

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERNED CHURCHMEN
AND FORWARD IN FAITH/NORTH AMERICA'S
WILMINGTON RALLY FOR ONE PROVINCE
September 16-18, 2004

A REPORT

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This year's gathering was hosted by St. Mary's Anglican Catholic Church in Wilmington, Delaware, (the Rev. Canon Kenneth Gunn-Walberg, Rector), the Anglican Fellowship of the Delaware Valley providing the Steering Committee to expedite the preparations.

Despite the inclement weather produced by Hurricane Ivan, the attendance was outstanding, with the seven major jurisdictions or groups in the United States represented. What was to make our time together extraordinary was (i) the forthright presentation of the issues before us (ii) combined with a gracious comportment toward one another (iii) excellence in the presentations (iv) an awareness of the kairotic moment and the necessity to re-group and work together as one army right now (v) the recognition of London (Forward in Faith/United Kingdom) as a point of common convergence, (vi) the commitment to the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium as the basis for our faith and practice (vii) and definite action points to facilitate the unity of orthodox Episcopalians and Anglicans in this country. Only in the Holy Spirit could all this happen.

The groups represented were the Anglican Catholic Church (ACC), the Anglican Church in America (ACA), the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA), the Anglican Province of Christ the King (APCK), the Diocese of the Holy Cross (DHC), Forward in Faith/North America (FiF/NA), Forward in Faith/United Kingdom (FiF/UK) and the Reformed Episcopal Church (REC). Regrets and greetings were received from the Anglican Province of America (APA), Bishop Robert Mercer of the Anglican Catholic Church in Canada (ACCC) and Bishop Keith Ackerman of the Diocese of Quincy (FiF/NA).

On the evening of Thursday the 16th of September the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen held its Annual Meeting. I gave a brief talk on the situation with the Free Synod in the Church of Sweden and the new Missionary Province. Bishop Obara from Kenya is helping the Missionary Province. The Missionary Province can relate to the Free Synod as reconnaissance to infantry, just as our continuing jurisdictions have related to the larger body of believers as reconnaissance to infantry. Involvement with the Swedes led to involvement with the Norwegians, who set up the Nordic Catholic Church and connected it with the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC). Now, as we pull together into one province, the PNCC is opening a door to us for more communication, and I will be attending their Buffalo-Erie Diocesan Synod this October 7-9.

The Friday morning Mass was celebrated by Father David Moyer, SSC, President of FiF/NA and Rector of Good Shepherd, Rosemont, Pennsylvania. He was assisted by Father David Ousley, SSC, Rector of St. James the Less, Philadelphia (FiF/NA), and Father Larry Snyder, SSC, Rector of St. Luke's, Newtown (FiF/NA). I gave a homily on the essential oneness of the Body, which we can either reveal or obscure. The place where our community first fell apart in 1974, Philadelphia, could well be the very place where our Lord delights in showing forth healing and renewal.

The morning talks were on the theme of "Recapturing Legitimacy, Orthodoxy and Authority in Anglicanism." Bishop George Langberg of the Diocese of the Northeast (ACA) spoke on Legitimacy. To be legitimate we must live as one in Christ, and embrace the full spectrum of Anglican witness and the historic Book of Common Prayer. Father David Kennedy, SSC (FiF/NA) took up the topic of Orthodoxy, inhering in the Vincentian Canon, the authority of Holy Scripture, the three Creeds, the Apostolic Ministry, the seven Sacraments, the historic Book of Common Prayer, New Testament morality and a relationship with Rome and Orthodoxy. Authority was covered by Father David Ousley, SSC, not only in

terms of the authority of the episcopate and the canons, but of our growing in submission to godly authority, after the example of our Lord.

Friday afternoon was for a panel discussion moderated by Father Michael Heidt, SSC, St. Luke's, Bladensburg, Maryland (FiF/NA) and consisting of Bishop John Broadhurst, Bishop of Fulham (London) and Chairman of FiF/International, Bishop George Langberg, Father David Kennedy, SSC, Father Jonathan Ostman, SSC, Rector of St. John's, Newport, Rhode Island (FiF/NA), and Auburn Traycik, Editor of the Christian Challenge. We dealt with (i) the core issue (heretical Christology) (ii) the infallibility of the Church (iii) the Anglican Network and FiF/NA as a convocation in it, to leaven the lump to whatever extent possible with full catholic witness on apostolic ministry and (iv) the elephant on the table of the New Testament standard of marriage for bishops, clergy and laity. Bishop Robert Waggner (DHC) expressed the view on (iii) that continuing jurisdictions should give this their full support, signing on as members of the FiF/NA Convocation and on (iv) that the Holy Spirit is calling us to more discipline, not less.

On Friday evening after the banquet Bishop Broadhurst gave an address to bring us up to date on the emerging free province in the UK. The prospects for it look good and at this October's Assembly, it will be proclaimed. Having it in place will make a tremendous difference to us in the US, since we will all want to be related to it. At this point, on behalf of all who may read this Report, I would like to express our profoundest gratitude to Bishop Broadhurst for being with us.

The Saturday morning Mass at St. Mary's was celebrated by Bishop William McClain of the Diocese of the Mid Atlantic States (ACC). He gave the homily, highlighting the reconnaissance gains made by the grace of God by the ACC during the past 26 years. Saturday was a "Festival of Faith," a concept for rallies for the faithful started by Father Michael Heidt, SSC. This one was called "One Church, One Faith, One Lord."

Bishop Broadhurst spoke on "One Church," and the extent to which we ourselves are sometimes the obstacle to unity. But in the great and terrible battle which is upon us, the battle for Truth, we must unite into one army of the Lord, and relinquish the existing pattern of guerilla units. The Lord is enabling us to build confidence in one another now, so that we can build a city outside the city, to recover the city. Father David Moyer, SSC, took up the theme "One Faith," noting that we have no faith of our own, only that which has been handed on to us. The three challenges facing us are (i) the loss of our magisterium, the single, standard Book of Common Prayer, (ii) the breakdown of mutually acceptable ministries (the ordination of women) and (iii) the loss of an identifiable method of correction (canons consistent with Scripture and Tradition). The first step toward recovery of the mind of Christ is a united college of our orthodox bishops with competent theologians at their sides for prayer and reflection. Already on this day there were five such bishops present. The foundation we can begin laying immediately is holiness. God wants to form us in his holiness, as ambassadors for Christ, to draw souls to Him. Nothing is more attractive or memorable than holiness, the holiness of God.

Bishop John Rodgers (AMiA) addressed us on "One Lord." Our unity is in Christ, the Saviour of all men, our incarnate Lord, the Son of God, the Word of God, the final Judge, whose claims and whose authority are breathtakingly absolute and eternal. By His Resurrection, sin, Satan and death have crumbled. He fulfills, unites and perfects the ministries of prophet, priest and king, and makes a claim of radical obedience to all who follow Him. His claim upon us right now is for us to knit our lives together in Him, to pray together and to share our ministries together. We are at a kairotic moment during which it is possible for us all to link up as believing Anglicans. If we fail to do so now we may never regain the opportunity. But Bishop Rodgers believes, and all who spoke believe, that we are not going to miss the great opportunity our

heavenly Father is placing before us now, to knit our lives together.

There was a sense, in our Rally, that the Holy Spirit was wonderfully at work to make these three days a real turning point. Nothing will be the same from here on in. One bishop, Louis Campese (Diocese of the Southeast, ACA) echoed the Pope on his trip to Greece, when he said that he, Bishop Campese, was standing before us in repentance, asking forgiveness from anyone who may ever have been offended at anything sinful he or his jurisdiction had done. Nothing reveals the unity of the Body like mutual repentance. Over these past twenty-six years our Lord has tested us and humbled us and prepared us for this time. And now there are models, such as the Anglican Fellowship of the Delaware Valley, which can be applied in any number of cities, as a way forward in our life together. We will open up the possibilities for one province as we begin, right now, wherever we are, to think, speak and act, in terms of it, as though it were already in place.

We learned, during this Rally, of rapid new developments pointing toward one army for the battle. Archbishop Robert Morse (APCK) had invited Archbishop Louis Falk (ACA) and Archbishop John Hepworth (Traditional Anglican Communion) and others to the bi-annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Bishop Charles Grafton in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on September 25, and that after the Pilgrimage, they were to re-group in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, on Sunday the 26th, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, for 5 pm Evensong and Solemn Benediction.

We finished our Rally with that Liturgy, a fitting way to sum up what Bishop Rodgers had just laid before us, lifting Jesus higher in our midst, to reveal Him in the Holy Spirit as Lord of all, Desire of the nations and our greatest joy.