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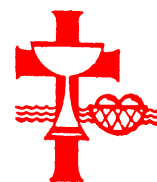

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Practical postmodernism for parishes

RODNEY HUDGENS

LESLIE NIPPS

In Seattle, hundreds of young people gather once a week for a traditional choral compline service by candlelight. They listen with awe and prayerfulness to the beauty of Gregorian chant, as they find God in shared worship. Many of them will never become members of the regular Sunday parish, but mission is alive as they gather for liturgy and community.

Churches are finding energy and power through new ways of forming community and inviting people into the experience of God in Christ. Amidst the real threat of stagnation and death for so many of our parishes, this resurrection may be surprising to some. Renewed communities, directly or indirectly, have discovered the liveliness of postmodernism and its teachings for churches desiring to reinvigorate mission in their midst. We can learn from them and their worship practices, and the possibility they hold for all of our parishes.

Ah, postmodernism! To many, it is beginning to seem like a fad, and perhaps stimulating resistance as a result. Nonetheless, we have found the current discussion of postmodernism to be a practical help toward the mission work at our parishes. We are not scholars; we are parish priests looking for helpful tools and enlivening visions for our work. Practical texts on postmodernism now beginning to enter the book market by Leonard Sweet, Marva Dawn, and Brian McLaren (to name a few), as well as invigorating and controversial web communities like theooze and re:generation, have helped us move forward in growing mission in our congregations. Whether you believe postmodernism is a fad, a marketing ploy or a generational mirage; whether you believe the church is being "re-formed" or is already dead and rising from the ashes, the context in which we do church has made an important transition.

Critics and adherents agree that postmodernism resists concise definition, although we are describing a western philosophical movement which affects the large number of US Americans, Canadians, Australians and Europeans. It becomes even more difficult, however, to discuss the pressures of postmodernism in other places–and even amongst certain populations of these countries–because of the mixed pressures of indigenous philosophical movements, postcolonialism and the Americanization-of-everything. Instead, we will try to describe the postmodern experience and restrict our discussion to how it influences the people in our local communities.

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In Pasadena, a large parish has found their mission growing through their invitation to committed parish social justice. The programs are diverse, and their call to serious commitment from their membership is intense. They are doing powerful work in their neighborhood and throughout the church.

The postmodern experience should not surprise us, emerging as it does from recent western history. For many of us, the church practices we have known were born of the enlightenment. The enlightenment taught us that reason is authoritative and that human existence, like nature, was observable and knowable. This view held sway in the worlds of science, technology, economics, social theory, even theology. In some important ways, the enlightenment world reduced Christian faith and practice to objective analysis, reifying it to something explainable by our preconceptions.

In the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, cracks emerged in this picture, giving rise to modernity. Truth, and what constitutes it, became pluriform. The power of scientific inquiry led to the revelation of all kinds of truths, not all of them compatible. Suspicion became the primary mode of investigation, and Christianity began to be one option among many. It was a way of living that could not be sustained. New means of choosing a life and embracing values were desperately needed by people who could not go back to the enlightenment but who could not sustain the relativity of modernity. Over the last century or so, postmodernism began to emerge as one answer to the quandary.

Postmodernism embraces modernity's consequences: the collapse of a single meta-narrative. In this context, all narrative is believed to be culturally encoded; truth is more than factual accuracy. Therefore, postmodernism is highly skeptical of exclusive truth claims. By being sensitive to culture and social location, it values many different contexts. It places highest value on the plurality of human experience and its deepest desire is for community.

Postmodernism is increasingly the cultural context in which we in the West all live. That is not to say the enlightenment and modernism have ceased influencing us; they certainly do. But postmodernism is the new context–breaking in, shaping us and demanding our thoughtful attention.

This image is, we believe, a fundamentally exciting and enlivening one. We do not therefore accept that postmodernity is a problem to be solved; it is merely the next stage in the ongoing adventure of salvation. Some will argue that we should maintain the present course, simply interpreting traditional practices in meaningful terms for a new age. We disagree. In the face of substantive technological and cultural changes, God is clearly reaching out to humanity in new ways, too. When the disciples were in the boat during the storm, Jesus did not ask them to stop the boat and row back to him. Instead, he yearned for them so much that he went to them where they were, in the midst of the storm–even if it meant walking on water.

In Pennsylvania, a suburban parish is engaging mission through its exploration of technological tools in worship. Multi-media presentations, amplified music and an enthusiastic congregation make for a vision of new life and growing faith.

Mission–the sharing of the Good News of Jesus and the transformation of lives in that light–takes place in the human world. We can have an endless conversation about "the Christ of culture and the Christ against culture" (citing H. Richard Neibuhr's 1953 classic), or we could argue about what John meant when he recorded Jesus talking about the difference between being "in the world" and "of the world." Regardless of how you understand those issues, faith is lived out nonetheless in human communities which are vibrant expressions of their cultural moment. We, you and the next-door neighbor are, to one extent or another, postmoderns. Our longings and life commitments are shaped by the world which has taught us how to speak, socialize, work and play. Mission happens in that world; or mission fails to happen in that world, if we do not notice how people and communities are changing.

Unfortunately, most parishes respond primarily only to the dated challenges of the enlightenment and modernism, which are primarily struggles about truth and who has it. They are failing to respond to the shifting cultural forces surrounding us, and as a result many are struggling with mission. If, however, we seek to understand the values of postmodernism and the kinds of behaviors and lifestyles it tends to engender, we can find remarkable new resources for mission in our parishes. If we do this, we are simply seeking to understand the people we have been called and sent to serve. Who are

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these people, and what can they teach the church about life, faith and service? What can the church learn about the Good News from the postmodern culture which is our new home?

In particular, what might postmodernism, as defined and described above, teach us about worship? What is postmodern worship, and what are its engaging opportunities for encouraging mission in our parishes? We claim only one general principle: postmodern worship places the emphasis on the experience of the liturgy rather on its performance. In that context, postmodern worship is diverse; but regardless of its form, the focus of the liturgy is an experience of God in community rather than an explanation of God to the community. A rational non-experiential faith comes off as boring to postmoderns, who are waiting for a moving, honest, substantial experience. If you ask a postmodern Christian to choose between an experience of God or a mere description of God, the experience is preferred.

For several decades the liturgical renewal of the church has focused largely on the linguistic aspects of our worship. That work has served us remarkably well because our words must say what we mean. We wonder, however, if that work of renewal now has brought us to a new place with new insights and challenges. In the postmodern experience, the sacredness of worship is in the people who show up for worship and what they do together. In the world, we are the primary signs of Christ's presence; postmodern mission-minded worship suggests that the same should be true in liturgy.

In Texas, a small congregation is growing mission through its intentional engagement with highly participatory worship forms grounded in ancient practices. Moving the furniture, trying new worship spaces and configurations, acquiring beautiful ethnic vestments and arts, and dancing together in worship, have all brought new life to this parish.

Some may misinterpret the transitions in postmodern worship as a shift from traditional to contemporary worship styles. This presumed polarity is seductive, but false. Postmodern worship freely utilizes those resources that best serve the mission of the community, without need to condemn or affirm one over another. Elements from a variety of worship styles often coexist.

Taking into account our focus on experience over explanation, and understanding that postmodern worship is diverse and even contradictory, we offer some touchstones. Postmodern worship is:

- Biblical, adding our stories to the great Story.
- Celebratory, even while embracing the darker side of life and the reality of human suffering.
- Incarnational and transcendent, capable of communicating both the mundane and the awesome.
- Participatory, by allowing the community to shape the liturgy as it takes place.
- Cultural, relying heavily on the beauty of art, music, literature and drama to communicate the gospel.
- Communal, as a place for the individual.
- Service-oriented, looking outward to the world and seeking for ways actively and humbly to care for the neighbor.
- Paradoxical, honoring the complexity, contradictions and constant changes in life.
- Relevant to actual human experience.
- Sensorial, by involving the body and all its senses, not just the auditory.
- Experiential, encouraging honest feelings honestly shared with others.
- Pluralistic and diverse, celebrating the ambiguous and the belief that God is having one conversation with humanity; embracing the visions of others as potentially complementary and deepening.
- Eclectic, with an intentional connection to the wisdom of our ancient traditions and to the promise of our emerging future.
- Techno-savvy, using technology where it gives greater accessibility to the Gospel.

Above all, postmodernism reclaims Christianity as a relational religion, and Jesus–not Christianity itself–as the Savior. Therefore, no one single model represents a postmodern worship experience. The examples we have offered warn us not to take the wrong message from postmodernism: that there is one easy fix. We cannot comfort ourselves that if we get our Power Point sermon perfected, or if we institute that mystical ancient service, or if we start getting experimental with our liturgy, or if we make repeated pop references, or if we start outreach to the community, or if we return to the Christian basics, then our mission problem will be solved. Society is too diverse, and the solution that that vision offers is too artificial and lacking in imagination.

This mistake frequently appears in the discourse about younger generations (Generation X and the Millenials) and the church's attempts to address their general absence from our parishes. We often hear that GenXers and Millenials rarely find the church a serious place to explore their spiritual curiosity because we do not play rock music, or because we present too hierarchical a face, or because our language is archaic and incomprehensible, or because we fail to include enough popular references in our sermons. This diagnosis misses two important points: 1) all generations, including Generation X and the Millenials, are diverse and not easily lured by one simple marketing strategy; and 2) postmodern life is about all of us, not just the younger members of our shared culture.

We do agree, however, that the anthropological studies on these younger generations is vitally important to the future mission work of the church. Why? Because they represent the canary in the coal mine. Although we all are affected by postmodern values, these younger generations are more fully inculturated into them. If our parishes present a vision of faithful life which fails to take postmod-

ern realities seriously, then these generations will see that their questions and explorations have no place, and rightfully absent themselves more quickly from our midst. When they are absent from the churches we serve–and demographically, we know this is generally true–then we have some hard work to do addressing the important issues not simply of young people, but of all of us.

Why then are the parishes we have been describing attracting so many young people and other postmoderns? These parishes looked carefully at themselves, deepened and expanded the best of their ministry, and then shared the good news of who they are with those who are so deeply longing for what they are offering. They have all developed and celebrated a clear and inviting identity. Rather than relying on the Anglican "brand," they–like St. Paul–poured the living waters of Christ into particular worship forms that reach particular people. The idea that our prayer book provides that robust identity is no longer true. Despite the value of the prayer book as our common resource and model for prayer, we are in trouble if we rely on it alone to create an identity for our parishes.

More and more, people do not go to churches simply because they ought. The age of religious obligation is waning. In a recent issue of OPEN, two lead articles on baptism described the end of Christendom, and both insisted that liturgical reformers take this cultural shift into account. References to this current reality appear repeatedly in the serious journals of Christian theology in the West. We are no longer entitled to people's Sunday morning time as they go about other activities of equal value–recreation, sports, family events, work. Postmodern people seek religious experiences out of a desire for encounter with God, deepened purpose and welcoming community; when this profound desire is frustrated, they move on. A parish which meets no desire whatsoever (except for the need of the increasingly few who still go to church out of obligation) will most likely find its membership shrinking and its experience of mission dying.

Postmodernism offers, then, an important analysis of what has been going wrong for mainline American Christianity over the last decades. It is the refusal to embrace identity. It is the cowardly submission to lowest common denominatorism. It is being nothing for nobody (to turn St. Paul's teaching on its head) out of fear of creating conflict, or of offending people we think we cannot afford to offend, or of violating some perceived Anglican sensibilities. Rather, choosing to be something means choosing not to be something else. The tension cannot be avoided. A church that wants to thrive in these times must embrace a vision and an identity which meets the deepest desires of some group within its mission field.

A new Lutheran-Episcopal church start in Kentucky chose Saint Thomas as its patron. The start was located in an area suffering from the pain of economic and community crisis. Saint Thomas touched Jesus' wounds, and St. Thomas' Church promised to do the same for those in its community.

How can the teachings of postmodernism help our parishes begin to embrace identity for new mission? We offer a simple technique for parishes to grow mission by studying themselves and asking: Where is there life? Where are the principles of postmodernism already showing themselves, even if in very simple and nascent forms? These questions can be applied to any area of parish life (we have helped vestries apply it to issues of parish governance), but we are focusing on its potential for renewed mission in worship.

Perhaps you are lucky enough to have a community of artists who are itching to enliven your parish's vestment closet. Perhaps your music program is especially rich and eclectic. Perhaps you have a particularly gifted group of readers or actors. Perhaps your parish comes alive whenever the youth are invited to lead some aspect of worship. Perhaps you have seen how powerfully people have responded to icons and other visual images. Perhaps you have a variety of ethnic groups in your congregation, or there is a demonstrable interest in diverse cultural expressions.

What is present which draws people to participate in the making of liturgy together? Or, what is wonderfully sensory, or beautiful and lovely, or awesome and mysterious, even if only in a small and subtle way? Asking these questions invites parish leaders to consider what is most alive and full of potential, where an identity is waiting to be discovered and expanded, where mission truly can be developed. In those places, a parish has something for which others are looking, others who will want to be a part if given the opportunity.

When we have something for which others are looking, and we have developed our gifts so that they are robust and enticing, we cannot fail to take the next step and tell others about it. Strangers will never know what we have if we do not inform them, making it possible for them to take part easily and experience what we are offering. Whatever your evangelism strategy is, engage it and use it, or you will be developing these liturgical visions only for those who are already in the church. This result may be engaging for the parish, but it is not bold mission.

In many ways, postmodern worship gives us the opportunity to do what the liturgical traditions have always done: create a communal experience of God in Christ furthered by stories, music, art, ritual and symbol. Postmodernism encourages us to move away from the desire to perfect our liturgical forms and instead to work toward a worship experience. The place to start is in the divine life waiting to be discovered and celebrated within our parishes, where the Good News of Jesus is unmistakably at work in the human experience of the people who have gathered to know and love God in community.

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No doxology

John A. Dally

The following sermon was preached on the Commemoration of Lancelot Andrewes at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, September 26, 2001.

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial." (Luke 11:1-4)

No doxology. None needed, we might say. The prayer Jesus taught us is perfect, complete in itself. It is the request which prompts the prayer to which I call your attention today: "Lord, teach us to pray." Surely, a timely petition. Airplanes are not supposed to collide with skyscrapers. Skyscrapers which took years to build are not supposed to fall to the ground in a matter of hours. How do we pray in the face of the images of September 11? To whom do we appeal, and for what do we ask?

Our theology is in greater disarray than the stock market or the airline industry. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, whom I do not admire, have suggested that the attacks of September 11 represent God's judgment on a sinful nation, the chief sinners being feminists and homosexuals. Jane Dixon, whom I do admire, countered their statements by saying "this horror absolutely did not come from God." Particulars aside, it is Falwell and Robertson who speak the theology of the Bible, and Bishop Dixon who sides with secular humanism.

"I am going to bring upon you a nation from far away, O house of Israel," says the Lord. "It is an enduring nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know. Their quiver is like an open tomb; all of them are mighty warriors. They shall destroy with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust. And when your people say, 'Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us?' You shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours.'" (Jeremiah 5:15-19)

These words of Jeremiah to a nation confident in its military and economic might have innumerable counterparts throughout the biblical story. The inspired authors are united in seeing the hand of God in the most terrible military disasters which come upon the holy nation. The fact that no public theologian in these two weeks besides Falwell and Robertson has even suggested that it is our own sins which have brought this terror upon us shows how far we have strayed from a biblical faith. We show the world the face of innocence, and project a God of our own devising who blesses our every intention. But the God of the Bible has a long memory and does not so easily accept our protestations of innocence.

The God of the Bible remembers the day that the Emperor Constantine painted the monogram of Christ on his soldiers' shields and slaughtered the armies of his brother in the name of the only Son of God. The God of the Bible remembers the edicts of Christian rulers ordering the enslavement and death of the very Muslim neighbors who had enforced edicts of tolerance when they ruled in Europe. The God of the Bible remembers the war of Greece's liberation in 1811, a liberation which came at the price of 300,000 Muslim lives at the hands of their new Christian rulers. And the God of the Bible remembers the day the bells of every church in Austria rang to welcome the armies of Adolf Hitler when the Anschluss was decreed. We heard the voice of this God through the prophet Amos on Sunday: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds."

"Lord, teach us to pray." If you and I are to gather daily and pray eucharistic canons which claim the whole of salvation history for ourselves, you and I must claim the shadow side of our history as well. The attention of the whole nation is fixed on us right now, and our fellow citizens are making the same petition as Jesus' disciples: "You! People of the cloth! Theologians! Teach us to pray." How shall we answer them? With the prayer of the Crusader, who invokes the Christian God against the enemies of the Christian empire? How will our prayer be distinguished in the ears of God from the prayers of the terrorists?

Perhaps we would do well to cover our mouths and sit in sackcloth and ashes for a time, and listen to those who can teach us how to pray again. The whole troubled history of religiously inspired violence caught up with the men and women going about their work in the World Trade Center on September 11, caught up with them and brought them to the time of trial. From that place of final judgment, those offices filling with smoke and the smell of jet fuel, a remarkable story was repeated in many ways over and over again. Someone trapped on the top floors would get on a cell phone and call a spouse or parent and say, "It looks as though we're going to die, and I wanted you to know how much I love you." And then, the perfect prayer: "I have to go now. There are other people waiting to use the phone."

No doxology recorded. None needed.

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Gray pointed arches and flat disks of pure white bread

Knowing our lineage to find inspiration and challenge from earlier liturgists

DONALD SCHELL

Frequently I am startled at how little context and history we offer ourselves for the continuing work of renewing the church, re-examining its mission and liturgy, responding to new opportunities, and perhaps most of all, facing conflict. Speed Leas and Nancy Ammerman, two well-established scholars in church conflict, remind us that the ability to face and work with conflict is an essential mark of effective church leaders and adaptive, effective church communities. What drives us to make change? What are we trying to change? What is the risk and what do we hope to accomplish? One of my personal examples, a patron saint perhaps in living those questions, is John Mason Neale.

Many of us know John Mason Neale (died 1866, commemorated in BCP 1979 on August 7) as a hymn writer and translator, perhaps the most prolific single contributor to our Episcopal hymnal. So much has changed since (and partly because of) Neale's brief ministry that it takes patient imagination to recall what controversy surrounded all his work, what risks he took to serve the mission to which he felt called, and how much his work took him to the edges of church life.

Early Victorian Anglicans mistrusted hymns. Hymnody had largely been replaced with metrical psalms. Hymns and carols felt to many Anglicans as symptomatic of the dangerous enthusiasms of the Wesleys and their successors, outright non-conformists. Neale fought to introduce beauty and expression of feeling to liturgy. What he accomplished changed the face and feel of Anglicanism. He and those who shared his vision were so effective that today we struggle to go beyond their Gothic norms. Our way forward needs to recall what a threat the Ritualists and neo-Gothicism were to the old "high and dry" staid churchmanship of mid-nineteenth-century Anglicanism.

If we can take in how risky and confrontive Gothic-revival Ritualists were when that work was new, we may find ourselves asking new questions about tradition, culture and mission. Neale introduced colored vestments, altar cloths, flowers, candles and crosses to the stern black and white world of early Victorian liturgy. He wrote and lectured to advocate removing stratifying and distancing symbols like church furniture that represented rank. We take his accomplishments for granted because at least part of what was so profoundly transformative has become stultifying and formulaic. Our best work in renewing congregations and liturgies carries that same potential. The work of bringing new life to ancient tradition doesn't stop, and we would do well to become suspicious of our own settled norms and formulas.

To recall the full dimensions of Neale's willingness to face controversy, we must recall that not only was he a hymn-writer and liturgist, but in 1854 he founded the Sisters of Saint Margaret as a missionary order of nurses to work with England's rural poor. Neale startled the Oxford Movement and Ritualist clergy who had founded women's religious orders ahead of him by asking one of the sisters of the new community to be Mother Superior. Pusey and the first male founders of an Anglican women's community had kept a strict controlling role as Father Superior. Instead Neale took for himself the role of chaplain, because he believed women should shape their own communities. Similarly Neale insisted that (despite law and custom of the time that regarded women as subject to father or elder brother until marriage made them subject to a husband) that adult women could and should claim religious autonomy in their own vocations and commitments.

Not surprisingly, Neale encouraged the community of St. Margaret to set themselves a standard of professional nursing. The sisters received two months (!) intensive training for their work as primary caregivers to the rural poor, contemporary with Florence Nightingale's pioneering work training nurses. In fact, Nightingale took St. Margaret's sisters with her to staff her innovative military hospitals in the Crimea.

Neale's work with and for the sisters provoked death threats and riots. One of the St. Margaret's sisters, a respectable young woman and the daughter of an Anglican vicar, died of a disease she contracted from her nursing work with a dying family. When Neale and the community traveled to the sister's hometown of Lewes for the funeral, her rabidly Protestant father incited a mob to break up the funeral and attack Neale and the sisters. London papers explained that the father was understandably outraged since Mr. Neale and the St. Margaret's community had presumed to allow a woman to join the order against her father's will.

These glimpses of Neale's independent vision and courage help make clear how courageous he was as a deeply controversial liturgical reformer. While still studying theology at Cambridge, Neale had helped found the Cambridge Camden Society, dedicated to promoting Ritualist practices like use of altar cross, candles, flowers and colored liturgical vestments in church. All these practices were illegal in England at the time, and when Neale persisted in advocating and practicing such things after ordination, Neale's bishop inhibited him from exercising any priestly ministry in the diocese and further refused to release him to another diocese. The bishop's intention was to stop him. He took Neale to court several times because, despite the inhibition, for the remainder of his brief life Neale per-

sisted his unrubrical practices in two chapels that were not under diocesan jurisdiction, the chapel of the St. Margaret's sisters, and the chapel of Sackville College (an old people's home) where Neale was warden and under the protection of the Earl de la Warr. Repeated court judgments acknowledged that Neale could preside in these two places, though nowhere else.

We sometimes casually speak of this work under the loose description of Oxford Movement. Keble and other figures in that movement were friends of Neale's, but it was his Cambridge friends more than Oxford Movement teachers who gave the church the face we think of as Anglican.

Oxford Tractarians had not addressed questions of ritual practice or aesthetics. The Tractarian effort was word-centered; they preached and wrote to convince Anglicans to think of ourselves as Catholic and to understand our sacramental life as Catholic. Protestant sensibilities were uneasy, but the English church's old "high and dry" churchmanship had room for such thinking. And no one was actually advocating changing liturgy or moving furniture. We know that difference and know what provokes anger. Ritualists like Neale went the further step, so it was they who provoked controversy.

Tractarians offered ideas, Ritualists enfleshed ideas to touch people's experience. Neale was marginalized in the church for a Catholic vision of liturgy that dared to shape experience by Catholic practice. Some of us have faced uproar for moving an altar a few feet out from the wall. Ritualists created uproar by arguing for dismantling and reordering eighteenth-century churches that had been designed or remodeled as preaching halls. They destroyed woodwork and artifacts that were in the way of good liturgy, tearing out cozily warmed box pews where the wealthy enjoyed sitting to listen in comfort to long, rhetorically elevated sermons delivered by clergy in black gown and preaching tabs.

By pamphlets and publications, daring actions and aggressive advocacy, Neale's Cambridge Camden Society and its successor, the Ecclesiological Society, literally reshaped the church. They were so successful promoting Victorian Gothic-revival church architecture that they defined the worship environment of our Episcopal Church. And remember Neale's style wasn't just patient advocacy of change. One night Neale and a handful of eager lay assistants did a guerilla reordering of the cluttered medieval interior of Sackville College chapel. With axes, hammers and crowbars, they removed and destroyed the box pews and replaced them overnight with plain, egalitarian benches.

Ritualists addressed liturgical practice at every level as they worked for enormous change. Because they introduced sensory and irrational objects and actions into liturgy, they were accused of being "aesthetes," but in the slums of decaying English cities, these Catholic "aesthetes" proudly and gratefully pointed to their success with the same urban poor who had earlier responded to Wesleyan-inspired "sentimentalists." Like the Wesleyans and other bold, mission-minded Christians, Ritualists saw that it was essential to risk feeling for people to build their faith on experience.

The Ecclesiological Society still exists in England, by the way, and if you visit their website you'll discover they now work to preserve old church buildings and also to encourage building of new ones that work. Neale's spirit lives on in the Ecclesiological Society. Knowing his story in its context, it is easy to imagine a modern John Mason Neale among us to take hatchets to the woodwork, altar, altar rails and even his own modified bench pews by which some in our generation rigidly define our Anglican or Episcopalian identity.

The irony is that much of our work as visionary liturgical reformers and renewers must challenge what Neale and the Ritualists for good cultural and missionary reasons created, the English Gothic ideal of church and liturgy. Picture a progression of stony grey pointed arches, blue and red stained-glass windows, a nave ending in steps up to the narrowed path through a divided choir to the distant altar, and beyond it an inaccessible altar hard against the east wall. Picture a priest in Almy's chasuble standing at that altar with his back to the people raising a flat pure white disk of unleavened bread over his head. Neale fought hard and suffered much to create such churches.

What makes us long for something more primitive, less distant, more tactile and sensory? What were the Ritualists doing? Are they our spiritual ancestors or the ghosts we struggle against? Knowing Neale's intention and catching what drove his vision needn't change our longing or make us think the Gothic Revival should remain our norm. I do believe, however, that acknowledging just how norms we work to renew or replace came from work very like our own three, four and five generations ago may challenge us to greater boldness and greater humility as we continue to work to touch people's experience of God in the community's liturgy. Knowing and understanding our lineage will also help us in our conversation with anyone who believes Episcopal liturgy has "always been done" a particular way. What some of us simplistically and complacently call "traditional Anglicanism" was born of change, vision and a startling sense of mission.

Restored colonial churches in America show what Neale and his colleagues worked so hard to replace. After the great fire of London, in a great burst of creativity Christopher Wren remade Anglicanism's picture of itself. Wren's cool, clean classicism had provided a wonderful venue for erudite Enlightenment preaching. White, cream and marble, no images at all, these auditorium churches were a natural, culturally appropriate home to theological rationalism and upper-class Deism.

John Mason Neale and the Ritualists felt a different pull, one that speaks much more strongly to me and perhaps to many of us. In response to industrialized England's "dark satanic mills," a cultural upheaval in England killed the confident

rationalism of the Enlightenment. The Wesleys had taken on the church's abandonment of the poor and the upper class's comfortable investment in the African slave trade. The romantic movement in literature and the beginnings of the arts and crafts movement in design were shaping a new sensibility that valued mystery and feeling over cold logic that had been willing to turn a blind eye to human suffering and evil. Old Gothic ruins (often churches, monasteries and country chapels that Cromwell and the roundheads had vandalized), roofless, open to England's stormy weather, hinted at darker forces, stronger passions, and a struggle between love and death. People looked again at defaced and weathered carvings and dreamed of a time when community mattered enough that the work of people's hands (not industrial manufacture) created curves and curlicues, warm, irregular textures, colors, smells and all the creative work of many unique skills and visions working together.

Architecturally and liturgically rebuilding choirs (both the place in the church and the vested group of lay people sharing the leadership of worship) broke the hold of the preacher's long rational sermons on an Enlightenment God. Hymns, anthems and chant suggested words could carry more power and life than mere logical discourse. Choirs singing, priests in colored vestments, candles, new stained glass where there had been none, all offered a richness and sense of shared action, our meeting the holy in mystery that our thoughts could not encompass or comprehend.

John Mason Neale and the Ritualists worked passionately for a liturgy of the whole person, not just mind and ear, but a community act of sensory, feeling beings who responded to rite, music and the use of space. It takes some imagination and the odd historical reminder to grasp how deeply troubling these innovations were when they were introduced. The feeling of the old controversies can escape us because liturgical scholarship and pastoral, missionary thinking (both of which Neale cared deeply about) have moved on while romantic idealization of the medieval Gothic became a voice in America of classism, Anglophilia and conservative nostalgia.

As I was working on this, I learned that in the early days of San Francisco, a wild, culturally mixed boomtown, in 1867, just eighteen years after the Gold Rush and one year after Neale's death, St. Peter's Church was founded by a priest who had been forcibly ejected from another Episcopal church for introducing the suspiciously Roman practice of vesting the choir.

Vested choirs may be a culturally inappropriate, liturgically ineffective compromise. If we're willing to do our homework and ask hard questions, we actually can understand earlier, more participatory periods in the pre-medieval church's liturgy better than anyone in the nineteenth century could have. But we need more than information, more than historical data. If we are worthy heirs of John Mason Neale, truly teachers and leaders who walk in those footsteps, we will decry our church's Babylonian captivity and enslavement to buildings that don't serve liturgy or mission. His whole ministry was committed to creating and renewing spaces and communities for a freer and more vital church. Sometimes it seems as though ours is to make the compromises that allow us to continue to talk about ideals that we don't expect anyone to see or experience.

A hundred fifty years ago, Neale and the Ritualists did not hesitate to identify the church's future in a robust engagement with their own Victorian culture. Their love of the Gothic was argued from a particular understanding of church, craftsmanship, the value of work, and the worker, to an interconnected society, a gospel of person and community, and a coherent engagement of concerns for beauty, mystery and justice. The Ritualists' sense of history made them critics and ministers to a society facing the consequences of industrialization and the spoil of slavery and militarized colonialism. Across Britain, America and Canada, brand-new Gothic-revival churches fit well in communities which boasted brand-new Gothic-revival homes, libraries, city halls and hospitals. With classical rationality seeming bankrupt, romanticism and Gothic Revival came as a breath of fresh air.

Or yeast. The priest we pictured at the elevation, back to the altar is raising a perfectly round, perfectly white disk of bread. Yes, Neale and the Ritualists are also responsible for the unleavened wafers of communion bread with which so many Anglicans were raised, though their use of such bread, like other stories in the tradition, is one chapter in a long, twisting history of change. Our bread too tells a story of reformers and liturgists (like us) doing their best, generation by generation, as shifting vision, scholarship and new diagnoses of culture created differing senses of need.

In the earliest years of the church, Godfrey Diekmann and others argue, communion bread was always the leavened barley bread of the poor. Somewhere on the church's road to wealth and establishment, liturgical reformers of those first centuries aspired to offer Christ's body in the more dignified guise of wheat bread, the delicious, finer-textured bread of the privileged. But wheat, rye or barley, in Roman and Byzantine use communion bread East and West was always leavened bread until the time of Charlemagne in the ninth century.

Alcuin, Charlemagne's chaplain and a another liturgical reformer, poring over the texts of the gospels and thinking about what he knew of Judaism, suddenly realized that the bread of the first eucharist "must have been" unleavened because the synoptic gospels say the Last Supper was a Passover meal (though they don't get the details right). Today gospel scholars can still argue pro and con over whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal, but no contemporary liturgical scholars argue that the early church used unleavened bread for communion. The evidence for leavened is too clear: Greek language

distinguishes decisively between azymos (unleavened bread) and artos (ordinary leavened bread). The Greek New Testament texts, the Greek Lord's Prayer and all the ancient Greek liturgies use artos for the bread in eucharistic texts. Alcuin was mistaken. His mistake persisted in the Catholic West until the Reformation. Protestant reformers (including our Anglican reformers) restored the use of leavened bread, and most typically good large quantities of it. (Here my own sympathies are wholly Protestant!)

In the nineteenth century Neale and the Ritualists, the visionary liturgical reformers of their day, looked to tradition to help break the hold of rationalism. They borrowed freely from Roman Catholic tradition to involve the whole person (not just the mind) in worship and faith, as they made a new effort to build new ecumenical ties. Anglican Ritualists traveled to the Continent and saw their new friends and colleagues (Roman Catholic clergy) using unleavened wafers. Some Anglicans still had in their churches beautiful medieval eucharistic vessels with tiny patens that had been unusable since the Reformation. Where they dared, our Ritualist predecessors re-introduced Alcuin's reform: unleavened bread. The Sisters of St. Margaret and other Anglican women's communities began making communion wafers to help support themselves. In America and Canada the Ritualists' efforts, spread first through architecture and style, had led even low churchmen into elements of Catholic reform. Gothic buildings and vested choirs could serve Morning Prayer as well as Holy Communion. Where Ritualist sympathies were strong, in the late nineteenth century the rector or vicar might institute an early Sunday morning eucharist that actually happened weekly "for those who wanted that sort of thing." And often those who wanted that sort of thing were a little more tolerant of Romanizing, perhaps even a little drawn to tantalizing surprises like . . . little wafers made by Anglican sisters, embossed with a lamb (or a crucifix!). Some of our parents and grandparents can still remember the parish here or there that was startled when such bread ventured out of an 8 a.m. Holy Communion and into the quarterly or monthly communion Sunday.

With the early days of Associated Parishes and then the beginnings of our textual reforms with the 1967 Liturgy of the Lord's Supper, reformers in the Episcopal Church began seeing past Protestant origins to the early church's (and Eastern Orthodox Church's) use of leavened bread. I remember Alexander Schmemann teaching liturgical theology at General Seminary in the late 1960s and pushing us westerners to hear the serious, human-divine question of how communion bread tasted. "What does it mean?" he asked with annoyance. "No, taste and see . . . how does it taste?"

I offer this reminder of the original context for our Gothic arches and dry disks of unleavened bread so we can reclaim our lineage and honor our teachers. We need their vision and courage and critical eye. May we begin to see that the work of addressing particular culture, current scholarship and missionary opportunity won't really allow us to create or enshrine a new norm.

From the 1950s through 1979 AP worked to enlist the whole church in creating a new prayer book. That passion was driven by an urgency for mission and a sense of what damage old, forgotten and misunderstood missionary strategy would do in a new culture. After the new book, what did we accomplish in the 1980s and 1990s as we ignored our unresponsive buildings? Our culture moved on, reshaping itself, while our enactment of "new" liturgy continued to mold itself to fit our once radical Victorian Gothic-revival churches. To the outsider and visitor they are powerful signs of irrelevance and obscure self-referential practice. If we are to be faithful to our mission and true disciples and inheritors of brave reformers like John Mason Neale, we must do better.

Donald Schell is Rector of St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, San Francisco, California, and a member of Associated Parishes Council.

We'd hate to see you go!

We regret that for a number of members this will be their last copy of Open. Please take a minute to check the address block on the back cover. The top line gives the month and year of your membership expiration. For a number of readers it says "LAST COPY".

Given the part-time nature of the Coordinator position and the press of other business, renewal notices are mailed in the anniversary month, and there is no other follow-up. Please don't lose your membership by inadvertence or mail error. Please check the address with each issue and renew in a timely fashion.

There are important issues facing the Church on which you will find Open of use and interest.

International Anglican Liturgical Consultation discusses ministry and ordination

Paul Gibson
Anglican Communion News Service

More than 70 Anglican liturgists representing 30 provinces of the Anglican Communion gathered in Berkeley, California, as the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation in August 2001. The principal subject of the Consultation was ministry and the theology and liturgies of ordination.

Members of the Consultation have been working for some years on baptism, eucharist, and ministry, the agenda of the 1982 Lima Conference of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The subject of ministry had already been explored by two informal meetings of Anglican liturgists, and the adoption of a statement by the Berkeley Consultation brings this particular task to a conclusion.

The Consultation based both the theology and practice of ordination firmly on the baptismal nature of the church, emphasizing that the people of God are revealed in baptism to be a holy people ministering to the world in the name and manner of Christ. God bestows a variety of gifts to build up the body of Christ and enable its mission. Ordained ministers are integral members of the body, called by God and discerned by the body to be signs and animators of Christ's self-giving life and ministry to which all are called.

The Consultation described the role of the bishop in terms of pastor and teacher, and suggested that the rites of ordination and seating of a bishop should affirm and celebrate the bishop's ministry in and among the people.

Presbyters are called to share with bishops in the oversight of the church, especially in identifying and nurturing the gifts of the Spirit given to the community for the work of ministry. The Consultation noted that the terms "presbyter" and "priest" are both used among Anglicans and that both are appropriate. However, the ordination rite should affirm the priesthood of the whole baptized community and the sacramental, pastoral and teaching relationship of the presbyter to the community.

The Consultation noted that historically deacons were the managers of the local church, responsible for charitable and social work. The calling of the deacon is consequently to embody and activate the Christ-like service of the whole people of God in the world.

The Consultation noted that there is movement in some parts of the Communion towards direct ordination to the presbyterate and the episcopate. While recognizing that there is historical precedent for both direct and sequential ordination and that both have merit, the Consultation suggested that Provinces should be free to consider direct ordination.

The Consultation stressed that the act of ordination belongs to the community as a whole, with the bishop presiding as the focus of the church's unity. Because an ordination is an ecclesial event in which the church's life and ministry are ordered, it should take place in the context of a eucharist celebrated at a place and time when all the church's ministries may be most fully represented.

The Consultation developed a significant list of practical reflections and suggestions to help local communities realize its theological ideals.

In addition to its principal focus on ministry and ordination, the Consultation engaged in a lively discussion of the possibility of using elements other than bread and wine at the eucharist, and agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council that a survey be conducted to discover current practice in the Communion. The recommendation also suggested that the ACC form a small working group, including members of the Consultation, to study the data and draft a report with guidelines for further consideration by the Consultation and the ACC Standing Committee.

Sue Parks, Director of SPCK Worldwide, visited the Consultation to tell members that the SPCK is unable to provide financial assistance for liturgical publishing to a level that would meet both demand and need. Noting that one of the defining characteristics of Anglicanism is mother-tongue worship, she asked who would support Anglican liturgical publishing if Anglicans themselves don't provide the resources. She said she brought the problem to the Consultation because she felt that a liturgical conference is the forum in which the liturgical publishing needs of two-thirds world churches should be taken seriously.

The Consultation elected Paul Bradshaw, Joyce Kurari, and Tomas Maddela to be new members of the steering committee. The steering committee elected Paul Bradshaw to be chair of the Consultation.

Paul Gibson is an Associate Member of Associated Parishes Council.

Former AP Council member dies

William Wendt, formerly a member of Associated Parishes Council, died July 8 during services at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church. Longtime council members have fond memories of his contributions to AP, in particular his work on a model burial office.

A fuller article will appear in the next issue of OPEN.

Books edited by Elizabeth Morris Downie

Fairless, Caroline S. Children at Worship: Congregations in Bloom. Introduction by Louis Weil. New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2000. Xvi + 175 pp. $26.95 (paper).

Living into the renewal of ecclesiology and theology of ministry with which the 1979 prayer book challenges us has not been easy, and probably won't get any easier in the new future. Caroline Fairless' book will delight, excite, challenge, inspire, infuriate or terrify readers, depending on where they find themselves when they pick it up. Fairless shows us some of the implications of taking our baptismal theology seriously-really seriously-when it comes to children. If we mean what we say when we welcome them into the household of God to share with us in Christ's eternal priesthood, we simply cannot relegate them for years to basement classrooms or constrained silence while adults worship.

Children at Worship constantly invites the reader to take the first step in making a radical change in the way in which most congregations worship on Sunday morning. Prayer cards offered by anyone in the congregation as the prayers of the people, dramatizations of lectionary readings which the children write and act out, children's art as offering and as key to unlocking the artist in the adults in the congregation-all are places to begin. Just do it, Fairless urges! The caveats and acknowledgments of the difficulties are mostly confined to the final chapter, and encouragement permeates the book.

As a recovering rubrical fundamentalist, I struggle with suggestions such as moving the Gospel and sermon to a place after the Great Thanksgiving and communion. However, her charting of the evolution in this direction in her parish makes me examine why I resist. The scripts, poems, prayers and artwork reproduced in the book are beautiful examples of children's lives with God, lives much deeper and constant than many adults realize. Fairless shares freely some of the things that children have taught her about God.

Much has been said over the years in the pages of OPEN about change and adaptation as necessary and intrinsic to vital liturgy. Children at Worship suggests many ways to move toward the goal of full participation in worship by every single member of the assembly, regardless of age.

EMD

Meyers, Ruth A., and Pettingell, Phoebe, editors. Gleanings: Essays on Expansive Language with Prayers for Various Occasions. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2001. Xi + 147 pp. $22.95 (paper).

This slim but rich volume makes available some of the liturgical materials written or collected by members of the Expansive Language Committee of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, but not included in either volume of Enriching Our Worship.

The first half of the book contains four significant essays on aspects of expansive language. Associated Parishes Council member Jennifer M. Phillips writes on the poetics of liturgy, arguing that worship is moral formation by means of both its content and its qualities. She delineates nine principles for liturgical texts, discussing the music of language and the need for texts to express fitting theology at greatest length. Briefer mention is made of the evocative quality and vigor of good liturgical texts, and the necessity that they be just, hospitable and elegant. Above all, good liturgical texts touch the hearts and minds of many people, and become the words they call upon in times of both stress and joy. Phillips' words reflect her vocation as priest and poet, her passion for words that lead to God.

Pettingell's essay on an American vernacular for worship takes a hard look at how well the much-vaunted Anglican ideal of common prayer "in a tongue . . . understanded of the people" is realized in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. As a literary critic, she demonstrates how heavy the influence of Tudor English still is, though many of us are not very conscious of the degree to which it shapes the 1979 BCP. She argues persuasively the need to continue "the struggle to develop an authentic language common to all of our English-speaking worshipers in the Episcopal Church . . . if we are to pray authentically out of our own time and place."

In her essay Meyers offers readers a compact but thorough history of the evolution of inclusive-language history materials in the Episcopal Church, beginning with the creation of a "Committee on Sensitivity Relating to Women" during the development of the 1979 prayer book. She traces the evolution of standards of inclusivity and the emergence of criteria of balance and expansivity. She points to the use of previously neglected biblical images and persons, images from the patristic and mystical traditions, and texts prepared by the ecumenical English Language Liturgical Consultation, in the supplemental materials authorized by General Convention. The goal of finding texts which "provide an abundance of imagery which can enliven prayer and enable a fuller comprehension of the divine mystery" is the heart of the process of liturgical enrichment Meyers describes.

Gregory Howe's essay takes the process of liturgical enrichment into cyberspace, arguing that a far more inclusive process of revision and expansion is now possible since the advent of the internet. Unlike some who proclaim that the era of one bound Book of Common Prayer is over, Howe holds to the importance of the book but urges much fuller participation

via the internet in the decision-making process which brings each revision into being. He envisions "a Book of Common Prayer with a significant choice of full texts, adjusted and refined by major grass-roots input, with an absolute minimum of directions and rubrics . . . so that local congregations would have maximum freedom for the significant gestures, ceremonies, and traditions of their own cultural situation."

The "Prayers for Various Occasions" which make up the second half of the book are for the church year, the calendar of saints, and various pastoral occasions. There are prayers, litanies, prayers of the people, several eucharistic prayers and prayers from the Mothers of the Church. Some are particular to one situation but can serve as models for other occasions; some may find widespread use. Time spent reading and absorbing these examples will be time well spent for those who wish to write liturgical texts. And may that tribe increase, to the greater glory of God and the inclusion of all God's children in our worship.

EMD

For Those We Love But See No Longer: Daily Offices for Times of Grief. Lisa Belcher Hamilton. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press. Paper. 195 pp.

This pocket-sized office book contains all the materials for one week's daily prayer–morning, midday, evening, and compline. Hamilton has sensitively and gracefully abbreviated the prayer book daily offices for easy use in times of grief. Her work has authenticity; when her husband died at the age of 32, their son was only 26 months old, and daily prayer sustained her through the rage, numbness, loneliness and pain of grieving his death.

Hamilton, a priest in the Diocese of Connecticut, has "selected Morning Prayer readings to help the griever face another day without those who are dead. Noonday readings are a cry of missing the dead, 'Whom we love but see no longer.' Evening Prayer readings offer hope for the dead. At Compline, readings commend both oneself and the dead to God. Fridays are focused on God's grief at the crucifixion of Christ." Intercessions and collects from The Burial of the Dead weave through these short offices, and the materials offered for meditation come from a wonderful variety of sources, from George Herbert through Shaker hymns and an Aztec prayer. Lined pages at the end of each day encourage journaling.

This little book may assist survivors at various stages of spiritual practice, but will probably speak most readily to those who have some familiarity with the prayer book offices. Repetition and the absence of any necessity to make choices or juggle books are great helps to prayer when one is devastated by death.

EMD

Wall, John H. Dictionary for Episcopalians. Illustrations by Philippa J. Anderson. Boston: Cowley Publications, 2000. Xvii + 141 pp. $13.95 (paper).

Armentrout, Don S. and Slocum, Robert Boak, editors. An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians. New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2000. Xi + 578 pp. $32.95 (paper).

Size isn't everything, but sometimes it sends a signal. These two books with similar titles are really quite different in intent and approach, as the reader might guess from the difference in size.

Wall's slim volume is a revision, expansion and updating of the original, published in 1985. Much has changed in the life of the church in the intervening years, and the new edition reflects many of those changes. Intended as an introduction for newcomers to the working vocabulary of worship in the Episcopal Church, it gives brief definitions of terms for liturgy, vesture, furniture, church governance–the nuts and bolts of parish and diocesan life for the newcomer.

Long-time Episcopalians will also find helpful definitions here of the more arcane bits of terminology. Phonetic pronunciations are given for unusual words, and simple line drawings enliven most pages with visual "definitions." The clear and direct writing invites browsing, which is likely to reward almost any reader with a new nugget of information. This is indeed a book for every parish library; it also belongs in classrooms for junior-high and older students.

Both broader and deeper in scope, the work edited by Armentrout and Slocum has been described as a one-volume encyclopedia of the Episcopal Church. Thirty-two contributors are listed, many of them distinguished seminary professors; numerous research assistants also worked on the project. Lengthier entries on all of the subjects in Wall's work are here, and several additional major categories appear in this book. Theological terms are defined, and the historical heresies described. There are biographical entries for individuals: saints, lay persons, bishops, priests, missionaries and theologians. Church organizations past and present, domestic and overseas, and their work are described; brief histories of dioceses are included; many of the so-called "continuing" denominations which have left the Episcopal Church are identified.

I've undoubtedly missed other important categories (I don't pretend to have read all 578 pages!), but this gives some idea of the comprehensiveness of this large and well-executed dictionary. Over five pages of bibliography provide ample leads for further exploration. The page design is simple and clean, and the unidentified type face is easy to read. Page headers would have made finding entries easier, but I am happy to report that I found few typographical errors. In sum, a very useful and reliable reference work, and a bargain at its price.

EMD

Episcopal ecumenical commission addresses Lutheran ordination by-law

Episcopal New Service

The Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, meeting at the Lutheran Church Center in Chicago, Oct. 23-27, 2001, gave careful and prayerful consideration to developments in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America related to our relationship of full communion since the Commission's last meeting in January, 2001.

The Commission noted particularly the action of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in passing a by-law allowing "ordination in unusual circumstances," whereby a pastor would be delegated by a bishop to preside at the ordination of a pastor to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Prior to this action, the ELCA consulted with the Episcopal Church. In these consultations, the Episcopal Church conveyed its concerns, as summarized by the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in his letter to ELCA Presiding Bishop Anderson prior to the Churchwide Assembly and Presiding Bishop Griswold's statement following the passage of the by-law by the Churchwide Assembly.

The Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations reaffirmed the Episcopal Church's commitment to unity and offered the following assessment of the significance of the ELCA by-law.

First, we see the by-law in light of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (4:1-6): "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

Second, we affirm that the Episcopal Church is deeply and irrevocably committed to the unity of Christ's Church as of central and fundamental importance to our faithful response to the call of God to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We recognize that increasing unity often requires us, like all Christians, "in all things of human ordering or human choice" to be willing to "forego preferences of [our] own" (Chicago Quadrilateral, 1886). We affirm that the call to unity is also a call to ever greater openness to God and to each other, with patience and generosity of spirit expressed in word and deed, even–or perhaps particularly–when we find such generosity difficult.

Third, we see the by-law in the context of our developing full communion with the ELCA. We rejoice in the fact that Called to Common Mission is being implemented in both churches through such events as the participation of our Presiding Bishop in the installation of Mark Hanson as Presiding Bishop; the participation of other bishops of the Episcopal Church in the installation of synodical bishops; the participation of bishops of the ELCA in the consecrations of bishops of the Episcopal Church; the many and varied shared ministries and common worship in so many locations across the U.S.; and the continuing expansion and deepening of conversation, consultation and cooperation between our two churches in more and more areas of mission. We look forward to the continued participation of ELCA bishops in the consecrations of bishops in the Episcopal Church, and of Episcopal Church bishops in the installation of bishops in the ELCA; to the increase in the scope and number of shared mission and ministry programs; and to the involvement of the ELCA in the life of the Episcopal Church. Above all, we are grateful to God for the many opportunities that are now available to both churches for increasingly faithful life together according to the Gospel as we respond to our call to common mission.

The teaching of Scripture, the Episcopal Church's deep commitment to the unity for which Christ prayed, and the realities and possibilities of full communion constitute the context in which the ELCA's provisions for ordination in unusual circumstances must be assessed.

In light of this context, we conclude that, while any provision for exceptions to Called to Common Mission is a matter of serious concern, the passage of the by-law addressing ordination in unusual circumstances need not impair or hinder our relationship of full communion with the ELCA. We offer this summary of the reasons supporting this conclusion:

1. Both churches have always acknowledged that full communion is something that must be lived into, and we see the by-law as an expression of the commitment of the ELCA to do so. Such commitment entails the fostering and preserving of communion not only with the Episcopal Church, but also within the Lutheran Church. We are grateful for the ELCA's care in preserving and increasing unity within the ELCA as well as with the Episcopal Church.

2. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, so important for our ecumenical relations, addresses the historic episcopate, not ordination of priests and deacons. At the Churchwide Assembly and in the actions noted above, the ELCA has reaffirmed its commitment to the historic episcopate.

3. The actions of the Churchwide Assembly preserve and support the ministry of bishop as particularly concerned with the unity of the church, and as overseer of ordination, a key element of Called to Common Mission. We see the actions of the Churchwide Assembly as express-

ing such adaptation, including in the provisions and procedures of the by-law.

4. Called to Common Mission (paragraph 14) indicates that full communion for the Episcopal Church is realized through the shared ministry of bishops in the historic succession, a reality that will come into being over a period of time. The ELCA Churchwide Assembly affirmed the ELCA's movement into that reality.

We continue to be deeply concerned about how the by-law may be used. We have received strong and frequent assurances from the ELCA that the provisions in the by-law will effectively restrict to the rarest and most serious of circumstances exceptions to a bishop's participation in the laying-on-of-hands at the ordination of a member of the clergy (Called to Common Mission paragraph 20). We also note that our own General Convention has stated officially that those ordained in unusual circumstances will not serve congregations in the Episcopal Church. While we wait to see how the by-law is used in practice, we are guided by St. Paul's exhortations to forbearance and Christian love, and by our Lord Jesus Christ's high priestly prayer that we all may be one, that the world may believe.

The Lutheran response

Text of the motion the ELCA Ecumenical Affairs advisory committee, passed October 27:

The Department for Ecumenical Affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America express our thanks and appreciation to the Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations of the Episcopal Church for their gracious understanding and thoughtful commentary on their analysis of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's by-law actions with regard to full communion.

Further, we appreciate the fellowship, worship and work of joint meeting opportunities experienced over our October meeting dates in Chicago. We look forward to continuing growth in relationship.

A new baby sister

MARILYN HASKEL

As an unrepentant female I hesitate to note here that some men do indeed give birth. This particular incident has not been the happy nine months within the pampered heart of nubile fecundity, but rather an extended gestation stretching into years marked by false labor and peculiar urgings amid great huffings and puffings which sometimes came to naught. However, I think there's a light at the end of the birth canal, and am I ever glad! This has been pregnancy by committee, a far-flung group of individuals who were inseminated by a virile idea over a period of ten years. (We can fight over the details of that at a later time).

In 1991, Clayton Crawley proposed to Frank Hemlin a device that popped into a computer and could be harnessed to work for overworked clergy needing help creating liturgies to empower the flock. At that time, one might say, it was a gleam in Fr. Crawley's eye. However, as the gospel of John tells us, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Many moons came and went as the grain lay buried until Church Publishing discovered the computer and said, "Eureka!" Then the first RITE children were born: brother BRAIN, sisters WORD and LIGHT, and brother SONG. Thus we begin our tale.

One nice day in April of 1997 following an Associated Parishes Council meeting at Holy Cross Monastery, four liturgical malcontents–Juan Oliver, Clayton Crawley, Clay Morris, and Marilyn Haskel–gathered in a small restaurant somewhere between West Park and New York City to break bread and hatch the idea that was insistently pecking at its shell to see the light. It seemed so obvious and yet frightening in its magnitude. If Associated Parishes could think it, could Church Publishing produce it? Fr. Oliver stressed it must insist upon and teach the best of liturgical practice. The others agreed and added their concern to cool the brow of the long-suffering liturgical planner who struggles through many dusty tomes and deals with the heartbreak of typos. The malcontents were invigorated, energized, turned on and pumped up to get this timely tool onto the market. Thus was conceived the idea of what is now affectionately named as THE RITE STUFF, A Liturgical Planning Tool for the Episcopal Church.

Dreams developed the myriad qualities of this small new life. As with many expectant parents, no horizon was left imagined but unexplored. This child would be able to leap historical buildings in a single bound! A liturgist would say, "What?" and THE RITE STUFF would say "This!" Asking "Where?" a reply would roar back, "Here!" It was a heady incubation. Over the months and years the aunts and uncles, grandparents, and in-laws of the Associated Parishes Council and Church Publishing contributed opinions, advice, home remedies and a few old wives' (and husbands') tales. All was taken in and digested.

Then collective ankles began to swell and once-comfortable chairs became devices of physical entrapment. During several three-day stints of wading through multiple four-inch thick notebooks heavy laden with hypertext mark-up language, the four malcontents, in agony, groaned, "Surely do wish we'd have this baby."

Following the poking and pulling at the Alpha 2 tests and Beta 1 and 2, the testing phase of THE RITE STUFF is accomplished. (Thank God this process doesn't begin with Omega!) The ultrasound reveals a large, healthy baby that will emerge from the womb December 20th fully formed and preternaturally sophisticated in the ways of the Anglican liturgical world. Praise be to God who gives us the victory!

Marilyn Haskel is Marketing Director of Church Publishing, Inc., and a member of Associated Parishes Council.

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From discord to discernment

Daniel L. Prechtel

The coordinated attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States by militant Islamic extremists and the multi-leveled retaliation by the U.S. government in a tenuous coalition with others is a powerful sign and current symptom of a world still in deep turmoil and in desperate need of reconciliation. For Christians the cross is a symbol of God's reconciliation and peace through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection–it is the emphatic statement of God's willingness to enter into human vulnerability and suffering, and confront evil with the creative power of love. The cross bears witness to God's desire and intention for humanity's deliverance from evil and the breaking of the cycle of violence begetting violence.

Tension due to differences should be expected in human relationships and interactions. The differences often bring people into conflict, which is not necessarily something to avoid or fear. Conflict can be a graced part of the process of movement that can lead to a new, creative level of relationship. But when the differences yield a destructive or oppressive relationship the conflict has produced bitter fruit and shows the mark of sin. In the work of peacemaking and conflict negotiation it is vitally important to become aware that we have choices to make in how we engage in conflict. Some of those options move us to more hardened and entrenched positions with an increasing devaluation of the other, and some options move us toward greater freedom to make a creative resolution to the conflict with an increasing respect for the other as partner in the problem that both are facing. There is a spiritual discipline that is often unrecognized but can be a tremendous aid in the latter possibility–moving toward a stance of discernment, seeking to discover God's direction in the situation.

In a stance of discernment we might frame (implicitly or explicitly, depending on the situation) our conflict as a way of exploring these kinds of questions: What is God calling us to be or do in this situation? Are we open to the possibility that a new birth might be received in this relationship? What kind of outcome will best produce a sense of mutual respect and honoring of each other's needs and interests? How can we stay open and expectant of God's creative work in this conflicted situation? Are there wounds that need healing and, if so, what can we do to seek that healing process? Are we stuck in a need for forgiveness and, if so, what might be the path toward that forgiveness? Is there a gift hidden in this situation that is to be revealed if we can be faithful to listening deeply and respectfully to each other's limited truths and to the Source of a truth deeper than our own?

I don't pretend to any easy answer to the complexities of international conflict or to organizational, church or interpersonal conflict. However, our Christian spiritual tradition does provide an important resource in the way we approach conflict as occasions for discernment–and that approach can give shape to how we engage in conflict and what we might expect as possible from conflict.

Daniel Prechtel <d-prechtel@llministries.com> is the founding director of Lamb and Lion Spiritual Guidance Ministries.

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