

What's going on in the Anglican Communion? A personal opinion

What's going on in the Anglican Communion? It may well be that you neither know nor really want to know. Most people are far more interested in what is happening in their own church than in the convoluted political debates of Bishops, Archbishops and Synods far away. However there are times when distant events really do deserve some reflection, and that, I think is the case with the long-running arguments that have been besetting the Episcopal Church of the USA (Ecusa) following the election of one of its Bishops, Bishop Gene Robinson of New Hampshire.

Gene Robinson, as you'll know if you've been following the story at all, is gay. That in itself is not unusual. The church has always had gay priests and bishops in its ranks in fairly substantial numbers, some living in committed partnerships, despite the fact that, officially, this was against church policy. Most of these clergy, however, knowing how contentious an issue homosexuality is, have kept quiet about their sexuality, and hoped that by doing so they would simply be left to get on with their jobs. But living under a "don't ask, don't tell" policy has often been a great and lonely strain, and Gene Robinson, in the comparatively liberal environment of New Hampshire decided that he did not want his long-term partner, Mark Andrew, to be hidden away like a guilty secret.

This was always going to be an explosive decision. Homosexuality is an issue on which Christians are very divided. There isn't enough space here to go through all the arguments, but suffice it to say that opinions tend to be very deeply held by people on both sides of the debate. Some see the continued discrimination against gay and lesbian people as an affront to a Gospel of love and acceptance, while others see it as an essential defence against a creeping tide of dangerous liberalism. The majority in Ecusa supported Bishop Robinson's consecration as a Bishop – Bishops in Ecusa are elected democratically – but inevitably there were some who were vehemently opposed. If this debate had simply remained the business of Ecusa, it might have all eventually sorted itself out. However, it rapidly turned into an argument in which the rest of the Anglican Communion got involved, with pressure being brought to bear on Ecusa from other parts of the world not to elect any more gay or lesbian bishops or further to liberalise church practices. And that is where things became really complicated.

The Anglican Communion is a "family" of churches from around the world who all trace their roots back to the Church of England. Each national church (province) is actually independent and self-governing. There is no mechanism for the Communion to insist that all its member churches act or think in the same way. Nor does the Archbishop of Canterbury have any real power to enforce anything – he is not the "leader" of the Communion, despite the media's tendency to portray him as such. We help and inspire one another when we can, valuing our "family likeness", but provinces have traditionally respected the fact that laws, cultures and expectations vary hugely across the world and that we must trust each other to make local decisions. African Anglican churches, for example, are encouraged to deal with the issue of polygamy, still common in some areas, in whatever way seems best to them, without interference from abroad. So, when other provinces of the Anglican Church tried to tell Ecusa that they must toe a particular line on homosexuality they were very resistant to the idea. To make matters worse some conservative Anglican provinces in Africa began to appoint like-minded "missionary" bishops and priests to work in conservative parishes in the USA without Ecusa's permission, crossing boundaries in a way which has not happened in the Anglican church before, and which was widely regarded as very unhelpful interference by Ecusa's bishops. In short, the whole business has created a huge mess, and all attempts at finding a way through have so far failed, the latest being a meeting of American bishops with Rowan Williams in New Orleans last week. There is talk of schism in Ecusa, and between Ecusa and the rest of the Anglican Communion.

As I said at the beginning of this piece, many people will feel this is completely irrelevant to them. What has it to do with parish life in Seal? But the fault lines that are dividing the American church, both within provinces and between them are becoming more and more evident in the UK also. There are groups lobbying for far less tolerance of diversity within the church, for particular moral and doctrinal standpoints to be enforced in all the very different churches across the Communion. Gay and lesbian clergy, trying to minister quietly to their congregations, are becoming increasingly anxious for their futures, and those who support the inclusion of gay and lesbian people at all levels of the church wonder whether that will one day be held against them. I usually try to be as even-handed as I can in what I write, but it will be plain to you that I am not unbiased on this issue and can't pretend to be. Your view may be quite different to mine, and I recognise that, which is why I headed this piece "a personal opinion", but what is important is that the debate is not left to those who shout the loudest, or who can muster the largest number of supporters. One of the glories of the Anglican Church has been that, traditionally, there has been freedom to explore and express a wide diversity of views on all sorts of issues, and that we have been reticent to condemn or to over-regulate. It has meant that many different people have been able to find a home with us. I earnestly hope that home can be just as welcoming to all in the future.

Anne Le Bas

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Diary For October 2007		
5	Friday	
		1.30 Seal School Harvest Service
6	Saturday	
		6.30 Harvest Supper
7	Sunday	Harvest
		10 am All Age Communion for Harvest
		6.30 pm Evensong
10	Wednesday	
		11am Holy Communion
13	Saturday	
		1 pm Wedding: Blackburn/Bond
14	Sunday	Trinity 19
		10 am Holy Communion with Sunday School
		6.30 pm Evensong without Sermon
17	Wednesday	
		11am Holy Communion
21	Sunday	Trinity 20
		10am All Age Worship
		11.15 am Matins
		6.30pm "Breathing Space" Communion
24	Wednesday	
		11am Holy Communion
28	Sunday	Last after Trinity
		10am All Age Communion
		6.30 pm Evensong without sermon
26	Wednesday	
		11am Holy Communion
30	Sunday	Trinity 17
		10 am Holy Communion
		6.30 Evensong without sermon
31	Wednesday	
		11am Holy Communion
November 2007		
4	Sunday	All Saints/All Souls
		10 am Holy Communion for All Saints
		6.30 pm Special service for All Souls

Parish News

SEAL SCHOOL

is in need of a

CLERK TO THE GOVERNORS.

The Clerk deals with minutes, agendas and other administration to do with the Governing body. Word processing and internet skills would be essential, but training could be given in school related jargon and procedures! The post is paid at around £8 an hour and each of the three governors' meetings during the year generates about 6 hours work. Anyone interested in filling this post should contact the Headteacher, Tracey Smith on 762388

ALL SOULS' SERVICE

Sunday Nov 4th 6.30 pm

This special service, which we held last year for the first time, is an opportunity to give thanks for all those we loved who have died. It will be a gentle service of hymns, readings and prayers with a chance to light a candle in memory of anyone who is special to you.



I'll also be reading the names of those we are remembering in our prayers, so if you would like me to remember someone by name in this way please let me know in advance.

As well as coming yourself, you might also like to consider inviting to this service any who you know who have been bereaved.

Anne Le Bas

HARVEST

HARVEST SUPPER AND GAMES EVENING

Saturday 6th October 6.30 pm

In Seal School

Join us for supper and games for all ages.

Sausage, mash and beans. Apple pie.
(Vegetarian options available.)

Tickets: Adults £5.00
Children £2.50



(sign the list in church or
phone 01732 762955)

HARVEST THANKSGIVING

Sunday 7th October 10 am

A service of thanksgiving for all God's gifts.

We shall be collecting gifts of money this year at our harvest service in aid of the Diocesan "Poverty and Hope" appeal, which supports charities overseas and at home. We will welcome offerings of flowers, fruit and vegetables to decorate the church, but we won't be collecting food to distribute or sell this year.

Hilary Curtis is retiring from Seal School after 20 years service. Anyone who knows Hilary is most welcome to wish her a happy retirement on **Thursday 18th October 2007 from 6pm in the School Hall at Seal School.**

Sponsored Bike ride.

Many thanks to everyone that rode or walked this year as part of the annual Friends of Kent Churches bike ride. Several people from the parish took part in this event and we managed to raise £420.50 which is an excellent total. Half of this money will come back to the church so a big thank you to everyone who sponsored a rider or walker or took part in the event.

Many people who visited our church complimented us on our warm welcome and our refreshments. I would like to thank all those people that kindly donated refreshments or spent time signing in riders and walkers during the day. It certainly emphasised the importance of being a manned church! All in all a grand effort by everyone at Seal. Well done

Nicky Harvey

A SABBATICAL FOR THE ORGANIST

Daniel Eaton, our organist will be taking some time off over the next three months because of other commitments. He has arranged for a rota of several other organists to stand in for him, though he is still taking Wednesday Choir practices. Andrew Hanley and Matthew Berry will cover most of the Sunday morning services (welcome to Andrew this morning) and Barry Tilston will play for Evensongs. We are very grateful to them all for stepping into the breach so willingly and enabling Daniel to take this well-earned break. Daniel will be back with us regularly in the New Year!

'A CHORUS LINE'

The next production by the
**Stag Theatre Company, following their highly
successful staging of 'NOISES OFF' in May**

**Tuesday 23rd to Saturday 27th October at 8 pm –
The Ship Theatre, Walthamstow Hall School, Holly
Bush Lane, Sevenoaks TN13 3UL**

Rehearsals are well under way for this talented local company's next spectacular production, directed by Chris Howland, with David Grubb as musical director and Jessica Miles as choreographer. Casting for a new Broadway musical is in the final stages, with the lineup of hopefuls due to be whittled down to eight – four boys and four girls. For each dancer, this audition is the chance of a lifetime, but before he makes the final cut, the director Zach asks each of them to talk about themselves. One by one they come forward to talk about their lives, their families, their home towns, their lovers and their ambitions. This show, first created on Broadway in 1975, ran for an incredible 6137 performances at the Shubert theatre over 15 years. It won nine Tonys in 1976, a Pulitzer prize and dozens of other awards. It was revived in 2006 and is once again playing to full houses on Broadway under the slogan **THE BEST MUSICAL. EVER.** The music is by Marvin Hamlisch, the book by James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante, with lyrics by Edward Kleban, and the original show, devised from taped workshop sessions with real Broadway dancers, was choreographed and directed by Michael Bennett.

We have a new box office number for this show: 0778 772 4440

Those We Support

The Children's Society

Once again with Harvest time comes House-Box opening time, so please will our Box Holders hand in their Boxes to Church, so that we might check our Harvest of support for the work. With each change of season comes news of natural disasters around the world via Global Warning etc - but we also keep in mind the stirring work of our Society at home, please be generous in support again this year.

Bob & Dawn (763787)

Extract from The Children's Society Case Book ...

'Thank you. Your gift means the world to The Children's Society and the Children we work with. Children like Jamie, whose mum threw him out of home because his step-dad said he was in the way.'

"I wouldn't have made it through without The Children's Society. They were the only people who helped me when I was in a mess. At first I was a bit scared because everyone was so friendly – I couldn't cope with people smiling at me. But you helped turn things around for me. Now I can smile too."

Faith and Thought

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH –

October

I've brought you nuts and hops;
And when the leaf drops, why, the walnut drops.
Crack your first nut and light your first fire,
Roast your first chestnut crisp on the bar;
Makes the logs sparkle, stir the blaze higher,
Logs are as cheery as sun or as star,
Logs we can find wherever we are.
Spring one soft day will open the leaves,
Spring one bright day will lure back the flowers;
Never fancy my whistling wind grieves.
Never fancy I've tears in my showers;
Dance, night and days! And dance on, my hours!

Christina Rossetti

Parish Organisations

Royal British Legion – Seal Women's Section

We had no meeting in August. September is a lunch. October the AGM is on 24th October.

Due to the weather being wet we were unable to join friends at Rockdale for a game of Croquet, which those who were going had been looking forward to it in August.

Hope you all had an enjoyable break and those who went away had a good holiday.

Pat Walkling

Seal Mother Club

.For September members enjoyed seeing various aspects of Nepal. There was a variety of flora and fauna including a crocodile or two and a view of a rhino from the back of an elephant. Of course lots of temples and beautiful views – mostly with a backdrop of mountains. There were pictures of some lovely children too. Also, something that one doesn't see in the UK a complete family on a moped – Dad driving with a child sitting in front and Mum on pillion with the second child between them. Only Dad had a protective helmet! Oh, and don't forget the shopping. Yak train might be safer.

Next month, on 10th October, we have a speaker giving an illustrated talk on Walsingham. Visitors are very welcome to join us – refreshments are included in the entrance fee of £1.

Eileen Burgin

From the Parish Registers

We welcome in Baptism:

Heather Bain
Madeline Sargent
Evangeline Bailey
Scarlett Brady
Harry House

We entrust into God's keeping:

Graham Jessup

Coming Events

4 Nov	10am	All Saints Parish Communion
	6.30pm	All Souls Special Service
11 Nov	9am	Act of Remembrance Godden Green
	10am	Remembrance Service Seal
6 Dec	8pm	Advent "Breathing Space"
7 Dec	8pm	Christmas Quiz & Bazaar
13 Dec	8pm	Advent "Breathing Space"
16 Dec	10am	Christingle & Nativity Play
20 Dec	8pm	Advent "Breathing Space"
23 Dec	6.30pm	Carol Service
24 Dec	4pm	Crib Service
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass
25 Dec	10am	Communion for Christmas Day

The Knight's Prayer

God be in my head
And in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes
And in my looking;
God be in my mouth
And in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
And in my thinking;
God be at my end,
And at my departing.

Dates for the Next Issue

The November Magazine will be published on Friday 26th October 2007. All copy for that issue should be left in the basket at the back of the church or email me at a_c_chapman@hotmail.com by **21st October 2007**.

Two for the children



TOFFEE APPLES

You will need someone older to help you make these, but they are simple to make and yummy to eat.

1. Push a stick [wooden chopsticks work well] into the top of 8 apples.
2. Put 450g / 1 lb granulated sugar and 150 ml / 5 fl. oz. water into a heavy based pan, heat and stir until the sugar has dissolved.
3. Let the liquid continue to boil until it is a golden 'toffee' colour.
4. CAREFULLY remove the pan from the heat and dip and cover each apple with the toffee.
5. Put the apples onto an oiled baking tray to cool. Then EAT !

"As long as the world exists, there will be a time for planting and a time for harvest. There will always be cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night" Genesis 8:22



HARVEST

is a time to REMEMBER that GOD made the world. He made the land we live on, the air we breath, the water we drink and the food we eat.



HARVEST

is a time to say THANK YOU to GOD for giving us all the things we need to live.



HARVEST

is a time to SHARE with others all that GOD has given us.



Find these words in the haystack:

HARVEST PLOUGH FOOD
SEED GOD WHEAT SUN
SOIL RAIN BREAD
SCATTER LAND SOW LOAF

Picture Proverbs

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS A COLLECTION OF WISE SAYINGS FROM THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

WHAT DO THE FOLLOWING PROVERBS MEAN? THEY ALL COME FROM CHAPTER 27.



1. DO NOT BOAST ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.



2. LET ANOTHER PRAISE YOU, AND NOT YOUR OWN MOUTH; SOMEONE ELSE, AND NOT YOUR OWN LIPS.



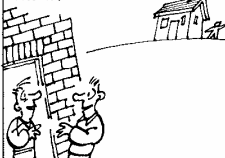
7. HE WHO IS FULL LOATHES HONEY...



...BUT TO THE HUNGRY EVEN WHAT IS BITTER TASTES SWEET.



10. - BETTER A NEIGHBOUR NEARBY THAN A BROTHER FAR AWAY.



12. THE PRUDENT SEE DANGER AND TAKE REFUGE, BUT THE SIMPLE KEEP GOING AND SUFFER FOR IT.



see Proverbs Ch. 27