Discovering Our Episcopal Voices: Past and Present

Finding Our Way Forward  Page 6
A Time for Self-Restraint  Page 8
Meet Our New Field Ed Director  Page 11
Living in a space that honors the conversation is difficult. It is so much easier to simplify, vilify, caricature, and ignore. For both sides on the current debate around sexuality, the temptation is to insist that the other holds a position which cannot be tolerated in the church. So some conservatives insist that the issues are sin and biblical authority, and the only appropriate response by the other side is repentance for advocating a sinful lifestyle. And some liberals insist that the issues are justice and human rights, and the only appropriate response by the other side is repentance for another form of segregation.

Virginia Theological Seminary continues to live in the space that honors the conversation. There are ground rules: conservatives must honor the Imago Dei in all people and be willing to hear the stories that shape the experience of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, and liberals must honor the Imago Dei in conservatives and concede that advocating “traditional marriage” should not be interpreted as homophobia. And both sides share a commitment to a creedal faith and a recognition that all need to make a case why their position is both biblical and Anglican.

Being formed in this space committed to conversation is healthy. Congregations and dioceses have the spectrum of view; the national church has both conservatives and liberals; and the Anglican Communion needs people committed to being in relationship while disagreeing about important issues.

At the Seminary, we have significant numbers of conservatives and liberals. The “news from the hill” is that it is possible to live in the space that honors conversation. It is possible for friendships to emerge and for all to partake of the Eucharist. We can do this. It does work. The issue today is sexuality, but tomorrow it will be something else. The skill of living with disagreement grounded in the love of Christ, which Paul called the Church of Corinth to learn, is one that the Church has needed countless times since and continues to need today.

The various publications of the Seminary have always been places of debate and conversation. In 1968, the Rev. C. FitzSimons Allison wrote an important piece defending the concept of “heresy”; in 1978, the Rt. Rev. John Walker made an impassioned plea for urban ministry in an article called The Urban Crisis and the Mission of the Church; and in 1986, the Rev. Charles Price made the Case for Divestment from South Africa and Allan Parrent made the Case Against Divestment. No particular article represents the “official” view of Virginia Theological Seminary; instead all these articles represent our commitment to be a place of debate and academic inquiry that honors the importance of the conversation.

With this newsletter comes the continuation of this tradition of lively conversation. We reflect the spectrum of debate within our church. We believe in the imperative of listening to a range of voices and stories. We invite you, the reader, to join the conversation which we are seeking to encourage.
Campus Shots

Top photo by David Lynch (VTS ’12); bottom photo by Audrey O’Brien (VTS ’12)

News from the Hill is published three times per year (March, June, and December) for alumni and friends of Virginia Theological Seminary, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304. Editorial comments should be directed to editor@vts.edu.

On the Cover: Krista DeVaul, wife of senior Phil DeVaul, looks through the window of an ancient home during a Jan-term trip to Jerusalem. Photo by Phil DeVaul.
Tanzanian Students Visit VTS in January

As part of a Global Partners grant awarded to VTS last summer by Trinity Wall Street, the Seminary recently welcomed four Tanzanian students from Msalato who arrived in January to take Jan-Term courses and to learn about outreach and mission in the U.S.

The students, Daudi Manase, Stephen Mnubi, Venus Mazengo, and Daniel Fweda, arrived on the coldest day of the year, with no coats! The VTS community stepped in to lend coats, hats, gloves and clothing to warm up the visitors.

The visiting students took advantage of the Bishop Payne Library’s holdings to work on their degree research projects, and audited two classes.

The students worshipped at Church of the Epiphany in DC, Immanuel Church on the Hill in Alexandria, and St. Andrew’s in Burke, VA for an experience of different parish settings.

Hosted by graduates of VTS, the Rev Dick Busch and Ms. Jane Brooks, the four visited ministries in the DC area, including Jubilee Jobs, Christ Church ministries, and Children’s Hospital. They were able to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and tour the National Cathedral with VTS students. They were also hosted by Mr. Fred Kalema-Musoke, chairman of Five Talents International, to learn about micro finance loans and ministry through development.

As Venuce said of his time with the VTS community, “I promise to pray for you all. Let us pray for each other. I know that the Grace of God is sufficient in all times and seasons.”

Below: the Tanzanian students visit the Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

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Anglican Endeavours: MSALATO THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

On January 16, 2010, Virginia Theological Seminary and Msalato Theological College entered into a partnership in theological education.

As Dean Markham and the Rev. Canon Moses Matonya, principal of MTC, signed the five-year agreement, VTS deepened its commitment to “serve the Anglican Communion and the Wider Church” as highlighted in Aim 3 of the Seminary’s Strategic Plan: “The Episcopal Church is discovering that it is difficult to remain in communion with different cultures and different peoples around the world. The prayer of Jesus to the Father was that his disciples ‘may be one, as we are one.’ We believe that we must resist the temptation simply to go our separate ways. The New Testament constantly exhorts us to ‘remain in conversation with each other, even while we are disagreeing.’”

Msalato, one of the largest theological colleges in East Africa, has been training priests in the Diocese of Central Tanganyika since the 1970s. Four years ago, Msalato expanded into a degree level curriculum and now serves as the theological campus for the new St. John’s University.

The signing of the partnership agreement is the first of a larger VTS plan to strengthen commitments to overseas theological education partners. Future agreement possibilities are with the seminary in Renk, Sudan; St. George’s College, Jerusalem; Holy Cross Theological College, Myanmar; Centro de Estudios Teologicos, Dominican Republic; Seminaire de Theologie, Haiti; and College of the Transfiguration, South Africa. There are other institutions with which VTS is growing ties, such as Rippon-Cuddesdon, Cambridge, UK.
Beatitudes Society Awards Virginia Seminary Student with Spot at Preaching Conference

The Beatitudes Society in Santa Barbara, California, has awarded Virginia Seminary middler, Nicholas “Chase” Danford (Diocese of Texas), with a spot at the Society’s exceptional Shaping Sermons to Nurture Justice conference in Berkeley, California. The conference will emphasize peer learning, foster skill development, and will encourage imagination and innovation while honoring the gifts of each participant.

Stephen L. Cook Releases Yale Bible Study Multimedia Project on Book of Isaiah

Professor Stephen L. Cook's Yale Bible Study Multimedia Project, The Yale Bible Study: Second Isaiah, with Robert R. Wilson, Yale Divinity School Professor, is now available online. There are eight 15-30 minute video conversations with Bob Wilson, supplemented with a notebook containing an introduction, interpretation essays, and supplemental materials (also free online).

The material is intended for use in small-group Bible study sessions to promote discussion and reflection. The Series aims to engage educated lay audiences by offering the insights of biblical scholarship in a relaxed, informal, yet rigorous manner.

The videos are available on Stephen Cook's faculty page at www.vts.edu and on YouTube.

2009 Dean’s Cross Recipients

Virginia Seminary awarded the Dean’s Cross for Servant Leadership in Church and Society to Bishop Carolyn Tanner Irish and Mr. David Pitts last December during a special service of Advent Lessons and Carols.

Established in November 2008, the Dean's Cross award recognizes outstanding leaders who embody their baptismal vows to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.”

Bishop Irish (VTS ’83) is the 10th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah. At the time of her election and consecration in 1996 she became the fourth woman in the Episcopal Church to hold the office of bishop.

Mr. David Pitts has been a lay Episcopalian who has offered his expertise and time to the Episcopal Church – in particular his many years of service on the Board of the Church Pension Fund.

Head of Chesapeake Bay Foundation to Headline 2010 Kreitler Lecture

On April 22, William C. Baker, president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), will keynote the 2010 Kreitler Lecture at Virginia Seminary. Baker’s lecture, “Momentum Builds for Saving the Bay: The Biggest Fight for Clean Water this Nation has Ever Seen,” will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Lettie Pate Evans Auditorium.

According to the CBF, “the Biggest Fight is an aggressive combination of education, grassroots activism, and--where necessary--litigation, designed to hold our government accountable for clean, healthy water throughout the Chesapeake Bay region.”

Look for invitations in your mailbox soon! Live streaming of the event will be available.

Pictured above from left to right: the Very Rev. Ian S. Markham; Mrs. Tae Cooper, recipient of the 2009 Dean’s Cross Award; Mr. David Pitts; the Rt. Rev. Carolyn Tanner Irish; and the Rt. Rev. “Bud” Shand, bishop of Easton and chairman of the board at Virginia Seminary.
As the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned, “our bonds of mutual affection” are at risk.

Since 2003, when the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson was consecrated as the Episcopal Church’s first openly gay bishop, the conflict within our church over issues of sexuality has threatened to irreparably divide us. Breakaway churches now have a combined membership of more than 100,000. In California, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Texas, entire dioceses have gone separate ways.

Events following the church’s General Convention last summer have exacerbated this worrisome state of affairs. There are increasing protests over the election of Rev. Mary Glasspool as the church’s first lesbian prelate and the decision by some New Hampshire churches to bless same-sex marriages. Calls for forbearance from church leaders who hope to prevent a permanent break in the fellowship have not been heeded.

Sadly, our period of “gracious restraint” is gravely troubled.

As an Episcopalian who is concerned about the fracturing of our church, and one who desires to hold it together, I fear our dwindling church will continue to shrink unless we find a way to bridge our differences. Further breaking apart of our denomination would be extraordinarily regrettable, but in my view probable if we continue on our present path.

It does not have to be this way. Rather than choosing between the absolutist positions where there is one “winner” and one “loser” with respect to those issues, I believe that there is another more practical approach worthy of consideration.

Before I explain, let me say that I claim no expertise in the polity of the Episcopal Church. Instead, my experience is in the world of national and international politics. Although I write from that perspective, I also write from a deep love of the church.

I make certain assumptions about our church. It is tolerant of differing opinions. It gives great latitude for decision making at the diocesan and parish levels. Further, I believe that most Episcopalians would like to move beyond what they see as constant intra-denominational conflict over issues of sexuality. Unless I am mistaken, most Episcopalians hope that the day will come when debates about ordination of openly gay clergy and same sex unions will no longer frequent the national news.

In my experience, some issues can be so vigorously contested that resolution of them is unreachable, at least for awhile. In those cases, the most practical approach usually is to address those matters where progress is possible, postpone decisions on irresolvable issues, and mutually respect the differing opinions of each side. To try to force resolution prematurely — so that one side is victorious and the other is defeated — yields no resolution at all. That is a recipe for continuing conflict and increasing anger.

I strongly believe that in the foreseeable future there is no likelihood of resolving within the church the issues of ordination of openly gay clergy and the blessing of same sex unions. Efforts to create winners and losers on these issues has no immediate possibility of creating either. Squabbling over church assets is the wrong way to resolve this impasse. The predictable result of continuing this battle will be public conflict without end in sight, to the utter dismay of most Episcopalians.

Therefore, I suggest that the best approach going forward would be for both sides of the controversy to agree to disagree, with each side expressing respect for the good faith of the other.
Such an approach could be called an “all are welcome” or “local option” approach and would promote a church of authentic inclusivity. It would be a reasonable and democratic solution. Under this approach, each parish would be able to decide by majority vote of its communicants the position it would take on these issues of sexuality. Those votes would be conducted for the first time in 2012 and thereafter only in general convention years when a particular parish was presented with a petition in writing signed by 50% or more of the communicants of that parish requesting another vote on the issue. Parishes that voted in favor of same-sex blessings/ordinations could be referred to by one designation and those voting against by some other designation. All would be deemed to be parishes in good standing in the Episcopal Church of the United States. Bishops in exercising oversight of the parishes in their diocese on issues of sexuality would do so in keeping with that particular parish’s most recent vote.

So how do we get there? We can “agree to disagree” on those contentious issues of sexuality by doing the following two things:

- For the next 2-½ years, church leaders would repeatedly express in written and oral statements a theme of inclusiveness and respect for advocates of each side of the sexuality issue, and call on each side to do likewise. The statements would be to the effect that the Episcopal Church is broad enough to include within it people who hold divergent views on a variety of issues including the ordination of openly gay clergy and the blessing of same sex unions.
- Church leaders, and indeed all Episcopalians, would support and actively seek to obtain passage of appropriate canonical revisions and/or resolutions at the 2012 General Convention that would implement or give effect to the “all are welcome” or “local option” approach that I have outlined above. Until General Convention 2012, the Presiding Bishop, Diocesan Bishops and Standing Committee would continue to honor the call for a time of gracious restraint.

Those on the extreme sides of the debate may disagree with this approach. But I think most Episcopalians would support it. To have a chance of working, however, there must be strong and compassionate leadership, particularly from our presiding bishop and other national church leaders, but also from other clergy and lay members who agree with this pragmatic view and are willing to promote it.

Anglicans, of course, have differences on theology and practice, and it is healthy for us to debate them. But now is not the time to allow these issues of sexuality to further splinter the church. Amid a steady national decline among protestant churches, our membership has shrunk from a high of 3.7 million Americans in 1965 to a little more than 2 million today. This trend will only worsen if this issue continues to divide us.

We can allow the gales of acrimony to blow us into further disarray. Or, we can accept this difficult challenge, harness those same winds, and chart a unified direction for the church that we all love, no matter which side of the debate we take. The choice is ours.

With credence, fortitude, and especially leadership, we can maintain our church as it has historically been—a people united in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”

James A. Baker III was the nation’s 61st Secretary of State and is a member of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas.
I first met former Secretary of State James A. Baker III during my years of service at Christ Church in Old Town, during my wonderful three years at VTS. The Secretary had come to celebrate the baptism of one of his many grandchildren and in his typical, affable, devoted way, he “showed up” to support his family and his Church. At the time, he was serving faithful Episcopalian, George H.W. Bush, our 41st President, in tackling the many challenges to world peace – often bringing together virtually opposing ends to the middle place of compromise and hope. At that time, I had no idea that I would have the blessing of serving alongside Secretary Baker in the parish where we now worship, and where he serves as special counsel to our Vestry. When Dean Markham first approached the Secretary and me about writing companion articles reflecting on our current crisis and divisions in our beloved Episcopal Church, I was deeply honored.

As you can see from Secretary Baker’s article, he brings his own perspective and insightful proposal out of, not only decades of experience in laying the groundwork for lasting peace and civility in a wide variety of arenas, but also a faithful member of the Episcopal Church and out of his deep and abiding devotion to our Lord and this Church we both love and seek to serve.

I, of course, look at this issue as a member of the clergy. I have served in six different Dioceses since graduating from VTS in 1992. I have served in a wide variety of parish settings – urban, suburban, rural and coastal, small, medium and now one of the largest parishes in our country, St. Martin’s in Houston. I have, for years, been open (as I was instructed to do at VTS), and have attempted to live into what Dean Markham calls “generous orthodoxy.” That said, I do so from the place of one who believes that the revisionists’ (I do not use this word pejoratively, but descriptively) position around human sexuality is not only inconsistent with the Biblical and Traditional teaching of the Church, but has been the chief cause for our divisions and the present anemia we see infecting most of TEC since the mid-1970s, (a time during which we have lost roughly 1/3rd of our membership).

But if I am completely honest, I must admit that I realize that these issues of deep concern to revisionists will not go away. These issues have dominated virtually every clergy conference, Diocesan gathering, and General Convention I have attended since my ordination over two decades ago. But I am an Episcopalian and I love and seek to serve the Episcopal Church. I have not been called away, and feel that my position on these matters has (or should have) as much validity and authenticity as those who may sit on the “other aisle” (to borrow a political term) than I do.

I disagree with the leadership in our Church who believe that we are not at a crisis moment.

To fail to name the problem is not only foolhardy, but simply foolish. We see the continued decline in our membership, the falling of parish and Diocesan budgets, and the hemorrhage that continues to depreciate our great institutions of theological reflection, our seminaries. Some in TEC leadership, some in positions of our General Convention, and many of our Diocesan Bishops are making decisions that clearly put at odds the greater, albeit vast, majority of worldwide Anglicanism; no one can state with integrity that any major decision around human sexuality at our most recent General Conventions was the position of a solid majority – or as we say in my part of the country – no slam dunk has occurred. We are still, perhaps increasingly, divided.

I, like my friend and mentor, Secretary Baker, believe there is – or at least can be – a solution. But what I have learned from Secretary Baker is that peace always comes with the price of some compromise, and that rarely a
solution is found that will satisfy the absolutists. Finding that peace--not issues around human sexuality--is what I believe to be our chief challenge at this present time. How to get there?

In a letter Thornton Wilder wrote in the late 1930s, he offered the following: “The fundamentalist tradition in American Protestantism has made into fixed hard laws the substance of the Gospel... All that is censorious... and joyless in the Calvinistic-Methodist-Baptist tradition is based upon a misreading of the New Testament and a failure to see that most of the tone in the Old Testament is expressly superseded in the New...

I will confess that it has been a long time since many of us have experienced authentic “joy” in what we know to be the structures of the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church. Some may have experienced some measure of satisfaction if his or her “side” won some specific victory, but is one part of the body “winning” and the other “losing,” really something worthy of joy?, (cf. I Corinthians 12). I would suggest that “joylessness” is rooted not in experiencing an open expression of freedom and authentic diversity, but instead a denomination increasingly dominated by strident liberals and conservatives running from grace into the pseudo-safety of fundamentalism.

On June 8, 1978, Aleksander Solzhenitsyn delivered a watershed speech at Harvard University entitled “A World Split Apart.” In it, he suggested that when a society begins to collapse into a kind of moral chaos, it “falls back” on legalism. He said, “Every conflict is solved according to the letter of the law, and this is considered to be the supreme solution. If one is right from a legal point of view, nothing more is required. Nobody may mention that one could still not be entirely right, and urge self-restraint or the renunciation of these legal rights or call for sacrifice and selfless risk; it would sound simply absurd. One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody operates at the extreme limit of the legal framework...”

I want to suggest that we are now witnessing this kind of “framework” in what we could easily say is a “church split apart.” The response to this increasingly divided Church is the kind of fundamentalism to which both Wilder and Solzhenitsyn refer. Conservatives have taken up the arms of schismatic and pietistic separation

What I have learned is that peace always comes with the price of some compromise, and that rarely a solution is found that will satisfy the absolutists.

ops, hopefully with the support of the Presiding Bishop, sought to find a middle-way that honors authentic inclusion. In order to do so, they would have to re-commit to Solzhenitsyn’s “self-restraint.” They have to listen to the larger Anglican voice. They would need to honor the called for moratoria around revisionist proposals concerning human sexuality and have to absolutely reject foreign incursions that disrupt our internal unity. Thus, again, we return to that call for self-restraint. Put simply, what if a majority of our bishops took the lead by calling the greater church to simply hit the “pause” button with a firm finger and do nothing more to finish the tear in our fabric that has just about destroyed our Anglican family.

This “pause” could be until our 2012 General Convention. In that interim, this majority of American Bishops, in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Consultative Council, coupled with leaders of our theological seminaries could work with a broad spectrum of open-minded-hearted rectors and lay leaders to develop a solution that respects not only the autonomy of individual bishops and their dioceses, but also of clergy and their parishes. Secretary Baker’s realistic, thoughtful and hopeful proposal could be one such solution. The present Anglican Covenant, and allowing its affirmation (if not adoption) by not simply a province, but by Dioceses and even parishes, could lay the groundwork for another solution. Both are worthy of consideration. This would, of course, require the appeal of our bishops directly to the ACC. Perhaps bishops, dioceses and parishes would begin to operate in ways that have never before been seen. Perhaps we have “covenant” and/or Windsor/Lambeth 1.10 compliant Dioceses or parishes and those which are not – each bearing some costs that accompany their decision. But a solution is not possible if the extremes continue to run rough-shod over one another with a kind of intolerant conviction that there is only one
Virginia Seminary is one of the “crossroads” of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. We welcome many guests to the Holy Hill in the course of a year, but we do not always have space to house them appropriately. It is our intent to furnish our guest dwellings with lovely appointments. So, we invite alumni/ae and friends to consider donations of antiques, paintings, objets d’art and rugs. If you make a donation, we will provide you with a letter which will state that these “gifts in kind” are fully deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Please respond to Ray Sabalis, Director of Development, at 703-461-1717 or rsabalis@vts.edu.

Surely we love our Lord and this “room” in His larger house enough that we could lay down our arms for one more season and forge a path forward. Surely we could find a way to move past issues and put our focus where it should be all along, in the words of VTS Professor, Charlie Price, “to know Christ and make Him known,” (BCP, p. 836). What this may mean is the “death” of TEC as we know it today, but if we are willing to welcome grace back into our midst, then perhaps a resurrection rests just beyond the corner.

The future of the effectiveness of TEC, and perhaps its very existence, should be determined not by how the church accommodates to the conservative and liberal “fundamentalists” in its midst, but how it reclaims an authentic understanding of grace, by becoming what it has sometimes claimed to be, the roomiest place in God’s house. Surely the foundation of that roominess is not legalism, but autonomy.

To fail to find a way forward will likely mean increasing the division in our beleaguered church, diminishing it to an impotent force in a world that desperately needs the hope Christianity brings. To let go of the strangling forces of legalism will reveal qualities our broken and sinful world so desperately needs in our day and age – charity, mutual respect, authentic unity, and selfless compassion and understanding – thereby revealing not only the reality of God’s love, but the hope that is always the fruit of seeking the truth – come whence it may, cost what it will. Well?

Dr. Levenson has served as the Rector of St. Martin’s since May of 2007. He received an MDiv. from VTS in 1992.
FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

• Christ and Culture: Communion After Lambeth (Church Publishing), by the Very Rev. Ian S. Markham, Ph.D.; the Rev. J. Barney Hawkins IV, Ph.D.; the Rev. Canon Martyn Percy; and the Rev. Mark Chapman. Leading bishops from around the world reflect on the ten main themes of the 2008 Lambeth Conference.


• Against Atheism: Why Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris Are Fundamentally Wrong (Wiley-Blackwell), by the Very Rev. Ian S. Markham, Ph.D., Markham questions the theological, ethical, and spiritual content underpinning books by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris by challenging the very foundations of their position.

• Transforming Preaching (Church Publishing), by the Rev. Ruthanna Hooke, Ph.D., with series editor, the Rev. James Lemler, Ph.D. The latest in the Church and Ministry “Transforming” series. To be released in April 2010.

NEW FIELD ED DIRECTOR
ALLISON ST. LOUIS

The Board of Trustees has elected the Rev. Canon Dr. Allison St. Louis (VTS ’00) to the faculty of the Seminary as Director of Field Education and the Second Three Years Program. Dr. St. Louis, who currently serves as the Vicar at Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford, Connecticut, steps into her new role at Virginia Seminary on March 15, 2010.

“We were all deeply impressed with Allison’s depth, thoughtfulness, energy, and commitment,” said Dean Markham. “She understands the vision underpinning the Second Three Years and the importance of Field Education in the hard work of formation.”

Dr. St. Louis succeeds the Rev. Jacques B. Hadler, Jr., who retires this spring after 17 years as the Seminary’s Director of Field Education. Prior to her work at the Cathedral in Hartford, Dr. St. Louis served at the Church of Our Saviour in Silver Spring, Maryland as Associate Rector (2003-2004) and as Assistant to the Rector (2000-2003).

A native of Trinidad, West Indies, Dr. St. Louis holds Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Science; a Bachelor of Science degrees from Howard University where she became a member of Phi Beta Kappa; and earned a Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary. She was ordained a priest in 2001 by the Rt. Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon. Her cross-cultural experience includes studies in Mexico and in Kenya.

Dr. St. Louis currently serves on the Pastoral Services Advisory Committee at Hartford Hospital and on the Diocese of Connecticut’s Committee II. She has been a Spiritual Director at VTS (2002-2004); a staff member of the Episcopal Preaching Foundation’s Preaching Excellence Program; and a Diocesan Review Committee member in the Diocese of Washington. She has been involved with the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and has served as Co-chair of the Diocese of Washington’s Task Force on Racial Reconciliation.

Stated Timothy F. Sedgwick, Ph.D., vice president and associate dean of Academic Affairs at VTS, “From a very strong group of finalists, Allison stood out given her broad experience as priest in two diverse, urban congregations, her deep spirituality, and her work as teacher and clinical psychologist.”
Virginia Theological Seminary creates a beautiful mosaic of the body of Christ. We are of different ethnicities, nationalities, cultures and gender. VTS alumni are able to faithfully serve whoever or wherever God may call them. We have the ability to represent the best of the Church, articulating the needs and concerns of those we serve. Assuring all that nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (BCP, 862)

We are as diverse in genetic makeup, as we are in theological perspectives and understandings of the Gospel. Each of us must become comfortable in proclaiming the Good News as we know it to be. Not discounting another’s perspective because we disagree. The more we share, the more we learn, and the more we grow. Many students have entered VTS with their minds closed to hearing another’s view. The more open they become to listening to their peers, they gain new insights to theology and interpretations of Scripture. The end result is not always agreement but respect.

VTS alumni, you continue to faithfully serve the Church. God has called us to ministries in schools and in shelters, serving parishes and visiting prisons throughout this nation and the world. Everywhere that you have been called your work has given glory to God. An alumnus in Uganda sent a note to the Seminary after receiving February’s eNews letter. One sentence of his brief note read, “I continue to praise God for VTS’ support to the worldwide church and the preparation for the church ministry.”

I thank God for the many voices that spring forth from this community.

There is a cost to being able and willing to educate those who seek a strong theological education. For many years the Seminary has benefitted from the generosity of friends. Friends who were committed to making sure that Virginia Seminary would be the strongest seminary throughout the Anglican Communion. We are extremely grateful for their wonderful gifts that have allowed us to grow into this role.

This year the Annual Fund theme is “Everyone Counts…Everyone is needed…Every Gift makes a Difference!” Many have responded since July 2009. Friends, parishes and alumni have made a $500,000 investment toward the Seminary’s future. Of this amount raised, 9% came from individuals and institutions that have never made a financial gift to the Seminary before. Thank you for your generosity! More of us can contribute towards making a difference this year before June 30, and I hope that you will do so.

Now is the time for all of us who have been blessed with being associated with VTS to give something back. As diverse as we may be, we are all unified by our common affiliation with this seminary. Consider sending a gift today; consider making a contribution towards strengthening an already strong institution; consider making an investment in those who will be sent out into the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Singing praise for a new ministry: the Rev. Jennifer Andrews-Weckerly (VTS ’09) and her husband, Scott, at her ordination to the priesthood at Trinity Episcopal Parish, Wilmington, Delaware. Photo by Coleman Sellers VI.

Corrections
The following are corrections to the Virginia Seminary Journal, Fall 2009.

- Page 93 – Memorial Gifts, the Rev. Margo D. Critchfield and Mr. Donald Critchfield gave a memorial gift to the Seminary in honor of the Rev. Robert A. Burch.

- Page 126 – large photo of Alix Dorr was taken by Heather Zdancewicz.
Class Notes

Please share your news with us!

Write: The Rev. Charles L. Fischer III, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304
E-mail: alumni@vts.edu
Call: 703-461-1711
Fax: 703-370-0138
Email Address Changes to: manderson@vts.edu

‘62
The Rev. Jay D. Hanson, interim rector, The Church of the Messiah, Rhinebeck, NY.

‘66
The Rev. Ben Campbell, pastoral director of the Richmond Hill community, was named person of the year by Richmond’s Fifty Plus magazine.

‘71
The Rev. Edward L. Mullins interim rector, St. Francis-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church, Green Valley, AZ.


‘75
The Rev. Charlie Caskey, interim rector, St. Andrew’s, Fullerton, CA.

‘78
The Rev. Jerry W. Fisher, interim rector, St. Anne’s Episcopal Church, Winston-Salem, NC.

‘78

‘81
The Rev. Frances Fosbroke Cox interim rector, Church of the Epiphany, Eden, NC.

‘85
The Rev. Kevin C. Warner rector, St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA.

‘90
The Rev. Lt. Col. Carl Wright has been reassigned by the Air Force to Barksdale AFB near Shreveport, LA.

‘91
The Rev. Shawn Hill, rector, St. Andrew’s Church, Pasadena, CA.

‘92
The Rev. Dr. Russell Levenson, Jr. has recently released Provoking Thoughts: A Compilation of Scriptures, Meditations, and Prayers.

‘94
The Rev. Pamela Webb, interim rector, The Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter, Burlington, NC.

‘96
The Rev. Douglas Gray priest-in-charge, Christ Episcopal Church, Denver, CO.

‘97
The Rev. Reginald Payne-Wiens rector, St. James Episcopal Church, Austin, TX.

The Rev. Lauren Stanley was appointed to be the Haiti point person in the U.S. for Episcopal Relief and Development and to coordinate relief efforts from VA.

‘01
The Rev. Earnest N. Graham III rector, St. John’s Episcopal Church, Suffolk, VA.

‘04
The Rev. Susan Q. Claytor rector, All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Hershey, PA.

The Rev. David A. Umphlett rector, St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, High Point, NC.

The Rev. David Wacaster, rector, Good Shepherd, Silver Spring, MD.

‘05

The Rev. Andrew O’Connor, rector, Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Wichita, KS.

‘06
The Rev. James Peter Swarr rector, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, East Longmeadow, MA.

The Rev. Caron Gwynn, interim rector at Church of the Ascension, Lexington Park, MD.

The Rev. Sammy Wood, associate rector, Church of the Advent, Boston, MA.

The Rev. Debra Brewin-Wilson, rector, St. Thomas, Croom, MD.

The Rev. Allison Liles, associate rector, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Huntsville, AL.

‘07
The Rev. Eric Liles, associate rector, St. John’s Episcopal Church, Huntsville, AL.

The Rev. Scott Petersen, rector, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Wilkesboro, NC.

‘08
The Rev. Mitchell T. Bojarski vicar, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Campbellsville, KY.

‘09
The Rev. Leigh Hall, canon for Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Diocese of Georgia.

The Rev. Kesha Brennom, priest-in-charge-under-special-circumstances, All Saints Church, Oxnard, CA.

The Rev. Troy Mendez, curate, Church of Our Savior, San Gabriel, CA.

 Keeping In Touch

The Journal
The Seminary’s magazine for alumni and friends.
Once per year, in September.

News from the Hill
The Seminary’s newsletter for supporters of VTS.
Three times per year, in March, June, and December.

The eNews
Email updates about happenings at VTS.
The first day of each month.

The Dean’s Commentary
Daily Seminary updates from Dean Markham and/or other guest contributors.
Daily, Monday-Friday.

Alumni Convocation 2010
Annual conference for graduates of the Seminary.
This year: October 5 & 6.

You can also find us on:
As I write this article I am looking out on the falling snow which has blanketed the campus yet again by another foot or so. This past week of record-breaking storms has seen the student body come together in some very unique and wonderful ways.

During the first wave of storms, the VTS campus was without heat and power. As this news spread, calls were made and within an hour the students living in off-hill apartments volunteered to host over 30 of the on-hill students for the night, providing them with food, warmth, and hospitality. As it happened, the power and heat came back on only hours later, but the attitude, “of course we want to help” was not only typical of radical VTS hospitality but of the radical hospitality that we as Christians are to offer those in need. Especially when those in need are members of our own community.

There were numerous fun activities that emerged from the series of storms: sledding, playing in the snow, and having nice roaring fires in the Scott Lounge fireplaces, just to name a few. There was a coming together of students as our normal routines were disrupted and altered by the effects of the storms. The on-hill students hosted a party for the community, “Snowapalooza,” where Hawaiian shirts and summer attire were donned. The cost of admission was clothing that would be donated to the homeless shelters so that those in the larger community might have warm clothes to wear. Finally students planned and held daily worship services both on-hill in Scott Lounge and off-hill in several different student homes. In short, we continued to find ways to help those in need both in and outside of the VTS community, and we continued to worship God.

The Rev. Matthew Hanisian
The Senior Class is pleased to announce that its class gift will be seed money for a book project that will celebrate the history of women being trained for ordained ministry at Virginia Theological Seminary.

Our hope is that this work will be published in 2011, the 35th anniversary of the canonical ordination of women in the Episcopal Church. The class has also commissioned a new Seminary banner that will be used in conjunction with our existing banner, and which will be premiered at our graduation in May.

Our projects are both well underway. The book project is in the final stages of development, and the new banner has been completed. We have exceeded our fundraising goal, we have committed to completing our pledges by graduation, and we have achieved a remarkable 93% participation rate.

Please join us in celebrating these two important gifts, and please consider partnering with us as a “Friend of 2010” by making a contribution to the book project.

Yours in faith, and on behalf of the Senior Class,

Alexander H. Webb II (“Sandy”) President

Student activities: VTS students in the Jordan River during their Jan-term trip to Israel, top photo; Middlers, David Romanik and Patrick Funston on a river boat during their immersion trip to the Sudan, middle; Bishop Shand and VTS students joined Phyllis Tickle (bottom, center) who was the featured speaker on the emergent church at the Diocese of Easton’s annual convention.
Ian Stephen Markham: So our Dean and President’s name was called as he became an American citizen at 11:23AM on March 1, 2010. The “liturgy” occurred in a rather humble, nondescript room of a federal building in Fairfax, Virginia. The room could have been a lecture room of any public high school in America.

There was a large screen at the front of the room on which were projected videos of Francis Scott Key’s National Anthem; a welcome from President Barack Obama; and the words of Lee Greenwood’s iconic song God Bless the USA. On the walls hung silk banners of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Constitution of the United States. Posters that featured quotes from past presidents were prominent in the room’s decor. There was an American flag at the front and the rear of the room—and each of those pledging allegiance to the United States of America were given their own small American flag. Finally, there were two posters which celebrated “Prominent Foreign-born Americans.” One poster recalled the career of Alexander Hamilton, our first Secretary of Treasury who was born on the island of Nevis in the British West Indies. The other prominent American celebrated was Knute Rochne, football player and coach who hailed from Voss, Norway.

Ian was the other “Prominent Foreign-born American” in the room. He was one of 13 candidates sworn in as citizens. It was quite moving to hear the countries of origin called in alphabetical order: Bermuda, Bolivia, El Salvador, India, Korea, Mauritania in West Africa, Mexico, Peru, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe. The gentleman from Mauritania told us that he had waited 11 long years for this day! It was moving indeed to see incarnate in a room in Fairfax, Virginia the poem of Emma Lazarus: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

Ian renounced all other allegiances—including “potentates and rulers!” He pledged allegiance to the flag of these United States. He received a certificate that confirmed his rights and privileges as a U.S. citizen. The young man who presid-
ed over the “civil liturgy” was himself a naturalized citizen; he reminded the 13 new Americans that this is a land of equality, liberty, freedom and justice for all. He told the newest among us that they were part of a “representative democracy” with a voice, a vote (2010 being an election year for Congress), and the possibility of being called to serve on a jury. And they could also now apply for a U.S. Passport which would identify them as Americans. It was President Reagan who said: “…you can go to live in France, but you can’t become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Germany or Italy, but you can’t become a German, an Italian…but anyone, from any corner of the world, can come to live in the United States and become an American.” So, along with our Dean, 13 very different souls became Americans—and it makes us a better country!

President Clinton said that “more than any other nation on earth, America has constantly drawn strength and spirit from wave after wave of immigrants. In each generation, they have proved to be the most restless, the most adventurous, the most innovative, the most industrious of people.” Immigrants from sea to shining sea have given so much to their adopted country—what one immigrant called “my peaceful refuge.”

As Ian stated, “It has been a pleasure to work in the United States. The warmth of the welcome, the passionate engagement with faith, and the deep desire to live with vast cultural differences have been defining features of America.”

So, we celebrate E Pluribus Unum: Of Many One! We are proud of our country and proud of the newest American in our midst. In the words of the song by Lee Greenwood, we rejoice “From the Lakes of Minnesota, to the hills of Tennessee, across the plains of Texas, from Detroit down to Houston, and New York to L.A.”—and all together we say “God Bless the USA!”

The Rev. J. Barney Hawkins IV, Ph.D. and Susan Shillinglaw

During the first semester of 2010, the Seminary has welcomed several guests to campus including the Rt. Rev. Suheil Dawani, bishop of Jerusalem (photo by David Copley), top; author and poet, Margaret B. Ingraham, who spoke to the Evening School class about her book, “This Holy Alphabet”, middle; and the Rev. David Norgard, president of Integrity USA, bottom.
The Rev. Dr. Joseph S. Pagano, rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Baltimore, Maryland was named the 2010 recipient of Virginia Seminary’s John Hines Preaching Award. The award is given annually to the outstanding preaching entry “where prophetic voice is central within the sermon.”

Pagano’s sermon, Babushkas and Other Prophets, tells the story of James Billington, a Librarian of Congress, who was in Moscow during the closing days of the Cold War. He witnesses an amazing act of bravery from the older women—“The Babushkas”—who kept the Orthodox Church alive in Russia during the Communist period. “Some of the Babushkas climbed onto the tanks and peered through the slits at the crew-cut men inside, and told them that there were new orders, these from God: ‘Thou shall not kill.’”

“There is a popular misconception that prophets are people who predict the future,” said Pagano. “A prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of their religious tradition, speaks on behalf of God, speaks on behalf of justice and mercy, and speaks on behalf of those who have no one to speak for them, folks like the widow, the orphan and the sojourner.” To read the full text of Pagano’s award-winning sermon, visit www.vts.edu.

Lay Ministry Honored with Lettie Pate Evans Award

Virginia Theological Seminary has awarded the 2010 Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans (LPWE) Award to Mr. Harry G. Chase from East Tennessee. This award celebrates the vitally important ministry of the laity in the church and beyond.

Chase was selected by the LPWE Committee because he has dedicated his life to volunteering as an independent family advocate with rural communities in the Central Appalachia, supporting families through a range of programs and a summer camp. Since retiring from business in 1998, he has worked hard to break the cycles of “generational poverty” which trap and isolate children, often times just outside official organizations reach.

According to the Rector of Chase’s nominating parish, the Rev. John Mark Wiggins of St. James Episcopal Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, “One of Chase’s many accomplishments includes the creation of the Maple Tree Learning Center, the only licensed day-care center in Jellico County Tennessee.” Added Rev. Wiggins, “Currently Chase drives 60 miles one-way to work at the Center, because of lack of funds to pay another employee.”
The Work of Loving Perfectly

On the first day of the current term, we gathered in the Chapel for the Dean’s sermon, renewal of our baptismal vows and a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In his sermon, the Dean spoke eloquently of loving God with our whole heart and our neighbor as our self by telling a lovely story about his son, Luke. Immediately, I heard the words of the poet Mary Oliver racing through my brain: “When we pray to love God perfectly, surely we do not mean only.”

As I sat with the faculty in the choir stalls, I found myself full of emotion as I watched that stream of human beings in search of the living bread, trying to love God and neighbor. We all come to the altar broken and in search of God’s healing touch. We bring our “disappointments and failures” in the words of Charlie Price. We long for relationships to be repaired and for God’s justice in the land. We pray with all our hearts for forgiveness, for our brokenness, and for the grace of new beginnings and the joy of wholeness.

You could not miss the pathos on the faces of our Haitian brothers who continue to mourn each day. We live with the horror in Haiti because it has a human face in our community. Our brothers and the Rev. Joseph Constant came to the altar loving God perfectly but surely not only.

I watched gay and lesbian students climb the chancel steps and come with reverence to the altar rail. The GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender) group meets regularly on campus, an affinity group of courage and mutual support. I watched members of the Rosary Society, the Anglo-Catholic members of our community, another affinity group which reminds us that the Virginia low church tradition is not the only way to “do” church. They, too, were in the line waiting to receive the mystery of living bread.

Another group made up of conservative students has formed on campus. They are known as the Clay Vessels. They also came for the timeless meal. Dean Markham recently said: “There is no one on campus that does not feel persecuted from time to time.” Perhaps, this is as it should be. We are a diverse community of Christians, striving to love God perfectly but surely not only.

In this edition of News from the Hill, we hear the voices of VTS across the years. Secretary Baker and Russ Levenson write clearly about the issues and concerns of conservatives in our Church. As the Dean says, we value conversation as we seek the truth, “come whence it may, cost what it will.” VTS has been educating truth-seekers for 187 years. When we come to our 200th anniversary, it will still be true that VTS forms leaders who seek and live the truth because we read the Life of One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Let me remind us of two of our graduates who served the Lord in their generation. We remember the Most Rev. John E. Hines (VTS ’33); last year we were given his Episcopal ring, his pectoral cross (pictured above left), his tippet with the shield of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, other vestments and some valuable papers. These material things belong to a man whose leadership was controversial and bold, courageous and charismatic. He led the Episcopal Church in a bewildering time, 1965-1974. Bishop Hines cared deeply about our Church’s relationship with sister denominations. His voice was the prophet’s voice as he made the Civil Rights movement his life’s work in Jesus’ name, and he shaped a Church that looks nothing like the Church he came into in 1947. Virginia Seminary is glad to have some of his material possessions in our Archives—to remember well the faith he incarnated in a time when the nation was living in pain, broken and in need of healing.

We also give thanks for the Rt. Rev. John Thomas Walker (VTS ’54) who served in the nation’s capitol as diocesan Bishop from 1977 to 1989. Recently, his widow, Maria Walker (pictured with Dean Markham left), gave us his Episcopal ring (below, left) and six boxes of his treasured papers: material things, yet signs of a holy life, a life well lived. Bishop Walker once described himself as a “quintessential Anglican,” and I say that with some pride because Anglicanism has always been the church in the middle, the church that wants to reach out to both sides and say you can find a home here.”

Bishop Hines, Bishop Walker, Secretary Baker, Dr. Levenson, our Haitian brothers (the Revs. Wisnel Dejardin, Abiade Lozama, and Sonley Joseph), the faculty in choir stalls, the staff, our students: we all are one because we “pray to love God perfectly, but surely we do not mean only.” Virginia Seminary forms truth-seekers who “will not rest till through the world thy truth has run, tell with this Bread shall all be blessed who see the light or feel the sun.” (Hymnal 1982, p. 321).

The Rev. J Barney Hawkins IV, Ph.D.
Prayers for Haiti

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 earthquake struck and devastated most of Port-au-Prince, Haiti and much of the surrounding areas.

The Seminary’s Director of Ethnic Ministries and Student Life, the Rev. Joseph Constant, reported that his family and their house was safe, however, the Seminary’s three Haitian students were saddened to learn of the loss of immediate family members.

A prayer service for Haiti was held at the Seminary on January 13. To listen to Dean Markham’s sermon, visit www.vts.edu in the Media Gallery.

The National Cathedral in Washington also held a prayer service for Haiti that included the Seminary’s Haitian students (pictured right with the Presiding Bishop.)

On January 23, Haiti’s Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Jean Zaché Duracin, appointed the Rev. Lauren Stanley (VTS ’97) to be the point person in the U.S. for Episcopal Relief and Development and to coordinate relief efforts from Virginia.

To make a donation to Haitian Relief efforts, please contact one of the following qualified organizations:

• Episcopal Relief & Development, NY
• Haiti Micah Project, Alexandria, VA
• Children’s Medical Mission of Haiti
• Maison de Naissance, Haiti
• Partners in Health, Boston, MA
• Hôpital Albert Schweitzer