



April 2005

# ENCOMPASS

News and Events from the American Anglican Council Mission and Ministry Network

## Christ Church, Jerusalem

### The Enduring Legacy of Michael Solomon Alexander

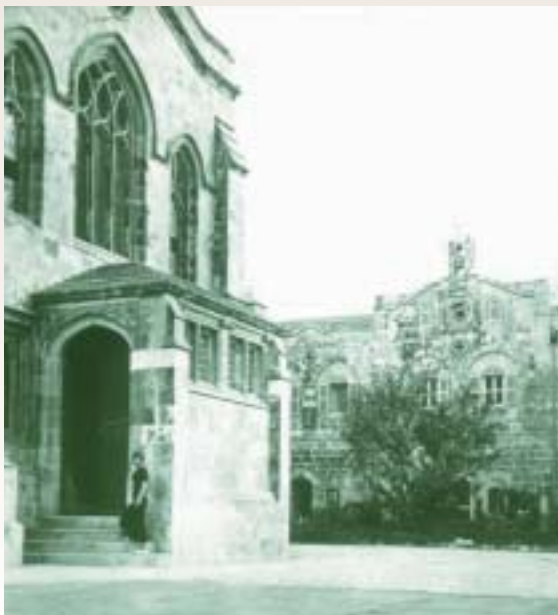
*by David Pileggi*

In January 1842, a German-born Jew named Michael Solomon Alexander entered the old city of Jerusalem and began his work as the first Anglican bishop in the Holy Land. As a young man he had taught Hebrew in England, where he later was ordained a rabbi. Alexander became a follower of Jesus in 1825 after meeting several Anglican clergymen who introduced him to the Gospel. Not surprisingly, he was ostracized by the Jewish community though he remained proud of his Jewishness after coming to faith.

Alexander was a lecturer of Hebrew and Rabbinic literature at Kings College London when he was chosen to be the first Anglican bishop in the Middle East. In addition to other work, he translated the Book of Common Prayer and the New Testament into Hebrew. He was an early advocate of the need for Christians to learn Hebrew and Jewish sources from the Second Temple Period in order to better understand their faith. He was also convinced that the people of Israel would return to their Promised Land, and once there, that God would pour out his Holy Spirit not only upon them, but upon all mankind.

When Bishop Alexander arrived in Jerusalem, he had no cathedral and almost no congregation. He set to work sharing the Gospel with his Jewish co-religionists and began building Christ Church, the founding church of the diocese. Although little is known about his personality, Bishop Alexander is remembered for his compassion. At that time, Jerusalem was a filthy, decaying town in a forgotten corner of the Ottoman Empire, and in response to the poverty and unsanitary conditions, Bishop Alexander established the first modern hospital in the Holy Land. Also at that time, the small Jewish community was extremely poor and received ill treatment from Muslims and Christians alike. Bishop Alexander was quick to help the poor, especially those Jews who had lost their livelihood after becoming followers of Christ. At his enthronement, the Archbishop of Canterbury charged Bishop Alexander to open a college for the education of Jewish and Gentile believers. In 1845, after only three years in office, Bishop Alexander died unexpectedly and did not live to see Christ Church's completion in 1849.

*For more on "Christ Church, Jerusalem," please turn to page 2.*



*Christ Church, Jerusalem, c. 1900.*



*Christ Church, Jerusalem, today.*

*Christ Church, Jerusalem  
(Continued from page 1)*

The church that Bishop Alexander never saw is a simple Gothic building and from the outside differs little from many other Anglican churches. However, once inside, the building has more similarity to a synagogue than to a local parish church. The communion table and stained-glass windows contain Jewish symbols and Hebrew script, and like all synagogues in Jerusalem, the church faces the Temple Mount. On the Eastern wall of the church, the words of Jesus and the Apostles' Creed are engraved in Hebrew. The church was so Jewish in appearance that it did not contain a cross until 1948, when it became necessary to prove to a vengeful Jordanian Army that the unusual building was indeed a Christian house of worship.

After many delays, Christ Church was completed and became one of the most unique churches in Jerusalem. Despite its relative newness (by Jerusalem standards), it is the only church in the Old City that fully acknowledges in symbol and architecture the Jewish roots of Christianity. In fact, Christ Church, Jerusalem came to be known as the "Jewish Protestant Church".

After Bishop Alexander died, Christ Church began receiving Arab Christians (mainly Greek Orthodox) into the Anglican fold in addition to Jewish converts. In 1898, the bishop's headquarters were moved to the newly finished Saint George's Cathedral, where the ministry eventually became focused on small, Arab-Anglican congregations scattered

throughout the Holy Land. Despite his short time in Jerusalem, Bishop Alexander left a spiritual legacy that remains alive in the Old City at Christ Church today.

However, many people have never heard about the Middle East's oldest Protestant Church. In spite of its rich history and current ministry, Christ Church, Jerusalem tends to be ignored by the Anglican establishment in the West. Could this be because Christ Church remains faithful to its evangelical roots and doesn't advocate the latest form of revisionist liberation theology? Or is it because of its belief in God's purposes for Israel (Romans 9 - 11) and its refusal to demonize Israel and the Jewish people for every ill in the Middle East today?

Currently, Christ Church continues according to Bishop Alexander's original vision. The church has started several Hebrew-speaking fellowships and continues to support Jewish believers in Jesus in numerous ways. Recently it took over responsibility for running a Messianic elementary school in Hebrew for children of Jewish believers. And Christ Church continues to assist poor Arab and Jewish believers throughout the country.

Perhaps the most important way in which Christ Church carries out Bishop Alexander's vision is in the education field. Both Shores Study Tours and Alexander College are committed to teaching the Jewish roots of our faith to Christians. For the past 18 years, Shores has turned the biblical land into a classroom by providing quality teaching at biblical sites throughout the country. These short-term study tours (for 10 days up to two weeks) are unique because they are guided by committed Christians or Jewish believers in Jesus. Shores Tours visits not only the holy sites but also places missed by most pilgrim groups. Alexander College, which opened in 2001, provides courses, sabbaticals and guided personal study for clergy and laity who seek an in-depth study experience in Israel and surrounding countries.



*Bishop Michael Solomon Alexander, founder of Christ Church, Jerusalem.*

The aim of Alexander College and Shores Tours is best described in one word: discipleship. Their premise is that by coming to a better knowledge of the Jewish context of the Bible, participants will better understand the life and teaching of Jesus. We can only be Jesus's disciples if we obey his commandments. Yet, how can we truly understand his life or teaching unless we know the Jewish context in which he lived? Teaching Christians to follow Jesus must be the goal of all Jewish roots education.

Unfortunately, for some Christians, learning about the Jewish roots of their faith represents just another fad. However, the emphasis on Jewish roots strikes a responsive chord in the Developing World. A number of African bishops have already participated in Alexander College seminars and now recommend the college to lecturers and seminary professors in their dioceses. Alexander College explores traditional Jewish values and roots alongside a first-hand experience of Israel's land and people while offering a more appropriate setting and perspective for the Developing World than most places in the West.

And what can Alexander College contribute to the "remnant" in the United States and Europe? A Hebraic understanding of Jesus, the New Testament and Christianity's Jewish roots is vital to the West as well. In our broken society; crippled as it is by the Enlightenment, rampant individualism and materialism; Christianity's Jewish roots, so cherished by Bishop Alexander, can nourish and help bring the healing that our families and churches so desperately need. ♦

*David Pileggi is the director of Alexander College, Jerusalem and Shores Study Tours. He holds a Master's Degree in Jewish Studies from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.*



*Christ Church Courtyard.*



## Message from the President

By the Rev. Canon  
David C. Anderson  
AAC President and CEO



I received word last month that five of my friends and comrades have been deposed by Jon Bruno, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. They were charged with “abandonment of communion” for transferring to overseas Anglican jurisdictions.

In some ways I feel uplifted by the sacrifice of my friends (and a number of others), but it also saddens me to see that such mean-spiritedness has overtaken formerly reasonable bishops.

Far from shameful, depositions pronounced by revisionist or so-called “pro-

gressive” bishops become badges of honor. Perhaps it is time to reserve space in the AAC headquarters in Atlanta for a “Wall of Honor” to honor those who have been deposed for upholding Biblical faith and defying revisionism. This Wall of Honor would remind us daily of the cost many are paying to be loyal to Christ and His Church: the stakes are extremely high as the Episcopal and Canadian Churches are in this decision-making time—a time that demands a clear choice.

It is very likely that the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church USA will choose to walk apart from the Anglican Communion, or even to refuse to make a choice, thereby forcing the Communion to put them on the curb. In such an event, even moderate bishops and priests will have to think hard about where they want to be. Many who have said that they would never, read NEVER, leave the Episcopal Church will have to decide if they can be a part of an institution that has been severed from global Anglicanism, including Canterbury. I predict that many will

make a most difficult decision and choose full membership in the global Communion. This will be a time to extend God’s grace, while putting aside blame and recrimination. I should think, however, that any “moderate” or “progressive” bishop who repents and agrees to conform to the doctrine and practice of the Anglican Communion would also have to apologize for depositions pronounced and seek to undo damage done to churches and clergy.

If you have been deposed for your faith, please send us a brief synopsis of your story detailing when, where, by whom and on what charge the deposition was issued. In addition, send us a copy of your deposition letter if possible. If you know of others who have been deposed for like reasons, ask them to contact us as well. History is being written with the ink of the sacrifices and oppression we see around us. Experiences we may deem unimportant give witness and courage to others in their lives and ministry. We want to tell your stories and highlight your testimonies! ♦

## A Perfect Fit

By Doug Mussey  
AAC Director of Finance  
and Development



Imagine for a moment a structure or an edifice in which all the pieces of every part of the construction fit together perfectly. Each component of the structure has been

cut so exactly and fits so securely together that there is no need for a single bonding agent. If you have traveled to the ancient Incan ruins of Peru, you would not have to imagine such a structure. Somehow, with what we would call primitive tools, the Incans constructed walls in which every stone is cut to precisely the right size so as to fit snugly against each other; the walls are water-tight and have withstood the test of time.

In Ephesians, Paul writes that the Church is to be like an Incan wall: all

Christians are to be joined together. However, unlike an Incan wall, which was completed, the building of the Church is an ongoing and ever-growing structure. The shape of the Church today will not be the shape of the Church tomorrow. Its abilities, strength and character will be altered by those joining the Church. However, there are attributes of the Church that will never change regardless of its members.

One unchanging attribute of the Church is that its members are called to serve one another. An excellent example of service is found in Exodus 11, in which the “fearsome foursome” was called to do battle for Israel. Joshua and his chosen went out to fight; meanwhile Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. When Moses held up the rod of God, the battle went in favor of Israel. When the rod of God was let down, the enemy prevailed. Furthermore, Moses needed help holding up the rod of God, and Aaron and Hur came to his rescue to do just that. All four were knit together in a common cause to bring victory to the nation of Israel.

So it is today. We are in a battle for the survival of the Church. Some are called

to the front line, while others are called to the hill to hold up the rod of God in support of the troops. This mutual edification is how the Church functions best. When we are all knit together, standing firm, with nothing out of place, then the Church is able to accomplish its purpose. William Barkley writes: “The church will achieve its unity only when it realizes that it exists not to propagate the point of view of any body of individuals, but to provide a home where the Spirit of Christ can dwell and where everyone who loves Christ can meet in the Spirit.” Could this be what Paul is talking about in Ephesians?

The word Paul uses for fitted together is “sunarmolog” and refers to the “careful joining of every component of a piece of furniture, wall, building, or other structure.” In addition, the word means that “every part is precisely cut to fit snugly, strongly, and beautifully with every other part,” and “nothing is out of place, defective, misshapen, or inappropriate”—much like an Incan wall. And our “structure”, the Church, has an eternal bonding agent: the servants who serve each other and their Master are bound together forever by His Spirit. ♦



THE AMERICAN ANGLICAN COUNCIL  
2296 Henderson Mill Rd., NE  
Suite 406  
Atlanta, GA 30345-2739  
(770) 414-1515  
(800) 914-2000  
info@americananglican.org  
www.americananglican.org

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Fails to Make Clear Choice

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## ECUSA House of Bishops Fails to Make Clear Choice

*Cynthia P. Brust*

**B**ishops of the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) met March 11-16, 2005 at Camp Allen near Navasota, Texas. The House of Bishops discussed the Windsor Report and the 2005 Primates' Communique and issued a Covenant Statement. Unfortunately, it fell far short of the expectations of the primates, who gave clear parameters for requirements to "walk together" with the communion. The House of Bishops failed to affirm Lambeth 1:10; it issued a temporary moratorium on the blessing of same sex-unions for themselves but left the door open for diocesan clergy to proceed with such blessings; and the bishops issued a moratorium on approval of ALL episcopal consecrations, thereby forcing hardship on those dioceses with elections scheduled before General Convention 2006.

According to news accounts in The Living Church, ECUSA Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold described primates as "out for blood" at their February meeting in

Northern Ireland. Such a public and disrespectful characterization of primates who oppose false teaching and practice demonstrates the reality of ECUSA's view of, and relationship with, the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The House of Bishops' statement has been received by various groups with mixed reviews. Gay and lesbian activists hail the underlying message that if non-celibate individuals living in homosexual partnerships are not consecrated bishops, then no one will be. Some orthodox Episcopalians are encouraged that the House of Bishops actually dealt with the issues at all given their past proclivity for avoiding the crisis. Still others view the documents as deceptive and assert that while the bishops may appear to address the primates' concerns, they do not express repentance for the innovations in faith and practice decried by the Communion. Many concerned clergy and laity were outraged at another "fudge" or fence-riding by bishops charged with defending the faith.

The division in the House of Bishops appears to be irreconcil-

able. Not only are there opposing and mutually exclusive theological views that make unity impossible, there were also repeated personal attacks at last month's meeting. The middle ground began to disintegrate at General Convention 2003, and that middle ground has now disappeared. In their communique, the primates issued a clear choice with no "wiggle room" for ECUSA's House of Bishops and General Convention. There can be no unity at the expense of truth, but the House of Bishops seems unable to grasp that reality. General Convention 2006 is the final opportunity for choosing to walk together or apart. ♦

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

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PUBLISHER: The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Cynthia P. Brust  
EDITOR: Jennifer M. Abel