

## ‘All Shall Be Well’

By The Rev. John Ohmer

“After all is said and done, a lot more is said than done,” the old wag goes, but our election of Katharine Jefferts Schori as our next presiding bishop may have done more to affect the future of the Episcopal Church than any other action of the General Convention.

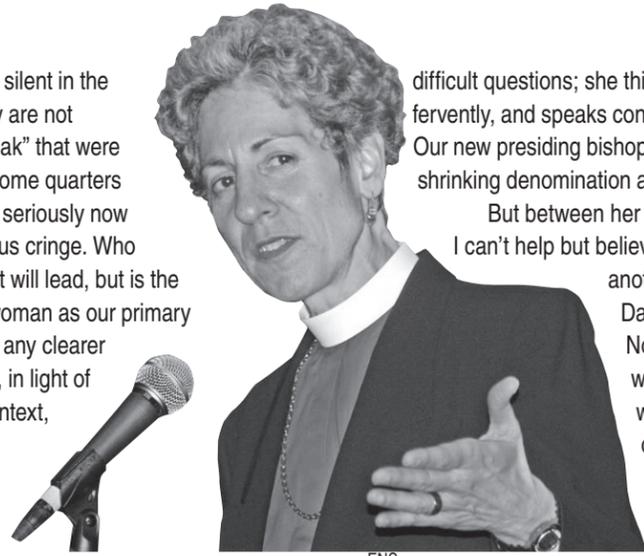
At the very least, the election kept us in the news as a relevant denomination. As one sociology professor has said, the Episcopal Church is “the California of Protestantism.” As we go, so goes the nation. We’re back in the headlines and back on CNN, more of a household name now than we were 10 days ago.

More importantly, in electing the Anglican Communion’s first female presiding bishop, we changed the face of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion forever. Those bishops – here and around the world – who object to women priests and/or women bishops must now move beyond arguing women’s ordination in principle to deciding whether or not they will recognize our primate. As it has been for a generation of women clergy, this is no longer an “issue” to be discussed. It’s personal.

The election also demonstrates an important point about the way Episcopalians interpret Scripture. Passages in Scripture, such as Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 14 that “women

should remain silent in the churches, they are not allowed to speak” that were once (and in some quarters still are) taken seriously now make most of us cringe. Who knows where it will lead, but is the election of a woman as our primary spokesperson any clearer indication that, in light of our cultural context, it is perfectly acceptable to give some passages in Scripture more authority than others?

Having had the privilege of meeting and talking in-depth with Bishop Jefferts Schori prior to this General Convention, her election has left me more excited to be an Episcopalian today than I have ever been before. The reason is simple: She’s a mensch, the good old Yiddish concept for someone who has fortitude, firmness of purpose – an upstanding person who takes responsibility for his or her actions. People will not agree with her on every issue – I don’t – but what a breath of fresh air her first press conference was: We got short, clear answers to



ENS

difficult questions; she thinks clearly, prays fervently, and speaks concisely. Our new presiding bishop-elect inherits a shrinking denomination at a difficult time. But between her and the Holy Spirit, I can’t help but believe the words of another great woman, Dame Julian of Norwich: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” •

### **Grown** *continued*

step back a pace or two to re-examine the way we relate to one another in a world where gender, race and sexual orientation sometimes have created divisions.

Chalk it up as a renewed challenge for a Church already facing many serious challenges. But isn’t that what growth is all about? Thank goodness, our Church’s goal is not numbing comfort, but transformational growth.

That’s the positive bottom line from the 75th General Convention. •

## A Gospel Beyond Words at Convention Eucharist

By The Rev. Holly Antolini

A sunrise unfolds over our heads as we enter the hall for the Convention Eucharist. Then waves seethe under a moody sky. A chalice emerges in a swirl of silver. A dove descends in a circle of stained glass. These are the Visual Preludes, expanding worship at General Convention.

Created by the Episcopal Church & the Visual Arts for the Eucharists of the 74th General Convention in Minneapolis, the Visual Preludes are the inspiration of Phoebe Griswold and sculptor-priest Gurdon Brewster. Under President Mel Ahlborn, ECVA has built a Web site (ecva.org) and attracted a growing community of artists across the Episcopal Church. This Convention’s Preludes were created in response to the daily Eucharistic lectionary by three artist-curators – Brie Dodson (Virginia), Jan Neal and Anne Wetzell – working with video artist Dan Hardison.

The images in the Visual Preludes spring from the spiritual lives and souls of 135 artists across the Episcopal Church. “Every image is a direct response to God,” says curator and Virginia painter Dodson. She describes how she begins developing a painting, and soon a Scripture verse comes to mind – a verse that intuitively becomes a shaping force in the painting, in feeling if not in content.

“My paintings are a lot about the unknown,” she observes, “sometimes moving into it, sometimes emerging from it. And they invite their viewers into the unknown.” Maine photographer and Triennium delegate Barbi Tinder finds her images in dawn walks. “I just notice the light,” she says, “and capture God’s artwork.”

“My art emerges in a conversation,” says Virginia deputy and fiber artist, the Rev. Susan

Goff. “It tells me what it wants to be. I’m only the co-creator, together with my Creator.”

“People appreciated the Preludes in 2003,” says Director Ahlborn. “By 2006, they were greeted with excitement and longing. I keep hearing, ‘How can we do this in our congregation?’ I think in our current visual culture, this artwork invites us beyond the verbal into a refreshingly new realm of the Spirit.”

Other Virginia artists who contributed to Preludes are: Anne Randolph Rechter, Goodwin House; Adrian Luxmoore, St. Paul’s, Richmond; Ginny Runge, St. John’s, McLean; Susan Tilt, St. Christopher’s, Springfield; Margaret Adams Parker, St. Mary’s, Arlington; Debbie Gale and Ed Moore, Trinity, Upperville; Isota Tucker Epes, St. Paul’s, Alexandria. •



*‘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

## Action of Some Clarity is Necessary

By The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee

These words are written before the outcome of the 75th General Convention is clear, at least in the area of the Convention response to the Windsor Report. What is clear is that the complexities of the Convention’s legislative process get in the way of a prayerful process of different people from different perspectives coming to a unity of mission that transcends differences.

But that prayerful process has certainly been present. I served on the Special Legislative Committee that dealt with all resolutions having to do with the Windsor Report. Complex procedural processes were present but did not silence the civil and courteous exchanges that led our committee to offer resolutions that most of us believe represented a substantial response to the requests of the Anglican Communion through the Windsor Report.

The challenge before both houses today is one of seeking a way to say clearly to the Anglican Communion that we are committed to the Communion, that we accept the cost to us of following the recommendations of the Windsor Report, and that we do so while simultaneously recognizing and listening to our gay and lesbian brother and sisters and responding to their concerns.

The legislative barriers today include the understandable desires of bishops and

deputies to speak often and to amend frequently. Those desires should be restrained. It may be necessary for the House of Bishops today to exercise leadership by adopting a Mind of the House resolution that commits the bishops to follow the Windsor Report. It is far preferable for the whole convention to act, but action of some clarity is necessary.

In Executive Session yesterday, one bishop told the touching story that he gave a son a prayer book autographed by Katharine Jefferts Schori and Gene Robinson because they are signs of the broad embrace of the church of the future.

To enter that future, we need to walk with others in the Communion. And with the inspired leadership of Bishop Jefferts Schori, we will enter the Communion of the future with the broad embrace that is characteristic of who we are.

This Convention revealed the diversity of our Church, the limitations of a legislative process to pastoral and mission concerns, and the hope of the future with the election of Bishop Jefferts Schori as presiding bishop, the adoption of a mission-oriented budget, and the Church’s commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. •

*For additional and expanded analysis and opinions, and to read about Religious at General Convention (right) visit us at [www.centeraisle.net](http://www.centeraisle.net).*



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

## Justice for All

Yesterday afternoon, it looked like the Episcopal Church was choosing to walk apart from the Anglican Communion with the rejection of Resolution A161, one of the Church’s responses to the Windsor Report.

Last night, fortunes changed when Deputies passed the revised A159, on our commitment to interdependence, and the rewritten A166, on the development of a covenant. Deputies refused to allow amendments, clearly stating that we need to stay in the Communion and allow new Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori to take part in the conversation. *Justice continued on TWO*

### Editorial

## So, Have We Grown?

In our first issue we stated our goals for growth and our position that at day’s end Convention will not be judged by who “wins” debates but by what we resolve to do together to spread the love of Christ when we leave here. So, let’s take a look at the measuring stick. Have we indeed grown over the past 11 days? Have we lived into our Convention theme?

The answer is a resounding “yes.” From issues of liturgy to social ills, we have discovered common ground – not unanimity across the board (that would somehow be un-Anglican), but oneness despite our diversity.

One of the greatest growth opportunities lies ahead. It comes from the unexpected selection of Katharine Jefferts Schori as presiding bishop. That single decision injects a whole new element into key relationships within our Church. More importantly, Jefferts Schori’s election will prod all of us to *Grown 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](mailto:centeraisle@thediocese.net). Candor is welcome. So is brevity. Shoot for 80 words or less.

### Hypocritical Expedience

I cannot reconcile priorities No. 2 and No. 4 in today's editorial in *Center Aisle* ("Time for Some Specificity," CA No. 6). It seems to me that affirming the full inclusion of gays and lesbians in God's church, including ordination and election to the episcopate, either is the right and proper thing to do, or it is not. It defies reason that it would be the right thing to do if only there were no opposition to it worldwide or from select parishes stateside; or that it would be the right thing to do three or six years hence. By all means, I pray that General Convention will achieve "clarity," but not at the sacrifice of reason.

Bishops and deputies attending GC 2006 may claim that a moratorium on assenting to the election of any more gay and lesbian bishops is not a slap in the face to gays and lesbians in the pews and in the pulpit, but they are wrong; dead wrong. They might claim that the concomitant call for the reaffirmation and embrace of gay and

lesbian members of the church is intended as a sincere declaration of good faith and love, but so long as the proposed moratorium is in place, such an affirmation and declaration of love would stand as a hollow and hypocritical expedience.

JOHN BOOTHBY  
RICHMOND, VA.

### Thanks for Nothing

The editorial on A161 asks and answers some rhetorical questions: "Is A161 fair to gays and lesbians? No. Is it fair to anyone who supports gays and lesbians? No. But is this debate really about fairness? Or is it about following Jesus and making sacrifices?"

Thank you for inviting gay and lesbian Episcopalians and their friends and families to engage in sacrifice. This must be the churchly variation on "Let's you and him fight." Only what it says is, "Let's you sacrifice and retain second-class membership in the Body of Christ." No thank you. Been there. Done that. Don't want the T-shirt.

But if A161 passes as proposed, it likely will not be we who threaten to leave the church.

THE REV. CYNTHIA GILLIATT  
HARRISONBURG, VA.

## Center Aisle Staff (most of them)



**Center Aisle:** Published by The Diocese of Virginia; The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, *Bishop*  
**Editor:** Ed Jones; **Lead Writers:** The Rev. John Ohmer, The Rev. Lauren R. Stanley; **Staff Writers:** The Rev. Holly Antolini, Susan Daughtry Fawcett **Contributor:** Mike Kerr; **Coordinator:** Patrick Getlein; **Print Production:** John Dixon;  
**Web Production:** Leo Campos, **Distribution:** The Rev. Percy Grant, Ben Bradshaw, Thomas Eaves, Will Packard, Abraham Thomas



## Justice continued

If we truly want to remain Anglicans, our chance to do so comes this morning. Today is the last day of Convention – what we do today will resonate throughout the Communion.

Once Deputies resoundingly rejected the much-revised resolution concerning ordination of gay bishops and public blessings of same-gender unions, there seemed to be a sense of shock afterwards, almost a question of, "What have we done?" That shock – that we were, at least at that moment, unwilling to respond to the Communion – contributed to the good work accomplished last night.

The question before Convention is one of justice – justice for gay and lesbian Episcopalians, as well as justice for the rest of the Communion – and how we are to live into this tension.

Immediately following the Eucharist this morning, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold will address a joint session to help Convention craft a response to the Anglican Communion. We commend Bishop Griswold for stepping into the breach and for helping all of us find common ground.

This is the time for both Deputies and Bishops to be focused, not on individual desires and ideas, but on what we share as Anglicans and how to communicate that message to the rest of the world.

Despite yesterday afternoon's actions, we now seem determined to honor our heritage. We have been Anglicans for 400 years, which has been both a challenge and a blessing. How we will continue to be part of that heritage is uncertain, but last night, Deputies took a positive step forward.

We need to keep going. •

## OffCenter



## Virginia Voices

### Can there be too much Wisdom?

By The Rev. Robert Prichard

On Thursday, June 15, the first lesson at the Daily Eucharist came not from the Old Testament or the Epistles, but from the second half of Chapter 7 of the Apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Solomon. On Friday, June 16, something similar happened.

The first lesson came from the first half of that same chapter. This coincidence of lessons leads to a simple question: How often does Wisdom appear in the Lesser Feasts and Fasts lectionary?

The answer: Lessons from the Wisdom of Solomon appear 11 times. Ten of the 11 come from either Chapter 3 or 7 of the book. If one considers the other Wisdom book from the Apocrypha – the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach, commonly called Ecclesiasticus – the concentration of Wisdom lessons is even greater.

This second Wisdom book also appears in the *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* lectionary nine times, though that is not immediately evident since the editors of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* designated the book as Ecclesiasticus on some occasions and as Sirach on others. In total then, there are at

present 20 lessons in the *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* calendar from the two Apocryphal Wisdom books. That total may soon rise.

The General Convention has sent the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music's Resolution C003, which calls for consideration of a feast day for the Martyrs of Sudan with suggested lessons that include Wisdom 3:1-9. Even without the additional lesson, however, the 20 Wisdom lessons in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* are already more numerous than the lessons from any book of the Old Testament.

With the exception of Isaiah (15 lessons) and Proverbs (five lessons), most other books of the Old Testament are severely underrepresented. There is, for example, only one lesson from Genesis and one lesson from any of the 12 minor prophets. There are no lessons from 1st or 2nd Kings, Joshua or Judges.

Could there be too much Wisdom? Were it the case that every person who attended a weekday Eucharistic service in the Episcopal

Church also attended Sunday worship, one might argue that this concentration of lessons from Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus simply provides a complement to a comprehensive cycle of biblical lessons heard on Sunday. Increasingly, however, complicated work and travel schedules mean that for some persons a weekday, rather than a Sunday service, has become the basic unit of church attendance. Such persons are introduced to an eccentric diet of Scripture, filled with Wisdom to be sure, but lacking in any overall coverage of the Old Testament. The same could be said of lessons from the Psalter or the New Testament.

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) has not yet addressed this apparent imbalance. It will, however, have the opportunity to do so in the near future. The Convention also has adopted an amended form of D008, which calls upon the commission to consider authorizing use of the more comprehensive Daily Office or Daily Eucharistic lectionaries as alternatives to the lessons listed in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. Let us hope that the standing commission exercises wisdom in dealing with this resolution. •

## The Riteness of Confirmation

By The Rev. John Ohmer

Will Rogers said, "This country has come to feel the same when Congress is in session as when the baby gets hold of a hammer."

At times I feel the same way when the General Convention gets hold of liturgy.

This General Convention has been asked to consider rites for "Moving a Child from a Crib to a Bed," and to approve prayers for "Earning a Driver's License or Permit." At the same time, it's being asked – in well-intentioned proposals to make baptism full initiation – to eliminate the necessity of confirmation for licensing, holding elected or appointed office, or accessing the ordination process.

In other words, we're developing new rites for young people while denuding the one we already have.

Let me be fair: The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) is to be commended for creative, hard work in the Triennium. They rightly point out that there is a deep-seated

need to mark, through some sort of ritual act, significant life changes. They are right in saying there is a need for rites of passage, especially for youth and young adults. And clearly, parish communities should be encouraged to "affirm and uphold" young people in their "journey through adolescence," liturgically.

But isn't that just another way of saying that we're in need of a sacramental rite for pre-teens and teenagers? Am I missing something, or isn't that what confirmation is? Or at least could be?

Again – as was pointed out in the House of Bishops Monday – much of what the SCLM has produced will be a very valuable resource for many people throughout the church. But going forward, wouldn't the church be better served if we find ways to strengthen the sacramental rite we already have in confirmation?

As Kathryn Tanner has written in the *Anglican Theological Review*, "Everything has already happened at baptism, but has yet to be

revealed in our lives, made our own, personally appropriated." Confirmation is where we take responsibility for the new life that is given to us in baptism and can be exactly the kind of affirming, upholding, ritual act young people need.

So why not invest the time, talents and treasure of our greatest liturgical minds on developing national standards and churchwide expectations for confirmation? What would a Christian bar- or bat-mitzvah program be like, complete with minimum age requirements, clearly stated expectations (perhaps even for learning a bit of Hebrew or Greek), and culminating with a service project?

Let's find a way to include new rites and prayers in our repertoire and uphold our theology of baptism, but without sacrificing confirmation – lest we find ourselves in need of a rite for Throwing the Baby Out With the Bath Water. •

