

How I was un-dragoned

by Bruce Mason

I simply could not go on. For over sixteen years I had struggled with my allergies and I was losing the battle. My weight had dropped dangerously low, and I was wasting away before my very eyes. There was absolutely nothing left that I could eat. Even the air and water made me sick. I was in my second year of an experimental allergy treatment that had only succeeded in making me worse. After all those years, I had nowhere else to turn – except to God. I cried out to the Lord in utter despair, begging for deliverance. In anguish, I pleaded to Him that I'd had enough – that I just couldn't take it any longer. Like Job, I felt completely broken, rent in two. It was as if I were rung out and left to hang damp and limp over a rail.

Since the sixth grade, my life had been a fruitless struggle of trying to “figure out” a solution to my allergies. In every way, my allergies had become who I was; they were my identity. From the very first day that I brought foods like Mako shark and frog legs to lunch, I became known as “that kid with allergies”. In a strange way, I didn't mind this label at first. (I had been adopted when I was an infant, and had struggled with identity issues.) Not only did my allergies get me extra attention at home, but they

gave me a distinctiveness that I managed to translate into a false sense of security. The trouble was that as my life progressed, I remained trapped inside this identity and it became unbearable. But the Lord saw my struggle and had other plans for me. He set out to teach me that my true identity could only be found in Him.

Beginning in the spring of 1997, soon after my wife and I started attending Truro Episcopal Church, God began to heal me. It was slow going at first, no thanks to me. It actually took me about a year and a half to let God really get down to work. I was so stubborn and stuck on trying to figure everything out myself, that I failed to see that God needed me to trust in Him completely. By the fall of 1998, however, I had at least finally realized that I was running out of my own ideas. With nowhere else to turn I let God lead me to one of Truro's healing prayer teams. I had attended Truro's various healing services, and been prayed over occasionally after church on Sundays, but had never sought prayer as an answer in and of itself. Rather, I thought that I could use prayer to ask God to help me figure out the solution to my allergies.

But as I let go and finally began to prayerfully submit myself to God, I found that He began to change me. He revealed painful experiences from my past that I had left unresolved. He made me realize that I was hauling around a horde of excess baggage and was layered with so many different identities that my true self was buried and virtually unrecognizable. I also learned that I was so wrought with fear—fear of being sick and fear of letting go of the sickness—that I was physically and spiritually incapacitated.

To be healed, I literally had to let God undress me – a process which proved to be painful at first. In the words of the boy-turned-dragon, then turned

Bruce and Shay Mason handing out daisies on “God is Peace” day, Sunday, August 3, 2003.

boy again, Eustace, in C.S. Lewis' *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, “The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I had ever felt. The only thing that made me bear it was the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.” As God purified me by stripping away my own ugliness, he also worked to make me completely dependant upon Him.

God led me to fast for a week. It actually wasn't a full fast, but a diet where He did the menu planning. I would literally stand in front of the open fridge and ask Him to show me what to eat – and he did. It was never much, but always just enough. I learned to trust God in an amazing new way. By the end of that week I was ready to let God tear deeply into me (though I did not realize it until it occurred). God began to strip away the fear and pain that had tormented me for so many years. I was brought to my knees and shaken like a leaf – a process he has repeated several times since. When he was finished, I felt lighter than before. I was freer, less burdened, and very conscious that His Spirit was at work in me. In the words of Eustace: “And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been.”

The following day, I found that I could eat! God had begun to physically manifest my healing! I was awestruck. It seemed almost unfathomable that a God so huge could love me so much that he would spend that much time working on me. I was (and still am) humbled to my very core. In the days ahead, I continued to ask God what to eat at each meal and found that He pointed me to things I would have never dared to try before. God also taught me *how* to eat – I simply did not know how to make a balanced meal or even how much to eat! I quickly gained over 15 pounds and began to look healthy. People repeatedly told me that they could see a difference in me, both physically and emotionally. Eustace explains: “I found that all the pain had gone.... And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again.”

Since the day God began to manifest his healing, He has actively been at work within me, stripping off old layers and setting me free. I am now a totally new person. I feel reborn, cleansed and whole. God's work in me is far from done, but when I look back to where I started, I can hardly believe how far I have come. God has given me an entirely new identity. It is a self that is rooted firmly in Him. I still do struggle at times. Allergic symptoms occasionally try to arise when I am anxious or fearful for one reason or another. But these symptoms are merely the residue of an old self. God has dressed me in new clothes – clothes that He has chosen just for me. ☩



TODAY'S EVENTS:

- 1p **Legislative Briefing Lunch**
All are welcome!
Central Lutheran, Fellowship Hall

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The AAC is a network of individuals, parishes, specialized ministries and Episcopal bishops who affirm Biblical authority and mainstream Anglican orthodoxy within the Episcopal Church. In response to the Lord's grace, we commit ourselves to proclaiming the Good News to every person and to working to reform and renew our Church.

THE DAILY ENCOMPASS

A WITNESS OF MAINSTREAM ANGLICANISM AT GENERAL CONVENTION 2003

Friday, August 8, 2003

Worldwide Anglican leaders express opposition to consent to the election of Gene Robinson

“The confirmation of Gene Robinson's election by the House of Bishops (ECUSA), as the first actively gay bishop has brought much sadness and disappointment to us in the Church of Nigeria... Even more shocking is the violation of their own constitution in which they claim to be in fellowship with churches ‘upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.’ ...

“We applaud the admirable integrity and loyalty of those gallant 45 Bishops of ECUSA who have refused to succumb to the pressure for compromise. In the language of the Bible, they have refused to bow their knees to baal. We assure them, and all the faithful within ECUSA, of our unflinching solidarity and fullest cooperation. We shall continue to be in full communion with them and we will do

all that is necessary to actualise this bond in practical terms...

“Nevertheless, as things stand, a clear choice has been made for a Church that exists primarily in allegiance to the unbiblical departures and waywardness of our generation; a Church that enthrones the will of men over and above the authority of God and His revealed and written Word. Such a Church is bound to become a shrine for the worship of men rather than God. We cannot go on limping between two opinions...”

*Most Rev'd Peter J. Akinola, DD,
Primate of All Nigeria.*

“The decision of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in America to elect and confirm an active homosexual man as a bishop is wrong. It is against Biblical teaching, it is sin and it damages the Body of Christ and leads people astray. It makes it difficult for people to understand what “family” means...

“This convention has ignored our calls for unity and caution. In acting alone, they have brought a great wound to the Anglican Communion and have separated themselves from us.”

Statement from the Archbishop of Kenya, The Most Rev. Benjamin Nzimbi

“We feel profoundly let down, as this decision will unquestionably damage our interfaith relations with our Muslim friends among whom we live. It will also have a negative impact on our relations with the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in our area, which continue to hold fast to the apostolic faith and teachings from the first century. We will definitely be seen by them now as heretical.



*My name is Geoffrey Mwangi.
I am five years old, and live in Kenya.
Will you sponsor me?*

To find out more about how to sponsor a child, visit the AAC booth in the Exhibit Hall.

www.APLACETOSTAND.org



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Erik Nelson

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Maybe Christ is doing something new

by Erik Nelson

That was the call of the theological left over the past two weeks. At first I was skeptical. Now I'm not so sure. Maybe they're right after all - maybe God is doing something new in the world.

Granted, I don't think He's doing what they think he's doing. After all, I believe that Christ is the fullest revelation of God in history, and I do not look toward new revelations as progressivists do (that is, after all, the major

difference between these views of the Gospel). While God may not do new things in *that* way, sometimes He does new things with *us*, His people. Perhaps this is one of those times. The more I think and pray about what lies ahead for us, the more I am joyful about the future.

There is a divide between the different generations' response to what happened this week. When the vote came down, I think we all cried. We mourned. We knew what would happen to Episcopalians here, and shuddered to think what would happen to Anglicans around the world. I dread what effect this decision might have on people my age and younger who are a generation torn apart by sexual brokenness. But soon I felt joy. Some felt freedom. For the older, more experienced reformers among us, I think there was more sadness than joy, seeing



Archbishop Nzambi, Primate of Kenya, with Bishop Herzog at the AAC press conference after the Gene Robinson vote, August 5.

Statements...

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"We had not expected this to be done to us by brothers and sisters who are in communion with us. We had expected that they would think of us before taking such a grave step. It showed great disrespect to the majority of the members of the Anglican Communion and the church worldwide. In fact, the decision shows disregard for the value of being in communion and part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. It also places in doubt the future of the Lambeth Conference. When its resolutions are no longer respected by members of the conference what purpose does it have?"
Statement from Rt. Rev. Dr. Mouneer Anis Bishop of Egypt, North Africa and the Horn of Africa

"In taking this unprecedented step the General Convention of ECUSA has abandoned the traditional teaching and disci-

pline of the church by electing an openly gay bishop, living in a sexual partnership outside of Christian marriage...

"The overwhelming majority of Anglicans across the Communion stands opposed to changes in the Church's traditional teaching and practice. This was reaffirmed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference, where it was agreed that "in view of the teaching of Scripture" the church - upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage."

Statement from Archbishop Drexel Gomez

"We greatly regret today's vote by ECUSA's General Convention to confirm the appointment of a bishop who is a practicing homosexual. Sadly this decision ignores the mind of the Anglican Communion as set out by the Lambeth Conference in 1998 in its Resolution 1.10 and the Primates' Meeting in Brazil in May 2003. The Convention's

the church they grew up in tear itself in two.

But I see opportunity. If indeed we trust in God's will, then no time can ever be a time of complete sorrow. And in this horrible event I see the potential for great things. I see Episcopalians who are committed to the Gospel now free from the burden of their church's latitudinarianism. I see priests at all stages of their ministries newly emboldened by what has happened. I see bishops who have long been set upon by their peers with joy in their hearts. I see a church that can be the center of revival and spiritual renewal. I see a church that can proclaim Christ to the nations—including our own.

On Wednesday I witnessed a unique eucharist, in which we sung Baptist hymns (with the original words, mind you), out of a Presbyterian hymnal, with Catholic, Evangelical and Charismatic Episcopalians all worshipping together, sharing the body and blood of our savior with four archbishops and twenty bishops representing nearly all streams of the Anglican tradition, and four continents. *This*, my friends, is what the church ought to look like.

There were some there who ordained women, some who didn't. Some who rang

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vote is contrary to the clear teaching of Holy Scripture and the Anglican formularies about marriage. If the consecration of Canon Robinson proceeds, the Convention will be taking ECUSA outside the scriptural and currently agreed boundaries of the Anglican Communion. This will cause great distress not only in North America but also across the Anglican family world-wide who have no wish to see ECUSA taken outside the Communion by errant leadership.

"We expect that Primates of the Communion will be meeting soon to consider what action to take. Dioceses and parishes in the United States who wish to remain loyal to the Anglican Communion will be also considering their position in the coming weeks. We offer them our support and prayers and call upon the whole Church to pray earnestly that God will have mercy on His church."

Statement from Anglican Mainstream
Issued August 5, 2003

To my Episcopal family

by Doug LeBlanc

Beloved friends:

Our gathering in Minneapolis has been my fifth consecutive General Convention as a reporter—the merest blink of an eye to convention veterans, but enough time to offer some perspective on where we have been and where we are going.

Professor Timothy Sedgwick observed in the early 1990s that many Episcopalians were experiencing cognitive dissonance about sexual morality—a feeling of disconnection between the church's teachings and its practices. He said this conflict must, in time, be resolved for the good of the church. To his everlasting credit, Sedgwick called on liberal Episcopalians, even then, to be gracious in the victory he expected would eventually be theirs.

Just as the 1976 convention in Minneapolis was the decisive moment in our church's discussion of ordaining women as priests, this convention marks the turning point in our discussion about blessing same-sex couples.

I give thanks for many of you on the left. You have shared meals, your homes, and soul-to-soul conversations with me. One of the richest gifts we can give each other is to risk discovering the person behind the activist's confrontational posture. To the many Episcopalians who embody liberalism's generosity at its best: thank you.

I hope that my offering some final thoughts on this General Convention and our subsequent life together will not be too severe a test of your generosity.

I ask five favors of you:

Give us time. I do not honestly know what this General Convention means for our future together. I know most of us want to remain faithful Anglicans. Nineteen of our shepherds

have asked sympathetic Primates to provide their godly guidance. We want their guidance to be marked more by wisdom than by speed, but we expect to hear from them. We cannot say within a matter of days or weeks just how we will remain Anglicans. If you're certain that God has led General Convention to vote as it has, please also trust that he will help us respond in ways that do not sacrifice our theological convictions.

Let people go with your blessings. Some Episcopalians will feel the need to leave, and

"One of the richest gifts we can give each other is to risk discovering the person behind the activist's confrontational posture. To the many Episcopalians who embody liberalism's generosity at its best: thank you."

right away. They may choose to become Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, or Southern Baptists. So what? They are neither traitors to Anglicanism nor weak in Christian faith. They are adults in search of the communion that best nurtures their theology and piety. Such were some of you if you were not born into the Episcopal Church. Some of these people may have welcomed you into your new life as an Episcopalian. Try to show a similar grace as they leave.

Show us your inclusivity. I'll confess to believing that redemption, not God's all-inclusive love, was the point of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. I think the gospel of inclusivity

does not make honest sense of Jesus' hard sayings about the afterlife, or about the legalists and hypocrites of his time. (Need we remind ourselves that all theological perspectives have their share of legalists and hypocrites?) Still, if you believe what you say about welcoming the Other, consider how often we *are* your Other.

Give the motives bashing a rest. When you declare that fear, hatred, intolerance, or a lust for power drive conservative Episcopalians, you are not helping us become more inclusive. I do not ask you to vanquish all such thoughts about us. We all think unkind things. I do ask you to consider whether such broad statements about our spiritual lives are worthy of inclusion in your sermons and publications.

Acknowledge our clashing worldviews. There will always be enough conservative Episcopalians for this church to argue about sex until the Second Advent, if it is so inclined. The next time you're sitting through another marathon open hearing about blessing same-sex unions, listen for what people are saying between the lines. Ponder what you hear about God, the state of this world, heaven and hell, and how we reach either place. And if that sentence sounds too literalist to you, I rest my case.

I'm not sure I can say this too many times, friends: thank you. Thank you for those times when you've shown patience with our reluctance to walk in the same direction with you. Thank you for when you've acknowledged our concerns about the holiness of God and the authority of Scripture. Thank you for recognizing that evangelical faith is a stream flowing into the glorious river of Anglicanism.

Thank you, above all, for the painful gift of clarity about where you want this church to move. If most conservatives are unable to accompany you, please know that you will always have a place in our hearts.

Doug LeBlanc is an Associate Editor of *Christianity Today*.

Something new...

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bells, some who didn't. Some who spoke in tongues, and some who didn't. Some who gave the liturgy in English, some in Spanish, some in Erdu and other languages. Some rich, some poor.

All spoke the Creed with one accord, and were brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

AAC Legislative Briefing Lunch

Come join us for lunch!

Catch up on legislative action!
Eat a delicious lunch!

1p Central Lutheran Church,
Fellowship Hall
Just across 12th St. from
the Convention Center