



# ENCOMPASS

News and Events from the American Anglican Council • Second Quarter 2015

## How should we then live in Babylon?

BY THE REV. CANON PHIL ASHEY,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Back in the 1970's when I was an undergrad at Stanford, our Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship chapter sponsored lectures by Dr. Francis Schaeffer to the whole university. In the wake of the Obergefell decision legalizing same-sex marriage and its ramifications for the constraint of our religious freedoms, I am reminded of the question Dr. Schaeffer posed in those lectures (and in his book) *How should we then live?*

I'm a pastor by first calling (an attorney by second), and I've been prayerfully reflecting on the answer to Dr. Schaeffer's most relevant question. So let me respectfully offer some thoughts as we look over the cultural, spiritual and legal landscape we now face.

### 1. We live in Babylon, not Jerusalem

A good friend (and fellow attorney) reminded me that the logic driving the *Obergefell* decision goes all the way back to 1992, to Justice Kennedy's "sweet mystery passage" from *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*. Justice Kennedy wrote: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and the mystery of human life." In cases before the U.S. Supreme Court involving the themes of the sexual revolution such as abortion, homosexuality, and gay marriage, the antinomian logic of the "sweet mystery passage" drives the outcome over and over, striking down traditional morality as irrational and oppressive.

It should come as no surprise when Justice Kennedy writes for the majority in *Obergefell*: "A first premise of the Court's relevant precedents is that the right to personal choice regarding marriage is *inherent in the concept of individual autonomy*" and "These considerations lead to the conclusion that the right to marry is a *fundamental right inherent in the liberty of the person*" (emphasis added).

In other words, in the new metaphysical-sexual expression regime, "it's all about me and my choices." We have long since left "Jerusalem" with its assumptions of objective truth. Culturally, we are in Babylon and are facing solipsism (the view or theory that the self is all that can be known to exist) as our fundamental philosophical point of reference, and narcissism



Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Furnace (Dan. 3:23-24,91-98) by Gustave Dore

(excessive or erotic interest in oneself) as the fundamental sexual right. These two things never end well, as Paul observes of those who have exchanged "the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man" in Romans 1:18-32.

While the Jews were in Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar made an idol 90 feet high and nine feet wide—an idol in the shape of a giant "I" (Daniel 3:1). What an appropriate biblical image for the challenge placed upon us by the new regime: to bow down before the almighty "I" of self. You know the rest of the story in Daniel 3. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not bow down to that idol, and though they were cast by the authorities into the fire, the only thing they lost were the ropes that bound them (Dan. 3:25-27). Like them, we cannot bow down to the almighty "I" of the new regime—however lonely that stance may be. As a church, we must respectfully, lovingly, truthfully but adamantly state that our identity is not in our autonomy or individual choices. Our identity is in Christ and in him alone (Ephesians 1).

With that in mind, how should we then live in Babylon—as Jesus would if he were in our shoes?

*"Babylon" continued on page 3*

## Director of Church Revitalization



Canon Steven Saul will lead AAC Church Revitalization initiatives

The American Anglican Council (AAC) welcomes The Rev'd Canon Steven Saul as its new Director of Church Revitalization and Coaching. The AAC's Board of Trustees created the position in response to Anglican churches seeking renewal and guidance in their ministry. "The American Anglican Council is here to equip the church for mission, develop faithful leaders and renew orthodox Anglicanism," said Chief Executive Officer the Rev. Canon Philip Ashley. "Adding Canon Saul to our team will help us better serve parishes and their leaders."

Canon Saul will direct the AAC's Church Revitalization and Lay Leadership Institute as well as coordinate clergy coaching. He attended the AAC's inaugural Clergy Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) and was a leader in the AAC's church revitalization program from 2011-2013. "During the last four years," says Canon Saul, "I've seen the importance of equipping the clergy, lay leadership and the local church for the call we have to 'live out' the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). I'm looking forward to personally working with Anglicans as we do that together."

Prior to ordination in 2003, Steven+ worked in the public and private business sectors. He brings to the church a heart for the lost and an understanding of how to strengthen the teams he serves. He has planted a church and served in small and large parishes. Canon Saul currently serves as the Canon to the Ordinary for the Anglican Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast and will continue in that position as he also works with the AAC.

Steven+ earned his B.A. in Communication from the University of Colorado at Boulder, M.B.A. from Dallas Baptist University and a Masters of Arts in Religion from Reformed Theological Seminary. He and Debbie, his wife of 25 years, have two grown sons, and live in suburban Houston, Texas. †

# Times they are a changin' but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever

BY ROBERT H. LUNDY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

I was in beautiful Vancouver, BC at the Anglican Church in North America's Provincial Council and needed a cab. What I ended up getting was a lesson from a Sikh taxi driver on the evils of "global power brokers and politicians" and how each person in each of their incarnations was responsible for "sharing the light inside them." He explained how "prophets" like Jesus, Mohammad and the Sikh Gurus all shared this light and were equally good examples for us. I squeezed in a few words about Christ and his uniqueness, but it was clear that this man wanted to do the talking. We got to our destination and my co-worker, Mary, and I got out. As I closed the car door Mary said, "Robert, I felt like I was back in 1960's for a minute there." While I wasn't yet born in the 60's, it didn't take much of an imagination to see how our driver's worldview hearkened back to Woodstock, free love and opposition to "the establishment." I think what amazed me the most was how our driver, claiming to be familiar with the world's religions, failed to see that the teaching of Christ, Mohammad and Guru Nanak are incompatible. This intelligent, spiritual man was living in spiritual darkness, unable to see the fallacy of his faith.

Back on the campus of the University of British Columbia where the ACNA's meeting was taking place, I ran into signs (literally) of spiritual darkness. This was just one of many alternative sexuality posters on display in the lobby of the Student Union. I had to Google "third gender" and "agender" and let's just say that they weren't what Jesus had in mind when he

## TRANS\*

I recently adopted the term "trans\*" (with the asterisk) in my writing. I think you should, too. If it's new to you, let me help clarify. Trans\* is one word for a variety of identities that are incredibly diverse, but share one simple, common denominator: a trans\* person is not your traditional cisgender wo/man. Beyond that, there is a lot of variation.

### WHAT DOES THE \* STAND FOR?

- \*TRANSGENDER
- \*TRANSSEXUAL \*TRANSVESTITE
- \*GENDERQUEER
- \*GENDERFLUID \*NON-BINARY \*GENDERF\*CK
- \*GENDERLESS
- \*AGENDER \*NON-GENDERED
- \*THIRD GENDER
- \*TWO-SPIRIT \*BIGENDER
- \*TRANS MAN
- \*TRANS WOMAN

read more at [ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)  
Alternative sexuality poster seen on the campus of UCB in the student union

"Changin' Times" continued on back page

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## 2. We must be prepared to receive those who are and will be wounded by the new metaphysical-sexual regime

As a church, we must prepare for the Sexual Revolution’s refugees. Russell Moore, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, described the two kinds of churches that will not be able to reach the refugees of the future:

“The first is the church that is so scared of people that we scream at them in anger and condemnation. If we see ourselves as people who are ‘losing’ a culture rather than people who have been sent on a mission to a culture, this is how we will be. That will be exacerbated if we take our cues from those who play outraged Christian caricatures for a living rather than from those who have come to seek and to save that which was lost. *If we do not love our mission field, we will have nothing to say to it.*”

“The second sort of church that will fail these refugees is the church that gives up, or silences, its convictions because they’re not

popular. This too is fear. We assume that we can reach people if we dance around the sexual questions, thinking that we can get to that part of discipleship after they’re part of the family. That’s just not the way Jesus does it. *Jesus gets right at the point of guilt, the part the person is protecting, and calls the person not only to repentance but also to forgiveness and freedom (Jn. 4:16).*” (emphasis added).

We know that the new, metaphysical-sexual expression regime cannot keep its promises of fulfillment and happiness. Sexual and relational brokenness and spiritual and emotional wounds will accelerate with the ever accelerating sexual revolution blessed by the Supreme Court as “fundamental liberties of the individual.” Refugees, present and future, will not be attracted to churches gripped by fear—either the fear that shuns them or that renders them embarrassed and silent.

What is the remedy for the fear that Russell Moore describes at the heart of both churches that cannot reach future refugees? Quite simply, the perfect love of Jesus Christ which casts out all fear (I John 4:18-21). Within our own Anglican context, I can think of no better example of how to reach refugees of the sexual revolution with Christ’s perfect love than the recent sermon “Sex and created bodies” (March 2, 2014) by the Rev. Sam Ferguson of The Falls Church Anglican. Preaching from I Corinthians 6:12-20 and Genesis 1:26-28, Ferguson describes his encounter with a fellow classmate at Cambridge who was planning a sex change operation, and to whom he ministered with both truth and love. Although his classmate ultimately became a follower of Jesus

and experienced transformation in Christ, he still struggled with his sexual identity and feelings. Ferguson continued to lovingly, truthfully, personally and faithfully be a friend and minister of Christ’s transforming love—just as Jesus would have. He makes the important point that our sex—our identity as male or female—is eternal, while our sexual drives and energies are temporary for this life only (there’s no marrying, no sexual activity in heaven; Luke 20:35). And so we should define ourselves by that which is eternal (our maleness or femaleness) and not that which is transitory (our subjective feelings).

## 3. Prepare yourself (and your church) for the coming legal challenges to enforce the regime

We can expect that advocates of same-sex marriage will not be satisfied with the decision in Obergefell. During oral argument by the United States’ top attorney, Solicitor General Verrilli was questioned about whether tax exempt status

would become an issue for colleges that prohibited same-sex conduct by their students. Verrilli agreed.

When asked about

*“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”*

*I Cor. 15:58*

the right of religious colleges to prohibit same-sex couples in their married housing facilities on the basis of religious freedom, Verrilli avoided answering the question. As Justice Thomas observed in his dissent, it is “All but inevitable” that the new definition of marriage and the religious definition of marriage “will come into conflict, particularly as individuals and churches are confronted with demands to participate in and endorse civil marriages between same-sex couples.”

As the recent statement of the Anglican Church in North America’s (ACNA) College of Bishops reiterates, Anglican churches in North America will neither perform nor participate in same-sex weddings or blessings, period. Therefore we can expect challenges to our tax exempt status, zoning, clergy housing allowances, employment practices, use of our facilities, and outreach ministries—to name but a few. The Christian Legal Society has material that will help you understand both the impact of the Obergefell decision on your religious freedoms, and the steps you should take now to prepare for these coming challenges. ([www.clsnet.org](http://www.clsnet.org))

***If you do not already have an attorney for your church or diocese, please find one.*** At the AAC, one of our strategic priorities is defending Anglicans in distress. During our long season of litigation, we helped network attorneys who were defending congregations who were leaving their denomination. We are here to do the same, working with the ACNA and sharing resources across denominations through our ecumenical partners (see [www.CommonGroundChristian.com](http://www.CommonGroundChristian.com)) to help prepare you for the days ahead.†



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created them "male and female." I don't assume every student at UCB believes this, but some certainly do. Likewise, I don't assume every Vancouverite holds mutually exclusive faith claims, but I do know the city needs Jesus.

To me, the Provincial Council and its meeting location was akin to holding a Maglite convention at the entrance to a cave. It was easy to see the dark places and where Christ's light needed to shine. I'm thankful for our brothers and sisters in Canada like Bishop Charlie Masters, Canon Paul Donison and Ms. Marilynn Jacobsen who are actively sharing the Gospel and shining the light in that part of the world.

Let I think my own country to be a city on a hill, the day after I got home to the USA the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage. One week later The Episcopal Church in the United States authorized a gender-neutral marriage rite.

In the 1960's, when my Sikh cab driver may have been theologically trained, Bob Dylan wrote "*The Times They are*

*a-Changin.*" The song became a sort of anthem for change in society and politics and has been covered and quoted countless times. To be sure, our own times are changing. We know, however, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and that God does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17) His precepts are trustworthy and are established forever. (Psalm 111:7-8) The Bible tells us that He does not change his mind and does not lie (Numbers 23:19). It says, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven..." (Col. 1:21-23). Let us continue in the faith and continue to spread the gospel in these changing times.†

**T**he American Anglican Council is a network of individuals, dioceses, parishes and ministries who affirm biblical authority and Christian orthodoxy within the Anglican Communion. By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the mission of the American Anglican Council is to build up and defend Great Commission Anglican churches in North America and worldwide through advocacy and counsel, leadership development and equipping the local church. *Encompass* is a quarterly publication of the American Anglican Council.

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