



September 2005

ENCOMPASS

News and Events from the American Anglican Council Mission and Ministry Network

Christ Church, Savannah: A Leader for Orthodoxy

BY CYNTHIA P. BRUST, EXEC. EDITOR

Christ Church, Savannah, has a strong and proud heritage as the Mother Church of Georgia, with its former rectors including both John Wesley and George Whitefield. Established in 1733, Christ Church celebrates that it has consistently stood on the one foundation of Jesus Christ as Lord. In the wake of the severe crisis the Episcopal Church has experienced since General Convention 2003, Christ Church has re-dedicated itself to being a Great Commission parish that not only upholds the Gospel in word and deed but also seeks to help other congregations embrace such a commitment.

Christ Church is actively sharing the story of its journey with other churches in order to motivate them to take an orthodox stand. This vision, fueled by prayer, has been years in the making and has developed from struggle and conflict. Church leaders

say the process has transformed them as individuals and as a congregation:

"When I came to Christ Church 14 years ago, it seemed to be running out of steam," said the Rev. Dr. Marc Robertson, Christ Church's rector. "The parish had experienced charismatic renewal in the '70s and went through its own flavor of turmoil in the midst of that period. By January 1992, renewal had lost some of the wind in its sails."

While the church was relatively stable, it did not seem to have a strong vision for ministry and had perhaps grown comfortable with the familiar—its traditions. As with most churches within the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA), the effects of revisionism had dulled evangelical fervor for some.

"I was from an evangelical background and held a strong

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Christ Church, Savannah.

AAC Leaders Meeting - Atlanta, GA - July 29-30, 2005

AAC: Where We Are, Where We Want to Be, & How We Get There

BY CYNTHIA P. BRUST, EXEC. EDITOR

The American Anglican Council (AAC) hosted a meeting for leaders from across the country July 29-30, 2005 at the AAC headquarters in Atlanta. Meeting objectives included building a common understanding of the mission and work of the AAC; getting to know other leaders in a small group setting; sharing ideas by hearing about the work of a variety of leaders; and discussing ways to work with specific problems that affect leadership teams.

"Our conversation was lively, and we didn't shy away from the hard topics," said the Rev. Canon David C. Anderson, AAC President. "This group of highly motivated men and women represent the vibrant and ever-growing sector of the Anglican Communion in North America. I am more convinced than ever that the work of the AAC is critical to realignment, and we need to build on the outstanding foundation of leaders we have."

Linda Newton, AAC Affiliates Administrator, emphasized the importance of leaders working in tandem given the diverse situations in which AAC leaders function.

"Our clergy and lay leaders find themselves in a variety of situations. Some have moderate bishops, some have orthodox bishops, and some have hostile revisionist bishops within ECUSA," Ms. Newton explained. "Still others are under the oversight of orthodox bishops in other provinces. We also find that our leaders are called to minister in congregations and situations with varying levels of awareness and commitment."

Staff presentations included the "Battle for the Soul of the Church" by Canon Anderson; "The Role of the AAC"



Left photo courtesy of Stand Firm Mississippi; right photo by the AAC.

Above Left: AAC President David Anderson speaking at the recent Leaders Meeting in July. Above Right: Wylene and Angus Graham, active AAC members of Bradenton, Fla., who made one of the several presentations by AAC leaders at the recent meeting in Atlanta.

by Canon Ellis E. Brust, Chief Operating Officer of the AAC; "Communications" by AAC Communications Director Cynthia Brust; and "Synergy: Leveraging Actions that Bear Fruit" by Ms. Newton. Clergy and lay leaders also offered their experience, insights and recommendations on a variety of topics, including motivating and educating both the laity and congregations about the AAC and Anglican Communion Network (ACN); using the Internet and web as effective education and communication tools; building synergy between the AAC and the ACN; new church start-ups; motivation and education using guest speakers; lay deployment and ministry; and communicating nationally and internationally. Presenters included: Bill Boniface, Dr. Tom Carmody, Andy Figueroa, Dr. Angus and Wylene Graham, Ralinda Gregor, Greg Griffith, Debbie Kollgaard, Dan Muth, Betty Lee Payne, Carol Rogers Smith, Ted Sluis, and Doug

"Leaders" continued on Page 4

AAC Mission Statement Revised

The Board of Trustees of the American Anglican Council (AAC) has voted to revise the organization's Mission Statement, including the AAC Covenant. These revisions better reflect the vision and ministry of the AAC today. The AAC continues to work with individuals, congregations and dioceses that remain within the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) as well as those in the United States which are affiliated with other provinces of the Anglican Communion. In addition, the organization maintains a strong international ministry working with various provinces as well as groups around the world. The revised Mission Statement and Covenant are below.

Mission Statement

The American Anglican Council is a network of individuals (laity, deacons, priests and bishops), parishes and specialized ministries who affirm Biblical authority and Christian orthodoxy within the Anglican Communion. In response to the Lord's calling and by His grace, we commit ourselves to proclaim the Good News to every person and to reform and renew the Church of Jesus Christ. We are uniting in order to fulfill our apostolic mission and ministry, working to build a faithful Anglican witness in America.

WE COVENANT:

FOR COMMITMENT

To encourage individuals to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and live a holy life in the power of the Holy Spirit;

FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

To educate and provide resources for congregations which are the center of the Church's life and mission;

FOR BIBLICAL FAITH

To strengthen, inform, connect and mobilize people of Biblical faith who will stand for Jesus amidst the challenges of contemporary culture and false teaching within the Church;

FOR LEADERSHIP

To recruit, form and deploy a new generation of Church leaders committed to upholding Biblical orthodoxy;

FOR WITNESS

To uphold the Great Commission mandate to make disciples as the primary purpose of the Church;

FOR ONE ANOTHER

To build up the Body of Christ through faithful prayer, shared resources, and unyielding commitment to one another in pursuit of the Lord's work.



Message from the President

BY THE REV. CANON DAVID C. ANDERSON
AAC President and CEO

While the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) continues in a status quo manner as though no crisis exists, those who are Biblically faithful and committed to the Anglican Communion continue to organize and prepare for what seems to many to be inevitable: the decision by ECUSA to walk apart from the Anglican Communion. One of the most encouraging experiences I have had lately is our recent Leaders Meeting. To see a gathering so bright, passionate, committed, articulate, energetic, capable and action-oriented filled me with joy. These individuals are truly soldiers in the battle for the soul of the Church. Throughout this edition of *Encompass* you will see examples of the strategic and pastoral ministry these saints assume, and I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their service.

One of the major projects before us now is preparation for General Convention 2006 to be held in Columbus, Ohio. As we work with various leaders in preparing for next summer, we ask you to pray for us in our strategic planning. In addition, I ask you to consider making a special donation to cover the sizable costs of working Convention. Our goals for General Convention are simple; we want to ensure that every man, woman, youth, congregation and diocese of the Episcopal Church is confronted with the question before that body: "choose this day whom you shall serve."

Congregations often ask about the benefits of affiliating with the AAC. There are a number of strong reasons to affiliate, but brand identification is central. Affiliating with the AAC, using our logo, and being listed on the affiliates page of our website immediately identifies you as a Gospel-centered congregation. Individual membership has the same impact. This is especially important as we approach General Convention. If you and your church are not already affiliated with the AAC, I encourage you to do so as soon as possible. You can join individually online or contact Linda Newton to affiliate as a congregation or ministry (E-mail: lnewton@americananglican.org). There are loyal orthodox Episcopalians all over the country looking for a spiritually safe congregation to worship with. ♦

New AAC Chapters & Districts

The American Anglican Council (AAC) is delighted to welcome three new chapters recently approved by the Board of Trustees. Chapters organized in **Oregon, South-eastern Wisconsin, and West Virginia** join the ranks of groups around the nation who have chosen to take a stand for orthodoxy.

In light of the growing numbers of chapters and leaders, the AAC has organized chapters and orthodox partners into geographic districts. These districts align with the Anglican Communion Network (ACN) Convocations but also incorporate ACN dioceses.

AAC Leadership Districts:

- District 1 - New England District
- District 2 - Mid-Atlantic District
- District 3 - Southeastern District
- District 4 - Mid-Continental District
- District 5 - Western District

Christ Church (continued from Page 1)

view of the authority of Scripture, but I was also young and loved being rector of Christ Church," Dr. Robertson explained. "I think I compromised my beliefs in some ways by holding too tightly to my position as a prize. I preached from personal conviction of the Gospel, but I didn't carry that out in other quadrants of leadership, teaching the committees to think Biblically, because I didn't want to bump heads. I had one foot on the boat and the other on the dock, but by General Convention 2000, the boat was moving too far, and I was going to fall into the water. I had a growing unease with the revisionism within the Episcopal Church."

Christ Church reached a low point in 2001 with the vestry and rector at odds, but the Holy Spirit intervened. Through a series of events, leaders experienced brokenness and repentance followed by a process of healing and restoration.

"Just prior to Advent 2001, a men's Bible study fasted and prayed for four weeks, praying that God's will would be done in our church," said Carol Rogers Smith, Christ Church vestry member. "I believe this prayer was a catalyst for our healing and a turning point for Christ Church."

Dr. Robertson noted that transformation was incremental rather than demonstrated in an "epiphany moment", and he emphasized that he and the vestry had to work hard to facilitate the healing process.

"Toward the end of 2002 and the beginning of 2003, the wind came back into our sails," he said.

With the parish back on an even keel and buoyed by renewed commitment, Christ Church began to focus on the future. As early as February 2003, Dr. Robertson grew increasingly concerned about the upcoming General Convention of the Episcopal Church and sought to prepare his congregation.

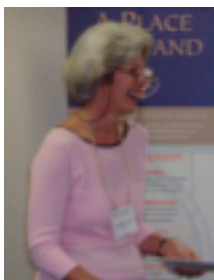


Photo by the AAC.

Carol Rogers Smith, a Christ Church vestry member, speaking at the recent AAC Leaders Meeting in Atlanta in July. Mrs. Smith also serves on the AAC/Georgia Board.

Christ Church leaders used a variety of tools to prepare and educate their congregation. They held seven parish forums and a series of Sunday School classes, and to this day continue to inform the congregation through a standing article on the "state of the church" in the church's monthly newsletter.

Mrs. Smith noted this decision was critical to the well-being of the church: "There was a leadership group who had been praying for the Church globally and who were very concerned about our not taking a stand," she said.

"They would have walked away if we had not taken such a strong stand, and now many of these individuals are on the vestry."

A group from Christ Church attended the American Anglican Council (AAC) conference, "A Place to Stand: Declaring, Preparing", in October 2003. The attendees came away with a common sense of mission centered on the transforming power of God in their lives. In June 2004, Christ Church made the decision to affiliate with both the AAC and the Anglican Communion Network (ACN). Their affiliation followed months of study and conversation and was not an issue-driven determination.

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-The Rev. Dr. Marc Robertson

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In the last year, Christ Church has moved forward in mission and ministry, hosting along with its sister church, St. John's, two conferences last fall focused on lay leadership. Another ministry component was a call to be "faithful in prayer, witness and action to our Anglican faith and order." The vestry prepared and commissioned teams to present the "orthodox case". Team members have worked with some 30 churches in eight states and 10 dioceses, offering their stories, strategies and prayers as they seek to motivate others to take a stand.

"Our major goal is to prepare each person, each parish, each diocese to make a choice," Mrs. Smith said.

The ministry is designed to be multi-level, working parishioner to parishioner, vestry to vestry, warden to warden, priest to priest.

Leaders emphasize that prayer is the foundation of each step.

"We are building relationships and networks for the primary purpose of promoting the Gospel of Christ," Dr. Robertson said. "We can't sit by and let the Gospel be disregarded or threatened. We are not clear about the future, and so we are moving forward with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other just as Nehemiah did when he was rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. We are doing ministry with our trowels but are prepared to fight and defend the Gospel with our swords as well. That balance is an important part of our ministry."



Photo courtesy of Christ Church, Savannah.

The Rev. Dr. Marc Robertson preaching at Christ Church, Savannah, where he is rector. Dr. Robertson also serves on the AAC/Georgia Board.

To learn more about the Christ Church story or to plan for a team to visit your church, contact Carol Rogers Smith: CarolRogers5@Comcast.net/912-233-4556. ♦

Leaders (continued from Page 1)
Spangler.

Perhaps one of the most productive components of the meeting was brainstorming in small groups, which then reported back in plenary session. These groups focused on issues such as communication, General Convention 2006, and building orthodox relationships for cooperative efforts. A number of positive and innovative ideas were generated, as well as action items identified, in this process. For example, Brad Hutt, one of the Washington, D.C., chapter leaders, recommended geographically grouping chapters and affiliates in order for them to more effectively network and co-operate. The AAC has incorporated this suggestion and grouped chapters and partners into five AAC Leadership Districts (see Page 2). This new structure is designed to unite, strengthen and enhance the work of chapters. Chapters are encouraged to work within their district for geographical ease but at the same time to communicate and share information and resources with all other chapters.

There was also a consensus that the AAC and ACN should continue to work closely and cooperatively although existing and functioning as two separate entities.

"We hope these districts will work in cooperation with the



Photo by the AAC.

AAC leaders gathered in Atlanta in late July.

respective ACN Convocation of their area and are suggesting that a board for each district include representatives from an AAC ECUSA congregation, a non-ECUSA congregation, and the ACN," Ms. Newton said. "This model was presented by the AAC/Los Angeles chapter, whose team includes an ECUSA partner, a Uganda partner, and a Network partner among others. They also have developed a creative process for reaching out to people, and we recommend that each district consider the AAC/LA model when building relationships within their districts."

Developing a district structure is the first step in implementing several ideas from the meeting. The AAC expects to develop other plans focused on organizing, building relationships, communicating effectively, and creating partnerships.

While the Anglican Communion faces a crisis of unprecedented proportions for which there is no quick fix or one-formula answer, the AAC leaders are working using creative strategies on a variety of fronts and are committed to the realignment of Anglicanism in North America. These leaders are committed to a vision of building and equipping Great Commission churches empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel, teach the Word of God, and extend His Kingdom. ♦

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