



May the joy of Christmas fill your soul to overflowing!



News shorts – ANiC and AEN

ANiC office closed over Christmas

Between December 24th (noon) and January 5th the office will be closed – phone calls will go unanswered and emails unopened – as staff members recuperate from a hectic year and prepare for an equally exciting 2009.

More on the newly launched North American Church

AnglicanTV has [posted two videos](#) from the December 3rd birthing of the Anglican Church of North America in Wheaton, Illinois:

- Archbishop-elect Bob Duncan's message at the Celebration service
- The media conference held immediately prior to the Celebration service featuring Archbishop-elect Duncan, Bishop Martin Minns, Dr Michael Howell (Forward in Faith), Mrs Cynthia Brust (Anglican Mission in America) and our own Venerable Charlie Masters.

Forward in Faith North America (FiFNA) has [addressed questions](#) members of that organization have been asking about the new Anglican Church in North America (ACNA).

David Virtue has written a [comprehensive summary](#) and analysis of reaction of the formation of the Anglican Church in North America. Speaking of the meeting of the GAFCon primates with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Virtue quotes another observer's humorous comment, "*The five GAFCON primates from Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Southern Cone had travelled from afar, bore gifts of frank discussion, gold-standard Christianity and little in the way of mirth. They were there to mark a new birth in the North, a province.*"

Come, let us reason together

Allan Pearson has written a very good "opinion" piece for the ACoC Diocese of Huron [newspaper](#) (page 5) on the issues of marriage and Scriptural authority.

Ordinations at St George's (Lowville)

Bishop Don Harvey officiated at a joy-filled ordination service at St George's last Sunday.

- New ANiC priest, the Rev Keith Stodart, will continue as ANiC membership chairman as well as serve as honorary assistant at St George's.
- New ANiC priest the Rev Peter Parent continues as chaplain in a nursing home and begins a new church planting ministry as he provides leadership for an emerging ANiC congregation.

- New ANiC deacon the Rev Scott Walker is the full time assistant at St George's where his responsibilities have included leading the youth ministry.

Parish Christmas letter

Bishop Don has sent [a letter](#) to ANiC parishes reflecting on the changes in ANiC this year and the "Joy of this Holy Season".

News shorts – Canada

Federation supports Anglican Church in North America

The Federation released a statement regarding the new province in formation:

Anglican Essentials Federation expression of good will re ACNA

The Anglican Essentials Federation, those who are taking their stand for Orthodoxy within the Anglican Church of Canada, wish to assure our brothers and sisters of the Anglican Church of North America of our prayers and goodwill as you embark on this new venture in mission and ministry for Christ as a new Anglican province in North America. We are encouraged by your mission-oriented focus and trust that out of the present crisis in our Communion will come a renewed commitment on the part of all Anglicans to reach out to our needy world in new and effective ways with the transforming Gospel of Christ.

ACoC Council of General Synod approves covenant – in principle

The Anglican Journal [reports](#) that "*The Council of General Synod (CoGS) has given approval in principle to the idea of an Anglican Covenant "without committing to any specifics of text,"*" but expressed the need for clearer definitions of some terms.

The response to the Covenant also noted that the ACoC and Primate have little power since its dioceses predate the province. It also said that Canadian Anglicans are "*critical of the assumption that the primates are uniquely responsible for articulating a 'common mind' for the communion.*"

News shorts – USA and North America

Anglican Communion Network (ACN) hands off ministries

Having accomplished its primary purpose, [the ACN](#), meeting in Kansas City last week, [voted to](#) "*begin handing over ministries as well as financial and administrative support services to the forming Anglican Church in North America... During the approximately six months the handover is expected to take, the Network office will continue to provide key organizational, administrative and other services for Network members and the Common Cause Partnership as it completes the creation of the Anglican Church in North America. ...[Then] the Network as it is currently configured will cease operation.*"

These ministries include:

- Anglican Relief and Development Fund – which has distributed "...more than \$3.5 million to support the work of Anglicans to meet the physical and spiritual needs of millions of people."
- Anglican Global Mission Partners – draws together 30+ Anglican organizations committed to mission
- Young Anglicans Project – working on a draft Anglican Catechism
- Titus Institute for Church Planting

Bishop Duncan said: "God did not use the Network to change the direction of The Episcopal Church as we had originally hoped. He has used it and us to create a Biblical, missionary and united Anglican province-in-waiting here in North America. We are deeply thankful to Him and to all who have supported its work."

TEC appeals for funding for lawsuits

With more and more parishes and dioceses disassociating from the Episcopal Church (TEC), the Presiding Bishop is looking for funds to pursue these congregations in the courts. David Virtue [reports](#) that TEC has written appeal letters to Episcopalians in the legal profession.

American Anglican Council conference, March 26-28

In their most recent weekly email update, American Anglican Council announced preliminary plans for a spring conference: "Blueprint for the New Church", March 26-28, 2009 at Holy Cross Anglican Church in Loganville, Georgia. More details to come.

Diocese leaves Anglican Communion Network

The Episcopal Church (TEC) Diocese of the Rio Grande has [officially disassociated](#) from the Anglican Communion Network (ACN) and reaffirmed its commitment to TEC, citing the ACN's role in forming the new Anglican Church in North America. The dean of the Cathedral explained that the diocese is "*...a pretty diverse mix. I think the picture people have in their mind about the Diocese of Rio Grande being a very conservative and evangelical diocese is, in many ways, not an accurate picture of where we are today. There are a good many parishes, the Cathedral being one, that are diverse theologically and socioeconomically; the differences with the Episcopal Church were differences of primarily the (former) episcopal leadership.*" The diocese has been without a bishop following the resignation in September 2007 of the Rt Rev Jeffrey Steenson who then joined the Roman Catholic Church.

Will presiding bishop's abuse of canons backfire?

Four members of the Anglican Communion Institute argue in [a paper](#) that, by purporting to accept a renunciation of ordained ministry by Bishop Iker (Fort Worth) – which he denies having made – Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori has unwittingly damaged her case for litigation against the departed Diocese of Fort Worth. Based on a careful reading of TEC canons, they argue that this action concedes "*that bishop Iker has not violated the Constitution and Canons of TEC and that he is no longer subject to its discipline.*" They concluded: "*ACI fears that the Presiding Bishop with the concurrence of TEC's progressive majority is now leading TEC not merely into canonical abuse and usurpation of power but into canonical chaos and institutional disintegration. Unless checked, this chaos will have grave implications for the future of the Communion as a whole.*"

In the US media and on the blogs

USA Today – Dec 9 08 – [Gays, God, the Bible and the bishops](#)

Crosswalk – Dec 12 08 – [Disaffected Anglicans form the new province](#)

GeoConger – Dec 12 08 – [Los Angeles backs same-sex blessings](#)

GeoConger – Dec 12 08 – [Fort Worth bishop deposed, but he denies renouncing orders](#)

Georgetown Times – Dec 14 08 – [Anglicans form rival province](#)

LA Times – Dec 15 08 – [Putting the Episcopal rift in a historical context](#)

BabyBlueOnline – Dec 16 08 – [Katharine Jefferts Schori hits the public relations circuit in attempt to fix Episcopal; Church's broken image](#)

ChristianNewsWire – Dec 16 08 – [Head of US Episcopal Church open to being wrong on her stance about homosexuality](#)

News shorts – International

South African bishop calls for prayer for Mugabe's removal

Bishop Joe Seoka of South Africa [is reported](#) to have called on churches and Anglicans to pray – particularly on December 16th, a South African public holiday marking reconciliation – for the Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe's removal from power. Under Mugabe's mismanagement, Zimbabwe has descended into political and economic chaos, with half the population in need of emergency food aid. The UN reports over 16,000 cholera cases and almost 800 deaths in Zimbabwe recently.

George Conger reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury [has called](#) the situation in Zimbabwe “...a complete humanitarian outrage, compounded by self-serving and self-deceiving pronouncements from those clinging to power. We are witnessing the breakdown of health care systems and water supply, on top of the ravages of cholera in many cities and towns. The continued state aggression towards civil society is unacceptable, most recently against the few doctors that remain in the country to serve an increasingly sick and desperate population. Outside pressure is more necessary than ever” to achieve change in Zimbabwe.”

More reports from a hurting world

A deaconess in **Nigeria** [reports](#) that that the carnage in Jos earlier this month has driven 30,000 to seek refuge in temporary camps for displaced persons. Many banks and markets remain closed, so food and supplies are running out. She says, “...we all say the biggest possible THANK YOU for your love and concern and especially for your prayers – but please, please do not stop praying as this is where our strength, our hope, and our life lie.” Archbishop Ben Kwashi (Jos) [has appealed](#) for help in replacing and repairing damaged and destroyed homes and churches. He estimates that \$125,000 (US) will be needed saying, “From amongst our own members 9 were killed, 8 injured, 42 adults displaced, 3 churches destroyed, 56 homes destroyed or looted, 57 businesses destroyed or looted, 26 vehicles destroyed. Full details can be found [on our website](#)...” Financial assistance can be sent “...via the Rev Canon Chris Sugden to Anglican International Development, 21 High Street, Eynsham, OX29 4HE, UK... or to Open Heavens Foundation, 3201 Preston Hollow Road, Fort Worth, Texas 76109.”

AEC blogger Scott Gilbreath [reports](#) that Christians in **Palestine** are subject to systematic persecution by Islamic groups dedicated to eradicating the few remaining Christians.

The New York Times [reports](#) on the unfettered killing rampage of rebel forces in **eastern Congo**, while under-manned UN forces fail miserably to protect civilians.

Archbishop of Canterbury remains mute on new province

George Conger [reports](#) that Dr Williams will neither block nor bless the creation of a new orthodox province in North America. First, five primates from the GAFCon Primates Council met with him for about five hours on December 5th to review the constitution of the Anglican Church in North America and discuss affairs in the Communion – including the boycott of Lambeth by over 200 bishops, the proposed Anglican Covenant and the ongoing “innovations” in doctrine and discipline in TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada.

Conger also questions an earlier unattributed media statement from Lambeth Palace that claimed the Anglican Consultative Council processes for creating a province were clearly laid out and would take years to complete. He presents clear evidence that, in fact, the ACC guidelines were intended to be a flexible – but optional – aid in provincial formation and that, in the past, the ACC was generally not consulted until the new province was a “fait accompli”.

Meanwhile, Bishop John Chane (Washington, DC) [has written](#) to his diocese denying the likelihood of the new North American province being officially recognized. He says that the media coverage the new province has received *“...was well beyond what was warranted considering that the proposed province is, at most, about 5 percent of the size of the Episcopal Church and that its chances of recognition are dim... The movers of the proposed new province embarrass themselves, the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion by the self-serving media coverage they have worked so hard to achieve.”* He then goes on to criticize the Archbishop of Canterbury: *“Unfortunately, the Archbishop has contributed to the confusion and anxiety... by meeting on numerous occasions with Duncan and his allies. These meetings have bestowed an unwarranted sense of legitimacy on those who seek to deconstruct the Anglican Communion.”*

Christmas message from the Archbishop of Canterbury

These are excerpts from Dr Williams’ [Christmas message](#):

“...God chose to show himself to us in a complete human life... from conception to maturity and even death, Hence the reverence which as Christians we ought to show to human beings in every condition, at every stage of existence. This is why we cannot regard unborn children as less than members of the human family, why those with disabilities or deprivations have no less claim upon us than anyone else, why we try to make loving sense of human life even when it is near its end...”

“...Christmas is a good time to think again about our attitudes to children and about what happens to children in our societies. Christians who recognise the infinite and all-powerful God in the vulnerability of a newborn baby have every reason to ask hard questions about the ways in which children come to be despised, exploited, even feared in our world. We all suspect that in a time of economic crisis worldwide, it will be the most vulnerable who are left to carry most of the human cost. The Holy Child of Bethlehem demands of us that we resist this with all our strength, for the

sake of the one who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor, became helpless with the helpless so that he might exalt us all through his mercy and abundant grace.”

“Lay presidency” and the Diocese of Sydney

For those who have been following the controversy stemming from the Diocese of Sydney’s synod decision in favour of lay presidency, Robert Munday, president of Nashotah House Theological Seminary, [offers some compelling reasons](#) to reconsider this decision. After reviewing historic Anglican teaching, he comments of the comparison some have made between Sydney’s decision and the liberal position on same-sex blessings: *“Both seem to be saying (1) “we know more about how the church should function than our Anglican forebears did” and (2) “we believe that what we are doing (be it lay presidency or same sex blessings) is a ‘Gospel imperative’.”*

In the international media and blogs

GeoConger (blog) – Dec 14 08 – [Archbishop wants Congo action](#)

Church of England Newspaper – Dec 13 08 – [Schism: it is the fact of the matter](#)

Christian Century – Dec 30 08 – [Rival Anglican church body,, for North America](#)

Church Times – Dec 12 08 – [New Anglican Province comes into being in US](#)

The Independent – Dec 13 08 – [The meaning of life by the Reverend Nicky Gumbel](#)

Catholic News Agency – Dec 16 08 – [Leaders debate... N America... province](#)

ACI – Dec 16 08 – [What I have learned...](#) – by Rev Dr Ephraim Radner

Religious Intelligence – Dec 17 08 – [Canadian Church ‘approves’... Covenant](#)

Christian Post – Dec 17 08 – [Episcopal head addresses controversies...](#)

Daily Mail – Dec 16 08 – [Unborn babies are ‘part of the family’, says... Canterbury](#)

TimesOnline – Dec 18 08 – [...disestablishment of Church...not ‘the end of the world’](#)

Soul food

Worth reading

In keeping with the Advent season, take a moment to rediscover the Bible’s teaching on the doctrinal significance of God breaking into human history in such an unexpected way. Dr J I Packer [discusses](#) the doctrines of Christ’s Incarnation and the Trinity – both from Scripture and the church history. For example, he says: *“Trinity and Incarnation belong together. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that the man Jesus is truly divine... the Incarnation declares that the divine Jesus is truly human. Together they proclaim the full reality of the Savior whom the New Testament sets forth, the Son who came from the Father’s side at the Father’s will to become the sinner’s substitute on the cross... The New Testament ... commands worship of Jesus and focuses consistently on the divine-human Savior and Lord as the proper object of faith, hope, and love here and now. Religion that lacks these emphases is not Christianity. Let there be no mistake about that!”*

Resources

Regent College (Vancouver) has copies of the GAFCON book, **"The Way, the Truth and the Life"** for \$12.95. You can order it by calling 1-800-334-3279 or from their [online bookstore \(www.regentbookstore.com\)](http://www.regentbookstore.com).

In response to a recent **Newsweek** [cover story](#) unabashedly promoting a one-sided case for homosexual marriage, a **Christianity Today** [editorial analyzes](#) the Newsweek attack on traditional Christian belief, showing that it failed miserably in making its case and seriously misrepresented the views of those who would argue against same-sex unions. *“While we do not expect Newsweek to excel in theological or biblical argument, we do expect that respected magazine to practice good journalism—like presenting the actual arguments of one's opponents, and being fair to the context of quoted sources.*

Several years ago, **Dr Edith Humphrey** [wrote a defense](#) of Christian marriage, published in Christianity Today, employing Scriptures, history and church tradition to counter revisionists' arguments for normalizing homosexuality and blessing same-sex relationships.

Also [responding](#) to the Newsweek article, respected theologian, **Dr Robert Gagnon** says... *“Religious proponents of gay marriage routinely ignore or twist the major arguments in Scripture and philosophy against homosexual practice. The cover story by Religion Editor Lisa Miller in the Dec. 15, 2008 issue of Newsweek, wholeheartedly endorsed by Managing Editor Jon Meacham, is a perfect case in point.”* Gagnon then masterfully exposes and destroys this “hopelessly distorted and one-sided propoganda piece” masquerading as journalism. Gagnon is a renowned expert on the subject of sexuality and the Bible.

Passionate commitment to mission

St Stephen's, an ANiC parish in St John's Newfoundland, has been prayerfully seeking ways to reach out to their new community. Last weekend, 10 people from St Stephen's visited 100 households to introduce the parish to the neighbourhood and invite people to Christmas services. Pray that many will visit St Stephen's over the Christmas season and find new life in Christ.

The Diocese of Sydney [has posted research](#) that shows non-church people are more open than we might think to contact with the church. They suggest that Christmas is the perfect time to reach out to our neighbours.

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Many churches have found the **ALPHA program** helpful in reaching out to the unchurched. In the most recent American Anglican Council weekly email update, a church shared the “secrets of their success” in running ALPHA. These included:

- **Prayer** coverage, and lots of it: Their team members arrive almost 90 minutes before the evening begins, to pair up and pray for each other, to worship, and to pray for the participants. In addition, they have intercessory prayer teams praying before, during and after ALPHA concludes.
- **Train EVERYBODY** on the team: Not only the speakers and small group facilitators and plants... but also the hospitality team, the dinner team, the greeters, etc.
- **Follow the schedule exactly:** Don't change the topics around. Don't shorten or omit the Holy Spirit weekend. Don't introduce prayer until after you have done the talk on prayer.

- **Major on hospitality:** Make the ALPHA dinner the best meal of the week for those who attend. Serve Starbucks coffee. Have the best possible childcare. Season all conversation around the meal with grace and acceptance and genuine interest in the non-church interests and activities of those attending.
- **Don't worry** about diminishing numbers over time: Instead, look around and observe who is there. Almost every ALPHA starts with a huge attendance by members of the church... but in the end, the real measure is how many unchurched people we are reaching. Heidi believes every church needs to give it at least three years to do this.

Just for fun

Who says church can't have a sense of humour?!



Prayer

and praise

Praise God for the orthodox North American province in formation – the Anglican Church in North America.

Please pray for Archbishop-designate **Bob Duncan** and for those involved in bringing this province to fruition – including Archbishop Greg Venables and the other GAFCon Primates.

Pray for the **leadership of ANiC** – especially Bishop Don, Bishop Malcolm and Charlie Masters.

Pray for **new ANiC congregations** as they get established and for other congregations and individuals still struggling with the question of future affiliation.

Please pray for **orthodox bishops, clergy and laity in the ACoC**, particularly for diocese that remain committed to the historic Christian faith.

Pray for those in authority over us in **government**.

Pray for our **troops in Afghanistan** during this Christmas season, for safety and for hearts that seek after God. Pray for the families and friends of those killed or wounded serving our nation.

Pray for peace in the **Congo, Palestine, Israel, Zimbabwe and Nigeria**.

And now a word from our sponsor

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Luke 2:8-14

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11