great deal if the bishops don’t meet again for ten years.

Lambeth’s chief concrete product is Reflections, a melding of the “indaba” groups’ reports. We are well aware of the small group form--and its limitations. Still, the gist of a discussion does come through, and it is worth reading, for what was said and what was left unsaid.

*Bishop Gray (Miss.) to the Windsor Continuation Committee at the Lambeth Conference, July 28, 2008:* "Within my own province I voted not to consent to the election of Gene Robinson for reasons both theological and ecclesiological. I have followed both the letter and spirit of the Windsor Report . . . For my faithfulness to this Communion I have been rewarded by regular incursions into our diocese by primates and bishops who have no apparent regard for either my theology or ecclesiology. I have made some peace with this reality . . . What I cannot make peace with is the portrayal of my sister and brother bishops in the Episcopal Church, who disagree with me, as bearers of a false gospel. That portrayal does violence to the imperfect, but faithful, grace-filled, and often costly, ways in which they live out their love of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am in serious disagreement with many of them, but do I see the Church in them? As God is my witness, I do. . . . And, in the midst of our internal conflicts, they show me Jesus. . . . We are a multitude of diverse theological, ecclesiological and sacramental perspectives. And the vast majority of us have figured out a way to stay together."

*Robert Duncan: A Destiny Foretold.* Like Archbishop Akinola of Nigeria, Bishop Robert Duncan always seems to wind up in charge of every outfit he belongs to. One of them is Common Cause of which he is Moderator. And since the consecration of Bishop Robinson in 2003, with the resulting divisions, a snide little remark has followed Bishop Duncan, that what he wanted most was to be Primate of his own traditionalist North American Anglican Province. If so, Common Cause looks like his vehicle.

GAFCON, a group of traditionalist Primates with others who met last June in Jerusalem, have urged the creation of a North American Province out of Common Cause. With that encouragement, Bishop Duncan is convening a meeting of Common Cause in early December aimed at constructing a separate North American Province.

Having completed the extraction of the Diocese of Pittsburgh from the Episcopal Church, Bishop Duncan has rushed what was formerly

the Diocese of Pittsburgh, along with the former Dioceses of San Diego, Quincy, and Fort Worth, into the waiting arms of Archbishop Venables of the Southern Cone (of South America). The Southern Cone is one of the Anglican Communion’s 38 Provinces and in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury -- that is, authentically Anglican. Archbishop Venables provides an Anglican way station, however remotely, to those who have abandoned The Episcopal Church.

Common Cause is a group of churches and organizations (including the four dioceses) who have the Episcopal Church in their past. When they meet in December, with a like group of Canadians, they intend to seek recognition as a Province, something only the Archbishop of Canterbury can provide. Holding on to a technical Anglican membership through the Southern Cone contact, Duncan and company will call on the GAFCON Provinces to provide support strong enough to persuade the Archbishop of Canterbury to recognize Common Cause as an alternative traditionalist Anglican Province in North America--where there are already two Provinces: TEC and ACC.

*Now What?* I have no idea where this is going to end up or what the shape of the Church will be. What I do know is that all the slogans and strong feelings are destructive unless they aim to strengthen the bonds we have in Christ Jesus. And if we imagine that we can accept division and check “them” off as no longer a part of “the beloved community” then we are more than wrong--we are, in the Biblical sense, fools.

So, while the separatists maneuver and those seeking to defend the materialities do their own maneuvering, the rest of us need to be learning to declare in worship and life the bonds of Christ across the moats and walls, both the real and the made-up. We have no clearer word than that we are to love one another. If we give ourselves to that work, maybe we will learn to defeat the petrifying of our differences.

*Between the Advents.* We’re turning now from Advent, from the first coming of Christ to be our Savior and his second coming, when he shall set everything to rights, and then present the world redeemed to God the Father. But we live in the time of ‘now’: between the Advents.

And the ‘now’ of our lives today is under an overhanging wave of economic troubles. And we will face the details of the ensuing year differently, depending on our own special circumstances. But one thing is clear for all of us. Whether by choice or necessity, we are being called in the emerging situation to live lives of simplicity.

Simplicity. The circumstances of our lives may already have given us a simple way of living. But for most of us the call to simplicity is a call to examine the way we live, the things on which we spend our resources of money and time and strength.

Simplicity is a spiritual discipline and a spiritual goal. We can in times of privation or limited resources have our sacrifices extorted from us, as we are forced backward step by step into a simpler life. Or we can embrace an opportunity to learn new ways of living sacrificially, new ways, and spiritually richer ways, of growing closer to God as we re-order and re-arrange the priorities of things and activities in our lives. We face a new encounter with the reality of God, our need of him, and the power of his grace.

--John D. Worrell

*Web Access: Input Your E-Mail Address Online*

*Nevertheless*, published in the Houston area, suffered a setback with Hurricane Ike, but we are still plugging along. Contact us! At <http://neverthesstx.org> (don't forget the *tx*) there is a button to type in your e-mail address or the e-mail address of your church office, or even the e-mail of a friend. By this means, you can receive e-mail notifications when a new issue is available (Note: this email address will be used for the sole purpose of informing you about NTL issues and therefore will remain private). You can then access the website to read or download your own copy. If you don't use e-mail, input the e-mail address of a friend or your church office (with their permission) to receive the e-mail, visit our website, and print your copy. But if neither of these arrangements works for you, please let us know. The NTL board stands ready to print your copy and drop it into the U.S. mail, if need be. Our readership is important to us. At <http://neverthesstx.org>, you will find a PayPal button to use for your donations to help fund the continuing life of *Nevertheless*.

*Nevertheless*, a journal of opinion independently published within the Episcopal Church, seeks to provide charitable, yet vigorous discourse among church members. We invite thoughtful articles and letters about the agenda of the church, church life, moral choice, and church decisions—their process and execution. Maximum standard for letters is 250 words, for articles 800 words. Contact us by mail at P.O. Box 8243, The Woodlands, Texas 77387, by e-mail via [letters@neverthesstx.org](mailto:letters@neverthesstx.org), and by phone at 713-840-1577. Board members are Dorothy Worrell, David Sugeno, Mary Kay Davis, Jim Abernathey, and Michael McFarland. NTL is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Our website <http://neverthesstx.org>

**NEVERTHELESS**  
TEXAS CHURCH REVIEW  
P.O. Box 8243  
The Woodlands, TX 77387

NON-PROFIT ORG  
US. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SPRING TX  
PERMIT #483

