

View from Sudan

By The Rev. Lauren R. Stanley

As the Episcopal Church's only full-time missionary in Sudan, I am seeing Christianity, and membership in the Anglican Communion, in a new light.

What I see and hear in Sudan has nothing to do with being an Anglican. No one asks me about Windsor or sexuality or pastoral oversight.

Instead, Sudanis ask, "Are you praying for us?"

They want to know, "Will you walk with us?" not just on their journeys of faith but in their entire lives.

They beg, "Do not forget us."

This is what it means for me to live and move and have my being in Renk: Sudanis presume I represent not only the whole Episcopal Church, which I do as an appointed missionary, but all of Christianity in America. Because Sudan also has close ties to the Church in England, many Sudanis also presume that I can and do speak for that portion of the Communion as well.

This is not a situation unique to me; most missionaries will tell you: Our denomination is not important.

What is important is whether we believe in Jesus, whether we pray for the people we serve, whether we are willing to walk with them in their difficult lives – and most important, in Sudan, whether we will remember them.

The 21-year civil war was brutal, pitting tribe against tribe, North against South, Arab against black, Muslim against Christian. Millions died; millions more were displaced. During that war, Christians in the South felt they were forgotten by the rest of the world. They do not want to be forgotten ever again.

Thus, my call as a missionary is to be a witness, to the Sudanis by my presence, thus reassuring them they are not forgotten, and for them through my telling of their story on their behalf. Before coming to General Convention, every Christian Sudani I knew charged me: Tell our story. Ask your people to pray for us. Do not forget us.

In their church services – which are part worship – part community gathering, all completely Sudanese, the people boldly proclaim: We have been faithful, even in the face of death.

And they boldly ask: Are you being faithful as well?

They are not just asking me personally.

They are not just asking the Episcopal Church in America.

They are not even asking the entire Anglican Communion.

They demand to know this of all Christians.

Believing in Jesus – and being faithful to Jesus – is all that matters. The work we do in Sudan is based on our personal relationships. We don't debate doctrine or dogma, Windsor or DEPO or Dromantine. We worry about famine and continuing war, about a lack of education and a lack of medicine. We care for the sick, seek peace, work for justice, teach reconciliation. We work one on one. We preach Jesus.

This is how we are faithful in Sudan.

For me, it is a refreshing approach to living out my faith.

And it has nothing to do with being an Anglican.

But it has everything to do with being a Christian. •

The High Table

A guide to area gastronomy

Un-Conventional Food & Fun

By Patrick Getlein

Well, it's almost the weekend again. And if you recall from my first food column, a person could starve downtown on the weekend. Fortunately, this weekend will be different. Some downtown restaurants and businesses normally closed will have weekend hours to glean traffic from the Columbus Festival Latino, the largest Hispanic/Latin event in Ohio, which runs Friday and Saturday, noon to midnight at the downtown riverfront. Over 30 food vendors will be on site serving up delicacies (and non-) from Puerto Rico, Colombia, Dominican Republic and, well, Columbus: fajitas, paella, tacos, bratwurst and cotton candy. The best part about the festival: it's free (and even 6.75% x 0 is still 0). The festival also features dancing, four music stages and a host of ethnic (and non-) craftspeople.

Other places to get good eats and have some un-Conventional fun this weekend: **Minor**



League Baseball – The Columbus Clippers (farm for the Yankees) vs. Syracuse Skychiefs (farm for Toronto), Sat., 7:05 p.m., Sun., 1:05 p.m.; **Grillmasters Festival** featuring grilling demonstrations, samples, contests, and music, Saturday, 9-5 p.m., North Market, 59 Spruce St. (Short North), free; **Juneteenth Ohio Festival** celebrating African-American history runs from noon-7 Friday and noon-8:30 p.m. Saturday and features food, live music and local entertainment. •

Time continued

2008 Lambeth Conference, time to engage fully in the listening process endorsed by Windsor for the communion. We might even gain time for our church to focus on the ministry of reconciliation in society called for yesterday by former Sen. John Danforth.

A moratorium is only one part of a Windsor response that must include reaffirming the full and equal claim of gay and lesbian people for membership in the Body of Christ. But a temporary moratorium does offer a precious advantage for those on a pilgrimage – time. •

Wheat & Chaff

Stop the clock!

Someone, never identified, decided the official timer for Committee 26's big hearing Wednesday night couldn't be trusted, and timed every single speaker for him or herself. The constant beeping – often during testimony and despite warnings to cease and desist – was presumptuous, inconsiderate, detracted from the hearings and distracted those present. Stop the clock!



Center Aisle

'The middle is not the midpoint on a line between two extremes. In the life of faith, the great bulk of people are at the center, and that center is faith in the Risen Christ.'

The Pastoral Address to the 210th Annual Council of the Diocese of Virginia, 2005, the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee

Perspective

Wake Up Before It Is Late

The Rt. Rev. Riah Abu Al-Essal, Bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East, spoke with Center Aisle Wednesday about the five resolutions concerning Israel and Palestine. Bishop Riah also reflected on the advertisement that has run in USA Today from CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, which was aimed at General Convention ("An Open Letter to Our Friends in the Episcopal Church Urging Fair Treatment of Israel").

CA: This is the advertisement that ran in USA Today addressing General Convention. Do you agree with it?

Riah: [after reading the ad] Who is this group? They do not know what they are talking about. [concerning the ad's claim that only 5 percent of the wall being built by Israel is concrete] Five percent? They have not seen it. They do not know what they are talking about. This is not true.

CA: What things can be done that are supportive and helpful for Christians in the Middle East?

Riah: First, the end of illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the support of the U.S. administration for the U.N. resolutions relating to the illegal occupation (by Israel) and the need to comply with those resolutions. Second, the removal of all stumbling blocks on the way to peace – the separation wall,



Riah Abu Al-Essal

particular in Jerusalem and Israel.

CA: What do you think about the resolutions under consideration?

Riah: On A011, the first two points are good, but please add, "in accordance with U.N. resolutions." On point three, yes, (but emphasize) "shared capital of two independent states." Points four, five and six are fine. For point seven, add "and anti-Palestinianism." A012, A013, A014 and A015 – yes.

CA: What can you say to us about the election of Hamas to govern Palestine?

Riah: You should recognize those elected by the best democratic process anywhere in the world, supervised by (former) President Carter and all those with him, and try to negotiate an end to violence (with Hamas). Otherwise, stop talking about democracy and democratizing the Middle East. You can't talk about it and then not support it when it happens.

CA: What else *continued on TWO*

For additional and expanded analysis and opinions, visit us at www.centeraisle.net. Or subscribe to our daily e-mail push at <http://www.centeraisle.net/listserv.html>. We'll send out a notice each night when the next day's content is ready for viewing.

"Where can I find the Center Aisle?"
By about 6:45 each morning, you can find it on the General Convention info desk in the lobby of your hotel. You also can find it in the Convention Center on the desk near the volunteer kiosk by the main escalators. And of course, we're distributing by hand each morning around town and outside the Convention Center.

Center Aisle is an opinion journal offered by the Diocese of Virginia as a gift to General Convention. We offer analysis and opinions from a variety of sources that reflect the transformational center of our church.

Editorial

Who's Next ?

The Rt. Rev. Charles Jenkins wins the award for coming up with the most down-to-earth metaphor for the job of presiding bishop.

The Bishop of Louisiana, one of seven nominees to succeed Frank Griswold, likened the job to a grain of sand in an oyster. Aside from the fact that it's hard to fault a Gulf Coast Episcopalian for thinking about seafood, Bishop Jenkins' analogy seems oddly on point.

That grain of sand can produce a pearl—a result that can be wonderful to behold. But the process of making that pearl can be grainy, even a little dirty.

No pearl-maker at 815 Second Avenue will have an easy go of it over the next nine years. But deputies and bishops should keep in mind that certain key traits and experiences will measurably improve the odds of success. Here are a few: *continued on THREE*

Editorial

Time and Timing

How are we doing on Windsor issues? Check back in 36 hours – or maybe 30. All of a sudden, it's all about time. But remember this: The Windsor Report doesn't call for a final resolution of differences this week or next. It's part of a process, a pilgrimage.

So let's not overlook the possibilities for more time. What would we gain from a moratorium on the election and consent to new bishops who are living in same-gender unions, at least until we gather in 2009 for the 76th General Convention?

We'd gain time to assess the possibilities for consensus at the *continued on FOUR*

Letter to the Editor

We're interested in our opinions—and yours!

E-mail your comments, analyses and reactions to centeraisle@thediocese.net or bring them to our offices in Room 30 on the third floor of the Columbus Renaissance Hotel.

Candor is welcome. So is brevity. Shoot for 80 words or less.

Windsor Proposals Wanting

The Diocese of Virginia, with great pride likes to bill itself as “centrist” – it even has the audacity to bill its publication the “Center Aisle.” Oh yes, it is in the center of a denomination which has treated one group of members, commonly referred to as being on the “right” side of the aisle, with great hostility. The denomination has moved steadily in one direction and those who can't come with us – on the ordination of women, on the revised hymnal, on the revised Prayer Book, on inclusive language – as expendable. Consequently, this wing of the denomination no longer exists. We've destroyed an entire transept and now, prideful, call the aisle which runs between the main nave and the liturgical north end the “center aisle.”

While I support those changes I mentioned, that does not mean that I, standing on my own, can lay claim to the “center aisle” either. We must look to see where the Church as a whole is and measure it against the plumb line which is set forth in the Word of God.

In the past, as noted in the excellent article by Julia E. Randle, the Diocese of Virginia was

complicit in the slave economy. I'm sure the Diocese thought the center aisle supported this endeavor. Today, we think our rightness allows us to drive out those who disagree with us. At the last General Convention, we threw down the gauntlet and decided that anyone who disagrees with the ordination of a non-celibate homosexual is also outside the bounds of Christian fellowship.

The Anglican Communion world wide has begged ECUSA to turn back. We are called to mend the tear that we have caused to the fabric of the Communion.

Will we choose to repent and return to the Communion? Or will we merely express regret that the rest of the Communion feels hurt (as expressed by unsigned editorial “How Many ‘R's in Windsor?”)?

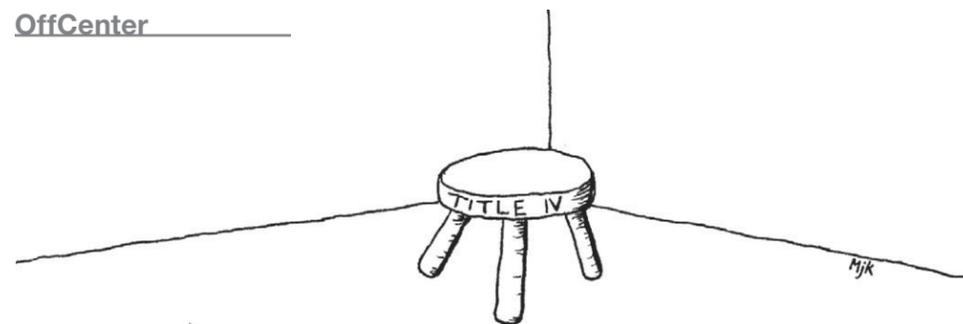
Bishop Tom Wright of Durham, one of the authors of the Windsor Report has reviewed the draft proposals being offered by ECUSA and found them wanting, concluding:

“If [the resolutions as introduced] are passed without amendment, ECUSA will have specifically, deliberately and knowingly decided not to comply with Windsor.”

WILLIAM P. SULIK
SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

Editor's note: A link to N.T. Wright's review of the Episcopal Church's response to Windsor is linked from Mr. Sulik's complete letter at www.centeraisle.net.

OffCenter



Bishop Lee



Jones



Ohmer



Stanley



Antolini



Fawcett



Kerr



Getlein

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Distribution: The Rev. Percy Grant, Ben Bradshaw, Thomas Eaves, Abraham Thomas



Wake Up *continued*

would you say to us at General Convention?

Riah: Wake up before it is late. Wake up to the mission entrusted to us by God. As Paul would say, God was in Christ reconciling the world to him, and he entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to us. But reconciliation in no way sets aside the search for justice. The search for justice implies giving sight to the blind, opening the eyes of the people to ... the facts on the ground. Otherwise, we are speaking in abstract terms that very few people understand and far less think of implementing. Wake up before it is late. Try to protect, preserve and sustain whatever is left of the indigenous Christians in the birthplace of our faith. Wake up before it is late and the land of the Holy One becomes a museum of holy stones rather than a place with a lively Christian community testifying to the death and to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, in whose name we meet and for whose sake and the sake of his Gospel we gather and confer. •

Committee Hearings: June 16

Structure: 7:30 a.m., Franklin AB, OH on D059,D060, Reg. 15 min. prior; 8:00 a.m. Franklin AB, Deliberations on A104, A107, A108,A135,D059,D060.

Natl./Int.: 8 a.m., Delaware A, OH on A016,B013,B014,D016,D020, Reg. 15 min. prior

Social & Urban: 7:30 a.m., Delaware BC, OH on A167,D028, Reg. 15 min. prior

Churches in Sm. Comm.: 8 a.m., Madison, OH on D057, Reg. 10 min. prior

Evangelism: 7:30 a.m., Fairfield OH on B023,D058, Reg. 15 min. prior

Prayer Bk., Lit. & Music: 7:30 a.m., Franklin CD, OH on B016,D041, Reg. 15 min. prior

Ch. Pens. Fd: 7:30 a.m., Knox, OH on D048, D065, D075, Reg. 15 min. prior

PB & F: 7:30 a.m., Conv. Ctr., D233, Exec. Sess. on D233-235; 7:45 a.m. OH on A149, Reg. 15 min. prior; 1 p.m. Exec. Sess. on D233

Spec. Comm.: 7:30 a.m., Hayes Comm., deliberation on A160-163, A165, C004, C014, C025, C038, C042

Virginia Voices

Liturgies of Passage: Pass some, pass on others

By The Rev. Victoria Heard

In Virginia Voices, Center Aisle features the diverse viewpoints of the deputation from the Diocese of Virginia on key issues facing General Convention. Today Victoria Heard, diocesan missionary for church planting, tackles the liturgical proposals.

Buried in the Blue Book (pp. 131-225) is a series of collects and liturgies that address times of passage. They were designed to be inclusive and culturally diverse, and are proposed to be published on a par with the *Book of Occasional Services*.

There also are funeral liturgies for *Enriching Our Worship*. They would be available for provisional use, and only with the permission of the bishop. The funeral liturgies are thoughtful and well-crafted, if you allow for the predictable

Who's Next *continued*

Inspirational Leadership:

We need a presiding bishop who will be energetic and inspiring in calling us together as a diverse but united community of faith. Reacting to the crisis of the day is not enough.

We applaud Bishop Neil Alexander of Atlanta for urging us to be “proactive to those who are upset” and to be bold in a commitment to hold the church together.

However, he is perceived by some to have flip-flopped on key issues of human sexuality—a perception that could cause problems in the Communion.

Though structures in our national church may be in need of reinvention, the authority of the presiding bishop is more rooted in relationships than structures. That's why his or her credibility and personal style of leadership are so critical.

Refocusing on Mission:

All the nominees have, quite rightly, emphasized this point. But it's important to review the track records to see who has moved beyond talk to action.

Edwin Gulick, the bishop of Kentucky, may not be one of our most powerful speakers. But he has demonstrated the power of mission to override disagreements. In his diocese, as in others, conservative and liberal parishes have come together in the name of Katrina relief. Also, Bishop

prejudice against language mentioning men.

Reading the liturgies of passage, however, I was reminded of the joke about why you'd rather meet a terrorist than a liturgist in a dark alley. The punch line: “You can reason with a terrorist.”

For children, there are collects for moving from crib to bed, riding a bike, going to school and “For Reaching Puberty.” Somehow, potty training was omitted. There's also a clutter of uneven collects for dating, divorcing, joining the military and getting out of jail. By contrast, there are good attempts for celebrating special birthdays like *Quinceaneras* and one for celebrating, say, an 80th birthday.

Some of these liturgies are not ready for use, due to an excess of sentiment and infelicitous wording. Some phrases are hyper-

Gulick has been intentional about establishing Jubilee Centers throughout his diocese.

Broad and Deep Personal Experience:

The folks in the parish pews are still the lifeblood of our church. Rectors have a particularly valuable opportunity to connect to that part of our faith community.

The seven nominees' resumes range from decades of parish service to none at all.

Bishops Alexander and Katharine Jefferts Schori of Nevada, in particular, lack significant service at the parish level.

However, Bishop Jefferts Schori does claim a background that demonstrates how life outside the church can be an empowering experience. A Ph.D. in oceanography, she brings a scientist's perspective to her spiritual life. Another example is Bishop Alexander, who draws from his experiences as a former Lutheran clergyman and a seminary theologian.

Staff management will be another key challenge for the new PB. Experience in running large and complex organizations would be helpful. We note, however, that Bishops Jenkins, Jefferts Schori, Francisco Duque-Gomez of Colombia and Stacy Sauls of Lexington have presided over small dioceses that could leave them ill-prepared for the demands at 815.

Mutual Submission:

Thank God we don't all agree on every

sweetened Hallmark: “May God join together all of the pieces of your lives into a fine and sturdy quilt to cover your days.” Others are odd and unmelodic: You'll find, “as we walk, run, dance, crawl, stumble, leap, and fly,” in the prayer for pilgrims. The liturgy for betrothals sounds like a do-it-yourself wedding, and could be mistaken as such by unchurched friends.

Let's approve the birthday and elder rites, and the funerals for provisional use, and hone them. Return the rest to the Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music with the following questions: Are they necessary? Are they well-crafted? Are they likely to be used to God's glory by real people going through real transitions in life? •

controversial issue. What prospects would we have for spiritual growth if dogma smothered out the diversity that has enriched our church in so many ways?

In particular, we need a leader who understands the diversity of our worldwide communion—a leader who tempers passion for principle with the humility of those at the foot of the cross.

Bishop Jenkins voted against consenting to Gene Robinson's election, and yet demonstrated loyalty to our Church and the Communion by participating in the post-Windsor presentation to the Anglican Consultative Council.

Henry Parsley, the bishop of Alabama, also voted against consenting to Gene Robinson. Though he has been criticized by some since then for taking a hard line with critics of the Convention's consent, we think his approach has been balanced.

Bishop Parsley understands that moderation and passion can go hand and hand. He eloquently captured the hope of many, when he told The Witness that “the middle way has led us into paths of wisdom and reconciliation and courage in the past, and can continue so to lead us in the future.”

No one person will determine the success of our efforts to live in unity with diversity. But the choice of a new presiding bishop will help set the tone for the critical years ahead. •

