



Affirming Catholicism: Inspiration and Hope in the Anglican Communion

**Affirming Catholicism Newsletter
January 2016**

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

(Collect for the Second Sunday of Epiphany)

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

(Howard Thurman)

Watchword for January 2016 (from the Herrnhuter *Losungen*)

“For God did not give us a spirit of downheartedness,
but rather a spirit of power and of love and of consideration.”

2 Tim 1:7

The biblical "Watchwords" of the Herrnhut Brethren (Moravian Church)
have been published every year since 1731.

Gospel Imprint: "Who is Jesus?"

"Christianity isn't first and foremost a set of beliefs; nor is it a list of moral instructions. Christianity is a living encounter with Jesus. ... Jesus' ministry included teaching, preaching and healing. In God's name Jesus invited people to acknowledge how seriously they had become separated from God. He stressed God's love for all who repented. He showed respect to the despised and the marginalized. He spoke about living in God's rule of justice, truth and hope, the 'Kingdom of God'. ... "

You can find the rest of the leaflet here>

Please do print it out and make it widely available!

Gospel Imprint is the fresh voice in Anglicanism sharing free resources with all Christians who are seeking to learn, worship and witness to the generosity of the Kingdom of God. It is supported by Affirming Catholicism and the Society of Catholic Priests.

An initial reflection on the primates' meeting

The primates of the Anglican Communion met in Canterbury from 11 to 15 January. As has been widely reported (and is laid out in the [communiqué](#)) in view of the "recent change in marriage doctrine" by The Episcopal Church:

"for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity."

At the same time, the Primates also

"condemned homophobic prejudice and violence and resolved to work together to offer pastoral care and loving service irrespective of sexual orientation. This conviction arises out of our discipleship of Jesus Christ. The Primates reaffirmed their rejection of criminal sanctions against same-sex attracted people."

All the Primates attended, although the Archbishop of Uganda, Stanley Ntagali, left the meeting after two days, as he explained in [an open letter to his church](#). That all the Primates attended is an achievement worth commending, as are the anti-homophobic statements made in the communiqué. It is also important to emphasise that TEC is not being asked to leave the Communion, and will be fully represented at ACC 16 in Lusaka in April 2016, which will be exploring the theme ""Intentional Discipleship in a World of Differences".

Reflecting on the recommendation of the Primates' Meeting, the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, [Michael Curry](#), emphasised that the Anglican Communion is rooted in relationships, relationships of mission. [Speaking to the other Primates](#), he explained the biblical foundation of the position taken by The Episcopal Church:

"Our commitment to be an inclusive church is not based on a social theory or capitulation to the ways of the culture, but on our belief that the outstretched

arms of Jesus on the cross are a sign of the very love of God reaching out to us all. While I understand that many disagree with us, our decision regarding marriage is based on the belief that the words of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians are true for the church today: All who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, for all are one in Christ.

For so many who are committed to following Jesus in the way of love and being a church that lives that love, this decision will bring real pain. For fellow disciples of Jesus in our church who are gay or lesbian, this will bring more pain. For many who have felt and been rejected by the church because of who they are, for many who have felt and been rejected by families and communities, our church opening itself in love was a sign of hope. And this will add pain on top of pain."

The Primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, [Francisco de Assis da Silva](#), commented that he expects his own church to be facing the same questions as TEC very shortly. Other churches, including the SEC and the Anglican Church in Canada, and indeed the Church of England itself, will be continually challenged by their own members to revisit their position on same-sex marriage. It is striking that the key question at the 2016 Primates' meeting seems no longer to have been the appointment of gay bishops, but the question of same sex marriage.

A good many people have written about the Primates' meeting, both in anticipation and in response. Several commentators have queried the legitimacy of the Primates' recommendation: whether they have the power to make it at all and whether they are acting as if the Anglican Communion Covenant had been agreed (e.g. [Norman Doe](#)).

[Fred Hiltz](#), Primate of the Anglican Church in Canada, reflected:

"While the meeting of the Primates was particularly challenging with respect to relationships throughout the Communion, there was about midway through a declared unanimous commitment to continue to walk together and not apart. ... We were reminded once again of the principle named by the Windsor Continuation Group that 'when the Primates speak collectively, or in a united or unanimous manner, their advice – while it is no more than advice – nevertheless needs to be received with a readiness to undertake reflection and accommodation'."

He commented also "I am especially mindful of the pain the LGBTQ community within our Church is feeling. I am very sorry. I acknowledge their frustration and that of their supporters in being made to feel like the sacrificial offering on the altar of the Church's unity. I recognize that many are angry and deeply disillusioned with the very Church in which they endeavour to live out their lives as disciples of Jesus. I know that for some it is in fact very difficult to remain within its fellowship, and that it will take a great resolve of will and courage to do so."

There have been many theologically well-founded and thought-provoking contributions. A few are reproduced (with links to the complete text) here.

Before the meeting, [Mark Chapman](#), Professor of the History of Modern Theology in the University of Oxford, and Vice-Principal of Ripon College, Cuddesdon, recommended: "Try deep consultation, not rushed decisions." [Martyn Percy](#), Dean of Christchurch Oxford, wrote: "no amount of well-intentioned epistemological Pelagianism (i.e., 'we can fix this ourselves') will be able to replace the need for some serious theological deliberation on the nature of humanity, grace and

redemption. What was once a quiet, slightly suppressed ethical debate about alterity (i.e., sexuality) – a group of people somewhere out there, so to speak – has now become a much louder debate about the justice and integrity within our Communion, and concerns our own people. The key question just won't go away. How exactly are we to regard and treat people who are not like us – in terms of their sexuality and gender identity – yet fully part of this body of Christ?"

In response to the Primates' meeting, [Bill Countryman](#), Episcopal priest and retired professor of Biblical Theology, writes: "The status of lesbians and gay men (still more of transexual persons) varies enormously from culture to culture. And it is part of the larger issue of gender, which also remains unresolved among us. It is no accident that many of the churches that are particularly angry about the embrace of homosexual persons are also opposed to the ordination of women. And it is no accident that the leadership of these groups is entirely male and presents itself as emphatically heterosexual.

"But the fact that the task is difficult does not mean that it can or should be lightly abandoned. The unity of the church is more than an institutional convenience, more than a theological premise, and more than a concern of professional ecumenists. It is a matter of deep spiritual value. God's creation of humanity in God's image and likeness, implies ... God's search for friends. And since God has created so many of us and of such different temperament, experience, and culture, it seems reasonable to infer that our very multiplicity is part of what we bring to God as God's friends. The great danger of Christians in any one place or time is that we shall begin to identify the gospel with the practices and prejudices of our particular time and place. Only a community of discourse that is large and varied enough to disrupt that kind of fossilization is ultimately adequate to the needs of our growing friendship with God, this friendship for which God created us and to which we are learning to respond through God's grace."

[Angus Ritchie](#), Executive Director of the Centre for Theology and Community and priest in Shadwell and Bethnal Green, reflects on the value of continuing to walk together: "The cost borne by the Episcopal Church of the United States for conducting same-sex marriages - being unable to represent the Communion at ecumenical and inter-faith gatherings - is of a rather different order to the cost LGBT Christians would bear in many other parts of the world if the Communion fell apart. That Anglicans across the world should keep talking, keep walking together and grow more open to one another's experiences - these are prizes for which it is worth making some compromises, for they increase the extent to which the churches in countries where LGBT people are persecuted will hear alternative perspectives."

[Mark Strange](#), Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, where Samuel Seabury was consecrated first non-English Bishop for the American Church reflects: "Now I am confronted by a different situation, a Church which has followed its own accepted processes to bring about a change in its Canons, a change which it believes is done in response to the love revealed to us all by Jesus Christ. This Church has been reprimanded by those who see things differently. In the drive for unity in the Anglican Communion we risk removing our diversity and our ability to respond to the particular needs of mission in our own communities, the ability to hear the voice of God in our own situations."

What can we do? Pray for each other! And stay! There is much here, especially in the graciousness of Michael Curry's response and that of others who are directly

affected, that should make us proud to be Anglican. Might your parish consider twinning with a TEC parish, or entering into a trilateral relationship with a parish in TEC and a parish in the global South?

Draft Columba Agreement between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland

The announcement of the Columba Agreement (named after St Columba's House, Woking, where it was drafted) on Christmas Eve received considerable attention in the blogosphere and on social media. The draft Agreement needs to be read in the context of a long process of exploring Anglican Reformed relationships in England and Scotland. The Church of England and Church of Scotland have for many years met annually for "state of the nation" discussions considering responses to social and political questions. More theologically focussed talks between the Church of England and Church of Scotland began in 1999. In 2009, "Our Fellowship in the Gospel" was produced and in 2010 it was approved by General Synod. Questions began to be asked about what should happen next.

At that point, it was clear to both parties that it would be inappropriate for these discussions to be taken any further without involving the Scottish Episcopal Church. The question of the involvement of the URC was also raised, however, the Church of England and URC were in the midst of drafting "Healing the Past – Building the Future" (2011), which led to the Service of Reconciliation, Healing of Memories and Mutual Commitment between the Church of England and the United Reformed Church which was held at Westminster Abbey on 7 February 2012. It was therefore decided to proceed with a series of "tripartite" conversations. Three of these took place, in 2010 at Wydale, in 2011 in Edinburgh and in 2012 at Swanwick. These resulted in the proposal that conversations leading to two agreements should be take place concurrently, one between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, and the other between the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland. It was proposed that the Reuilly Agreement should form the basis of these, since it represents a theological agreement between Anglicans and Reformed as well as Lutheran churches. The two agreements would take account of the different relationships of Church of Scotland with the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of England, and the different questions which arise from the geographical and jurisdictional situations.

Discussions between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland proceeded, with an observer from the SEC present throughout. These have now given rise to the Columba Agreement, which is based on the Reuilly Agreement and which considers ways of working together in the very few places in England and the Diocese in Europe where the Church of Scotland and the Church of England minister in the same place. The Columba Agreement will be debated at the General Synod of the Church of England in February and at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May.

The Scottish Episcopal Church, however, decided that a Reuilly-type agreement would not suffice for the Scottish situation, where there is already a de facto recognition of mutual Eucharistic hospitality and pulpit exchange (but not of con-celebration or full interchangeability of ministries). Instead, the Church of Scotland

and the Scottish Episcopal Church will continue to work together to explore and articulate their relationship through an appropriate agreement.

Resources for working with children:

Emma Smith writes: As a newly elected member of the AffCath Board with special responsibility for Children's Formation, I hope to introduce to the newsletter some regular ideas for children's ministry in the Catholic tradition. We are very aware that many of our members may have considerable expertise and/or experience in this field, and we would be delighted if anyone would like to send in brief ideas which have worked, or suggestions for resources, books or films which have been helpful. In this edition of the Newsletter, we suggest one or two initial ideas for Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent; in the next newsletter we will consider Good Friday and the Stations of the Cross. We look forward to receiving any pointers for work with children from toddlers to teenagers.

Shrove Tuesday

One can never go far wrong with offering pancakes to children and young people – even if they decline to eat them, toddlers seem to enjoy squirting ready-made pancakes with maple syrup and nutella, and children and teenagers can be encouraged to try their hand at making – or flipping - the pancakes. A pancake party is a wonderful vehicle for introducing a brief discussion of what Lent means, “In Lent some of us give up things we love, like pancakes or Nutella...”, for distributing a Lenten programme of positive activities such as “Love Life, Live Lent” or Christian Aid’s “Count Your Blessings”, or (for teenagers and older children), watching a relevant film and discussing it. Last year we used “Chocolat” to good effect with our teen group to address some Lenten issues, including recognising when we are wrong, and leading into a discussion of penitence and absolution. It is also possible (with sufficient Health and Safety precautions!) to enlist the children’s help in burning the Palm Crosses ready for Ash Wednesday, and to use this as an encouragement for them to come (and bring their families!) to a Service of Ashing.

Ash Wednesday

The Catholic tradition is so full of wonderful “visual aids” to encapsulate the mystery and the sense of Lent, many of which can be shared with children, either in church or Sunday School. We may all have used the idea of cutting out the letters of the words, “Alleluia” and “Gloria” in gold paper, and solemnly placing them at the start of Lent in a purple file or box until Easter (when we have to remember to get them out again!). Some form of purple “Lord, have mercy” can be introduced instead, to draw the children’s attention to these seasonal changes in the liturgy, and what they represent in terms of our worship and our state of heart and mind during Lent. I have taken children around the church, gathering up any remaining flower arrangements and placing them on the compost heap (or in the bin!), leaving the church bare until Easter, while Sarah Lenton has good ideas for “burying” the church’s bells and candlesticks in sand (see Resources below).

The powerful message of penitence and of God’s forgiveness in the service of Ashing is also much more accessible than people (especially parents) often fear. School or Family Eucharists for Ash Wednesday (with considerable preparation to explain what will happen and why) can speak to children of all ages, whether Christians or not. I have been very touched by a Jewish school parent who was

deeply moved by the echoes she heard of Yom Kippur in the Ashing liturgy, and by a Reception class child who whispered to me at the altar rail as I was about to ash her, "I'm a Muslim so I'm not allowed a cross; please can I have a splodge instead?" Children are all aware of the need to say sorry and of the desire to be forgiven, and finding this physically enacted in the ritual can draw them into the mystery of Lenten penitence.

Resources mentioned

Sarah Lenton, [Creative Ideas for Children's Worship, Year B](#), Lent 1 (2012).
Paula Gooder and Peter Babington, [Love Life Live Lent, Be the Change!](#) (2012).
<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/lent/count-your-blessings/index.aspx>.
Chocolat (2000).

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Forthcoming events:

The Groombridge Lecture: 'Our hearts are restless until they rest in you': St Augustine

Speaker: Dr Margaret Lane
Wednesday, 24 February 2016, 7.30-9 p.m.
St Thomas the Apostle, Corseley Road, Groombridge TN3 9SF. (As you enter Groombridge, turn into Corseley Road - beside the Post Office.)

Augustine's well-known motif of the restless heart with which he begins his Confessions has captured the imagination of countless seekers of the truth through the centuries. Many have seen their stories in the pages of the Confessions including no less a person than Teresa of Avila. In this evening's talk, we will reflect on how Augustine moves from restless to rest and in his story hope to find our own.

Support for diocesan events:

Would you like to organise an event locally but can't afford to bring a speaker in? Affirming Catholicism can offer grants of up to £500 to help fund your event. Expressions of interest to the Board at administrator@affirmingcatholicism.org.uk.

Donations and gift aid

We welcome donations to support the work of Affirming Catholicism. You can send a cheque to Mark Perrett, Affirming Catholicism, 114 Hamilton Terrace, Maida Vale, LONDON NW8 9UT, or make an online donation by registering here: <http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk/donate.html>

Have you renewed your gift aid declaration? Many of our supporters made gift aid declarations under the old rules, and these declarations have now run out. If you

have not renewed yours, or are not sure, please complete <https://form.jotformeu.com/53301712150338>

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If you pay income tax at the higher rate or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

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We hope you enjoy Affirming Catholicism's newsletter.

Do tell us what you think, and let us know of forthcoming events that you would like publicised by writing to: newsletters@affirmingcatholicism.org.uk.

If you are a diocesan coordinator, please pass the newsletter on to your members and supporters, or let us have their emails so that we can send it to them directly.

If you have received this because someone has forwarded it to you, please consider becoming a supporter yourself. It's easy to do this on our website www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk. In doing this, you will receive regular news and updates including the Annual Review; your financial contribution will help us to do more and to do it even better; and you will be one more voice calling for a generous and open Catholic future for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

If you would like to know more about what Affirming Catholicism does, look at our **Annual Review** which is available here:

http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk/Downloads/annual_review_downloads/Aff_Cath_2015_Annual_Review.pdf



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