



ENCOMPASS

News and Events from the American Anglican Council • Fourth Quarter 2016



5 Takeaways from 2016 — and their implications for 2017

BY THE REV. CANON PHIL ASHEY, PRESIDENT & CEO

As we begin 2017, what opportunities and challenges will carry over from 2016 for Anglican followers of Jesus Christ? I'd like to suggest that there are five "takeaways" from 2016 that we can reflect upon, five challenges that will shape our mission and ministries for Christ as we move into the New Year:

1. Reaffirm the limits of Anglican Diversity

Emboldened by the Archbishop of Canterbury's failure to uphold the January 2016 Primates' recommendation for discipline of The Episcopal Church (TEC), Anglican leaders in the largely Western "global north" churches will continue to abandon Biblical, apostolic and catholic doctrine and practice in favor of what is politically and culturally correct. These Churches will stretch to bless whatever the culture blesses in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation and changes to the definition of marriage. This was already the case for TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada, and we have seen such changes accelerate in Scotland, Wales and New Zealand.

But as I wrote previously, there are Limits to Anglican Diversity. We find these "guardrails" in the Bible, the creeds, and the doctrinal expressions of the Councils of the Ancient Church. These Christian essentials are what define Anglicans, rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury's mailing list. I've written an essay on this confessional identity of Anglicanism which concludes with this observation:

"If anything, it appears that increasing numbers of Anglicans are turning away from elusive identities based on relationships, "spirit and ethos" and returning to what Avis calls a "content-based," doctrinal identity, a confessional identity—one that is rooted and grounded in Scripture, the Creeds and the Historic Formularies of the Church, including the Thirty-Nine Articles. As a result, communion with the See of Canterbury is a waning factor for Anglican identity."

You can download the whole essay, *The Confessional Identity of Anglicanism A Canonical-Doctrinal Approach*, on our website, AmericanAnglican.org. Or you can watch our Anglican Perspective videos on the Thirty-Nine Articles online as well. The American Anglican Council will continue to make resources available to everyday Anglicans to help understand the Christian essentials that make Anglicanism a Biblical, catholic and confessional Church for the 21st century.

2. Prepare for further fractures in the Communion

The Church of England appears to be on an irrevocable course to bless same sex unions—either civil partnerships, same-sex marriages or both. The Church of England General Synod met at the end of January and it seems unlikely that Biblical teaching will be upheld. Already the Church of England Evangelical Council has issued a paper to the Bishops outlining the options for fracturing the

Dear reader,

The American Anglican Council will be rethinking its print communications in 2017. We value keeping you informed and engaged with the Anglican renewal movement. However, with advancements in digital communications, the efficiency and efficacy of print media is less certain and harder to gauge. While we will not be printing *Encompass* in 2017, we will continue our weekly international and domestic Anglican news email updates. You can sign up for those emails at AmericanAnglican.org as well as find fresh commentary on Anglican events, connect with our active facebook community and watch our weekly video series, *Anglican Perspective*. Thank you and feel welcome to share your thoughts with us.

In Christ,
Robert H. Lundy,
Editor, *Encompass*
RLundy@AmericanAnglican.org

"2016" cont. on page 3

A Testimony from the AAC's Rectors Summit



The Rector's Summit for Vision and Planning (RSVP) is a learning community for rectors of multi-staff, ASA 200+, parishes in the Anglican Church in North America to develop skills, gain insights into best practices, learn via case studies and encourage community. RSVP is sponsored by the American Anglican Council and Leaderworks. The inaugural meeting took place in December of 2016.

BY THE REV. JACK KING

The beginning of this new year holds a special significance for me. In August, I will celebrate the 10th anniversary of my priesthood ordination. I grew up in the Methodist tradition, but in the early years of my pastoral vocation, I sensed that the Anglican Church was my true spiritual home. I became an Anglican pastor because I love our church's embrace of Scripture and tradition; liturgy and theology; mission and mystery.

In Anglicanism, I also discovered a beautiful and rich tradition of spiritual and pastoral theology. I've long been drawn to saints who mediate on the theology of the heart. I befriended wise counsellors and saints such as Michael Ramsey, Jeremy Taylor, Evelyn Underhill, and Austin Farrer.

Reading the wisdom of these saints was not a detached, academic exercise. I became a rector at the age of 33 and learned two things right away. One, I firmly believed God called me to become a rector. Two, I was out of my depth. Seminary was preparation for ministry, but becoming a rector felt like baptism by fire. I needed the wisdom of saints as I began serving as rector. I needed their counsel for real pastoral dilemmas. I needed trustworthy guidance in my inner life as a young priest. I will always need the counsel of the saints as I serve the church and grow in my vocation.

What I've also needed these past ten years is a living assembly of Anglican pastors where soul care, the inner life, and the pastor's heart takes the main stage. I've been blessed with good friendships and pastoral care in my life as a priest. But until recently, my conversations about the inner life have mostly happened in one-on-one conversations, not when Anglicans gather for conferences.

I've attended numerous gatherings and conferences in Anglican life, both large and small, that seek to equip pastors and churches for mission and ministry. I've benefited from the tools I've received at these gatherings, but on the drive home,

I commonly had the same lament conference after conference—the pastor's soul took a back seat to other priorities.

As I drove to Asheville and another conference last December, the Rector's Summit for Vision and Planning (RSVP), I came with both hopes and some reservations. I come by it honestly—I'm a Gen-Xer. But I also have these past experiences to overcome. I've returned from too many conferences more depleted than refreshed. I wasn't expecting that I could be renewed and strengthened at the end of the gathering. I wasn't confident the pastor's soul would shape the next four days.

But from the first gathering, it was evident that the heart of this gathering would be the heart of the pastor. Thanks be to God. In the past few years, I've been encouraged that spiritual formation has garnered more and more space at Anglican gatherings. But I've never attended a conference that devoted as much energy and attention to the inner life of the pastor as RSVP did.

When Fr. Geoff Chapman, our main speaker on the pastor's heart, quoted St. Seraphim of Sarov's famous proverb, 'Acquire a spirit of peace and thousands around you will be saved,' I knew we were under the care of a wise and godly priest. I had been carrying St. Seraphim's pearl of wisdom in my heart for years; now I was in a room with Anglican pastors from numerous dioceses who were discussing what it means to acquire peace in the pastoral life. It was so refreshing to meditate on this and other spiritual topics in conversation with brothers and sisters who know the stresses and strains of pastoral life.

I'm also grateful that the Rector's Summit wasn't entirely about the inner life of rectors. Too much attention on the inner life can be, well, just too much. Moderation is wisdom and RSVP had wise moderation in its schedule of topics.

"RSVP" cont. on back page

“2016” *cont. from page 1*

Church of England—from mild to severe. And further fractures likely will occur in the Communion between the West/North and Global South. Will a sudden influx of cash to vulnerable Global South Churches from The Episcopal Church, Trinity Wall Street and the Anglican Communion Office postpone the fractures? For how long? How will GAFCON and the Global South Churches take action to replace the dysfunctional “Instruments of Communion” and take “enhanced ecclesial responsibility” for the doctrine, discipline and order of the Anglican Communion?

In 2017, The American Anglican Council will be there to help them find a way forward that is both confessionally based and classically conciliar.

3. Seize every opportunity to point people to Jesus Christ

I was surprised to get a call from CNN to talk about “A Christmas message for fearful people in 2016.” But I am grateful that the LORD orchestrated all of it, and gave me the opportunity to point the conversation, and the audience, to Jesus Christ. Without Christ in us, promises of “peace on earth and good will for all” are unlikely ever to be fulfilled. Through my college age children, I’ve come to listen to and understand the reasons why so many of their friends reject religion, the institutional church, politics and anything that lacks “authenticity.” I may not agree with their reasons, but seldom have I made any headway talking politics and religion. But I have always found a curiosity and openness in their friends, and others, to talk about Jesus.

We never know when such an opportunity will arise to point people past their fears, hurts and hang-ups to Jesus. That’s why we must be ready to seize those opportunities whenever they come our way. So in 2017 the American Anglican Council will continue to work with and coach local churches, lay leaders and clergy through our ReVive! workshops to reach their immediate communities and networks with the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

4. Face increasingly aggressive secularism in North American culture

In his keynote address to the 2016 Christian Legal Society Annual Meeting, Dr. Albert Mohler described four stages in the development of a secular culture. In North America, we are currently in the second stage, an increasingly aggressive secularism. A New York Times op-ed described religious liberty as “the freedom to believe what you want to believe in your heart, in your home, or in your pews.” That’s it. There is no freedom to believe or express your Christian faith in the public arena. Already, individual Christians, non-profits, churches and schools are being targeted by sexual orientation/gender identity laws, Executive Orders, litigation and other threats for expressing their faith and seeking to operate by a Christian world view in public.

If we want to seize every opportunity to point people to Jesus Christ, we need to preserve and protect the range of those opportunities while we have them. Our founders did not

intend to remove Christian faith from the public marketplace; their intent was to not “establish” or prefer any one religious expression over another. For this missional reason, the American Anglican Council has launched the Anglican Lawyers Network to help defend our religious liberties, and especially those of the local church. For this missional reason, we will continue in 2017 to work with like-minded, Biblically faithful Christians in The Common Ground Christian Network to exercise our religious freedom together as we engage our culture with the vision of the good life in Christ.

5. Offer refugees of exhausted secularism an alternative vision of the good life—The Kingdom of God

We know that the new metaphysical-sexual expression regime in our culture cannot keep its promises of fulfillment and happiness. Sexual and relational brokenness, spiritual and emotional wounds will accelerate with the ever-accelerating sexual revolution blessed by the Supreme Court as “fundamental liberties of the individual.” But more than that, secularism is a world view that begins with nothing and ends with nothing. It can never satisfy the needs of the human soul. As secularism accelerates in our culture, its exhausted refugees will be searching for answers.

But as Russell Moore observes in “The sexual revolution’s coming refugee crisis”, refugees, present and future, will not be attracted to churches gripped by fear—either the fear that shuns those refugees, or the fear that renders the Church embarrassed and silent.

More than ever, we need to build up an Anglican Church in North America that is ready for the refugees! We need to offer them an alternative vision of the good life. We need to offer them the Biblical vision of “The Kingdom of God”—the range of God’s effective will, where what God wants done IS done. We do this by inspired preaching and teaching. We do this by authentic acts of loving service that witness to the goodness, mercy and justice of God and his Kingdom. We do this by making disciples of Jesus Christ. In 2017, the American Anglican Council will continue to develop faithful leaders who are committed and equipped to cast such a vision, through our Leadership Training Institutes and Summits, at every level of the Church.

But we are also convinced that we need the power of God to meet each of these challenges I have described. “For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” (I Cor. 4:20). As Anglicans in North America, how can we call upon and appropriate the supernatural power of God, the Holy Spirit, for our witness and ministry? How can we find ways to allow God to move sovereignly to open opportunities for us to point people to Jesus, and to witness in word AND deed to the Kingdom of God?

So in 2017 the American Anglican Council commits to helping our Province address that question—because more than ever, we need a fresh Pentecost, in 2017 and beyond!†



THE AMERICAN ANGLICAN COUNCIL
PO Box 2868
Loganville, GA 30052
(800) 914-2000
(770) 414-1515
info@americananglican.org
www.americananglican.org

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In this issue...

- 5 Takeaways from 2016
- Rector's Summit for Vision and Planning Testimony

"RSVP" cont. from page 2

Interspersing RSVP with discussions about culture and mission in a secular age; hearing presentations on the best practices about membership or marriage preparation; considering the challenges for parish finances in the next 20 years—these topics were vitally important to the questions I've carried as a rector. I didn't leave RSVP with clear solutions to the questions I have about leading my parish, but I left with a set of tools to address the dilemmas I face in my life as a rector.

Best of all, I departed RSVP with a group of new friends—friends who know exactly what it's like to be a rector. I'm blessed with great pastoral support in my diocese, I have good spiritual friendships in Knoxville, yet these new friendships hold an important place in my life as a rector, too. It's a gift to be in a room with attentive, passionate rectors. Honesty and vulnerability are a gift of the Holy Spirit and that gift was in abundance at RSVP. It was a safe place to share my heart, to learn with fellow priests, to grow in my calling as a rector.

In the years ahead, I'm sure I'll still read Ramsey, Taylor, Underhill, and Farrer. But now when I'm faced with dilemmas or simply need encouragement from the saints, I'll also

reach out to my new friends, serving as rectors throughout this province. That seems like a good way to enter the next 10 years of ordained ministry.†



The Rev. Jack King is Rector of Apostles Anglican Church in Knoxville, TN. King took part in the inaugural meeting of the Rector's Summit for Vision and Planning in December, 2016.

The 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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