

Open Minds

The Newsletter of Albany Via Media

May, 2010

A Word from the Editors

A focus of this summer's Diocesan Convention will be a resolution sponsored by Frs. Paul Hartt and David Collum to endorse the proposed Anglican Covenant. Your Board has serious reservations about that document, in particular its Section 4.2, which deals with enforcement. If adopted as written, it would inject an element of corporate control into the Anglican Communion that has been missing from it by design. It is not surprising that the more democratic Anglican provinces, ours included, view it with skepticism.

Although the Covenant Design Group asked for advice from dioceses at each stage of the drafting process, Albany has only recently responded with a DVD prepared by Fr. Christopher Brown. As good as it is, it does not substitute for discussion. Neither Brown+ nor Bp. Love's appeal in the May *Albany Episcopalian* makes it clear why Albany should sign up now.

We share the view expressed recently by the Vestry of Christ Church, Hudson, that the Diocese of Albany should take no action on the Covenant until the Episcopal Church does so at the 2012 General Convention. To move prematurely and independently is unlikely to influence the Church's decision. It will, rather, add to tensions within this diocese and between it and the Church.

Should our Convention vote "Yes" or "No" on the Covenant this summer? We believe that a third choice is preferable: "Wait."

Lots of news has accumulated since the last issue of *Open Minds*. Fortunately, AVM's other media, the website and blog, have been active. We particularly recommend the blog, on

which you will find heartening evidence that the diocesan left, right, and center are beginning to converse. Read all about it, or better still, *get your own oars in the water!*

Bob and Marya Dodd
Editors

Albany Via Media's Mission

After considerable discussion, your Board of Directors settled on the following updated mission statement for AVM:

“Albany Via Media, being loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ, and as faithful members of the Episcopal Church, acknowledge and affirm that we are dedicated to maintaining and protecting the faith, unity, and vitality of the Diocese of Albany as part of the Episcopal Church, the theologically diverse, loving, and inclusive expression of the Anglican tradition in America.”

The Anglican Covenant: Too hot, too cold, just right, or...?

In the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, the heroine tries three bowls of porridge in the bears' house and finds one “too hot,” one “too cold,” and the third “just right.” The proposed Anglican Covenant, which is making the rounds of the 38 Anglican provinces in search of majority approval, is like the bears' porridge. Some find it too hot: too confining for progressive provinces like The Episcopal Church, Canada, Wales, Scotland, and much of the Church of England. Other provinces, including most in Africa, find it too cold: too permissive to force innovative national churches like ours to either toe an orthodox line or leave the Anglican Communion. A communique issued after the recent Global South Encounter called for sterner demands on signatories and a more powerful oversight body: the Primates Meeting.

Does no one find the Covenant “just right?” Its loyal friends are few, but they include Albany's Diocesan and its Standing Committee. They endorsed it last October and are now pushing this summer's Convention to follow suit. To add pressure to do so, Archbishop Drexel Gomez, Chair of the Communion's Covenant Design Group, will be the principal speaker at Convention.

Albany is not quite alone – the dioceses of Dallas and Central Florida have endorsed the Covenant as it stands or will soon do so – but it is significant that other conservative dioceses have not done so. Why must Albany make a decision now that the national Church will not – indeed cannot – make until the next General Convention? Why not follow the lead of the Province of Aoteroa, New Zealand, and Polynesia, whose next General Convention is, like ours, two years away? After a full day of discussion, its May synod endorsed the non-controversial descriptive sections of the Covenant, committed to give further discussion of the troublesome Section 4, and deferred a decision on the whole document until 2012.

Proposed in the 2004 Windsor Report and promoted by the Archbishop of Canterbury as the best way to unify the troubled Anglican Communion, the Covenant has had just the opposite effect. Jim Naughton described the present situation very well on *Episcopal Café*.

“Though various factions throughout the Communion have complained about the Covenant, no faction has said definitively that it will not sign it. Why? Because everyone involved in this charade understands that the first party to walk away from the table loses. The Global South can’t work its will on the Communion if it refuses to participate in its governing structures. The Episcopal and Canadian Churches can’t defend themselves from further incursions if they bail out. Regardless of how much theological prattle ensues, the decisions on whether to sign the document will be made on entirely political grounds.”

Although we must wait two years for our Church’s official reaction to the Covenant, Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori spoke for many of us when she addressed the 2009 Convention of the Diocese of Central New York:

“My personal opinion,” she said in response to a question, “is that [the Covenant] is really an inappropriate structural response to a situation that is going to become more and more common. My shorthand is that it’s an Enlightenment response to a Post-Modern problem. Building more structure is not going to fix the challenge of living in a diverse community. *The challenge of living in a diverse community is most effectively responded to by building more relationships, not by building walls, and that’s hard work.* It’s easier just to say, ‘well, you’re not doing what we want, so goodbye.’ That’s not a Christian way of responding, that’s not living into the love poured out in Christ, in my understanding.” (Emphasis added)

Is the Anglican Covenant too hot, too cold, or just right? Maybe it’s just undercooked: It needs more time to simmer on the back of the stove. A comment that Father Frank Wade made during his address to Albany Via Media on April 10 is relevant here:

“History shows us that it takes a long time for theological views to take shape or to reshape. We have made terrible mistakes when we have sought premature conformity on theological issues. The Inquisition, religious wars, the Pope and the Patriarch excommunicating one another, persecutions, crusades, pogroms, holocausts and hatred are all fruits of that impulse.”

Does “Be still and know” spring to mind?

Robert T. Dodd

The Reappearance of +Dan Herzog

You may recall that after he retired as Bishop of Albany in 2007, +Daniel Herzog resigned from Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church and returned to the Roman Catholic Church. On April 29, at Bp. Love’s request and after due consultation, the Presiding Bishop rescinded Bp. Dan’s resignation and reinstated him to the ordained ministry in this Church.

Inasmuch as Bp. Herzog has been physically present at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center for the last three years, it would be inaccurate to say that he has *returned* to the Diocese of Albany. That he has *reappeared* has delighted the many Albany Episcopalians who regretted losing him to Rome. Bp. Herzog will give Bp. Love badly needed help in our huge Diocese and his presence may make it unnecessary to strain an already tight budget by electing a suffragan.

Albany Via Media was openly critical of Bp. Dan when he was our Diocesan, and we continue to believe that he led Albany into missteps whose consequences linger today. However, it would be graceless not to acknowledge that his enthusiasm for the Anglican Communion Network also led to the creation of AVM, which continues to give voice, hope, and fellowship to



moderate and progressive Albany Episcopalians. As Fr. Frank Wade told the congregation of St. Luke’s, Saranac Lake, on March 11, “Our differences are among the greatest gifts we have to give one another.”

Welcome back, Bishop Dan!

Breaking New Ground in Los Angeles

On Saturday, May 15, 3000 people gathered in Los Angeles's Long Beach Arena to see Diane Jardine Bruce and Mary Douglas Glasspool consecrated as bishops suffragan in the Episcopal Church. As described in *Episcopal Life Online*, it was a huge, joyous celebration replete with drums, bagpipes, a mariachi band, and a 125-voice choir whose selections reflected the rich diversity of the Diocese of Los Angeles. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori served as the chief of seven consecrating bishops. The others included +Barbara Harris, who, 22 years ago, became the first woman bishop in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

This was, of course, no routine consecration. Simultaneous elevation of two women to the episcopate would be newsworthy, but +Mary Glasspool became the second partnered homosexual bishop and the first lesbian bishop in the Church. As was true seven years ago when V. Gene Robinson became the Bishop of New Hampshire, reactions to the consecration ranged from joy to outrage. The Rev. Susan Russell, former President of Integrity USA, said, "What we do here today isn't just for this diocese but...it's a beacon of hope to everyone looking for a community willing to lead in love, justice, and compassion for all people." Leaders of England's conservative Anglican Mainstream said, "Sadly, this shows that TEC has now explicitly decided to walk apart from most of the rest of the Communion." They added that a consequence should be the Episcopal Church "withdrawing or being excluded from the Anglican Communion's representative bodies."

In anticipation of negative reactions at home and overseas, the Presiding Bishop wrote to her fellow primates in March, when Rev. Canon Mary Glasspool had received enough consents to be consecrated:

"Know that this not the decision of one person, or a small group of people," she wrote. "It represents the mind of the majority of elected leaders in the Episcopal Church, lay, clergy, and bishops, who have carefully considered the opinions and feelings of other members of the Anglican Communion as well as the decades-long conversations within this Church. It represents a prayerful and thoughtful decision, made in good faith that this Church is 'working out its salvation in fear and trembling, believing that God is at work in us.' (Phillippians 2: 12-13)."

Or, as Mary Glasspool told a gathering of media on the eve of her consecration, "We are being the church that we say we are."

Robert T. Dodd

Homing Chickens

At the Metropolitan - Hudson pre-Convention meeting earlier this month, the diocesan Treasurer shared the quarterly Assessment Status Report with us . It paints a sorry picture: At a time of year when parishes should have paid a third of their assessment, 24 – almost a quarter – have paid less than 10%. Half of these have paid nothing.

No doubt some such parishes have legitimate reasons for falling behind -- unexpected capital expenses, shrunken endowment income in a sour economy – but they include several churches whose large assessments suggest financial strength. *When a progressive parish with a high assessment pays little or nothing to the diocese, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that the reason is political.* Are they responding negatively to Parish Choice?

Two Conventions ago, AVM backed a resolution to do away with the practice of allowing parishes to divert assessment money from the national Church to diocesan preferences. At that time, a priest of conservative bent described Parish Choice as immoral: She called it “fighting with God’s money.” During discussion of the resolution at Convention, another conservative priest asked whether progressive parishes might not stiff the diocese just as conservative ones do the Episcopal Church.

The new assessment data suggest that some people were listening and are making their own choices. *Are the Parish Choice chickens starting to come home to roost?*



Frank Wade Speaks to Albany Via Media

On Saturday afternoon, April 10, members and friends of AVM gathered at St. Paul’s, Albany, to hear the Rev. Dr. Francis H. Wade speak on “Communion, Covenant and Conversation: Being Episcopal and Anglican.” Father Frank, the retired Rector of St. Alban’s Church in Washington, D.C., is an expert on relations between our Church and the Anglican Communion – a very hot topic today. His address dealt with the importance of community to Christians, the ways in which stress and can lead us to grasp for authoritarian solutions, and the importance of staying in conversation with those with different views. His excellent speech is available through a link on the AVM website, albanyviamedia.org.

On Sunday, April 11, Father Frank gave a provocative sermon on Doubting Thomas at St. Luke's Church, Saranac Lake. Reprinted on the AVM blog (drbones.typepad.com), it has sparked a lively conversation.

A Word from Our President

Greetings,

We at AVM are proud to be Episcopalians.

We are proud of our goals and programs. Our website and blog offer open means to discuss Episcopal actions within the Diocese of Albany.

For Albany Via Media to survive, we must depend on donations. We charge no annual dues. We are an incorporated organization.

Please support our ministry with your contributions. Send them to:

John White, Treasurer, AVM
c/o St. Andrew's Church
10 North Main Avenue
Albany, NY 12203

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
C. R. Touby
President