



ENCOMPASS

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

Freedom in Christ: A Testimony of Healing

BY JENNIFER M. ABEL, EDITOR

One of the pervading myths in society today is that individuals caught in a homosexual lifestyle cannot change. Scientific studies contradict this assertion, but one of the most powerful ways for convincing people that change is possible—and desirable—is through personal testimony. Gert Walter, an AAC member of Santa Barbara, Calif., provides one such example with his story of transformation.

Gert's Story: Beginnings

"I grew up in a Christian home with two loving parents," Gert begins his written testimony. "In spite of this, I didn't have a good relationship with my father during much of my boyhood, and I felt insecure in relating to other males, both men and boys."

Gert's lack of fulfilling, healthy male relationships while he was young—a characteristic of many men who end up in the homosexual lifestyle—created in him an unmet emotional need and eventually led him to experiment with homosexual behavior. Initially introduced to this lifestyle by an admired "pastoral counselor" who "convinced [him his homosexual] feelings were repressed," Gert says he soon found that "the emotional closeness to other men satisfied a deep need." However, he also says his decisions forced him to "not only [turn] his back on God and the church, but also on [his] friends and parents..." Gert says he knew his parents would disapprove of what he had become involved in, but his fear of shame—his pride—prevented him from admitting his mistakes and turning back.

Despite hopeful feelings at the beginning, Gert's experienc-

es with the gay lifestyle ultimately delivered him disappointment and emptiness, rather than the stability, fulfillment, and care from others he so yearned for.

"...I discovered that John [my partner] had not been faithful to me," Gert says, explaining his disappointment. "When I confronted him, he told me that this was a normal part of a gay relationship. I found that hard to believe; after all, I knew several loving, committed gay couples. So we made a point of discussing this with them and to my dismay, they all admitted that one or both partners often had sex outside their relationship. This was terribly discouraging for me."

Gert found what many homosexually-active individuals find: the gay/lesbian lifestyle typically proves highly unstable and promiscuous, and does not produce the kinds of faithful, loving relationships most are seeking. It often leaves these individuals unsatisfied, depressed, suicidal, and prone to drug or alcohol addictions and abuse.



Gert Walter and wife Margie in 2004.

Turning Point and New Life

For Gert, however, a turning point came:

"On a late fall afternoon at a beach house near Santa Barbara, John and I had a major fight about my subservient role in our relationship," Gert says. "I remember feeling alone and hopeless because I couldn't see my way out of this miserable relationship. The next thing I remember was waking up in intensive care in a hospital where I had regained consciousness three days after a car collision with a fast moving train."

"Testimony" Continued on Page 4

A report on the AAC's HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF FUND

The AAC extends our thanks to all who have donated to the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund. Donated funds have been used in numerous ways. A large amount of aid has been sent to Church of the Holy Spirit (an AAC parish) and St. Luke's Episcopal, both in Baton Rouge, to help refugees in nearby hard-hit areas. The AAC has also partnered with the Stand in Alabama Firm chapters and Mississippi to direct aid to specific needs including assist- ing major relief agencies filling Funds were sent to two other their "need gaps" for aid purposes AAC parishes: Holy Apostles in Brandon, Anglican Church of the Holy Spirit in Montgomery, Ala. Church XP in In addition, the AAC partnered with Holy Cross Anglican Church (Loganville, Ga.) to send bus loads of supplies to the Gulf. The AAC does not withhold any portion of the donations for overhead costs; all donated money is directly forwarded to meet immediate, tangible needs in the Gulf Coast region. Please refer to the AAC website for many more details and photos! ♦



Above: Bill McMann assists hurricane refugees Ernest & Gitana Williams in reuniting with family in Atlanta. Photo courtesy of Fr. Ernest Saik, St. Luke's (Baton Rouge).

Three Myths About Homosexuality

#1 Homosexuals are "born gay"

Most scientists now agree it is impossible to pinpoint one genetic cause for homosexual behavior; rather, it is caused by multiple social, psychological and biological factors working together - as is true for any human behavior.

#2 Homosexuality is "normal and natural"

Homosexuality goes against one of the main God-given purposes of sexuality: procreation. Furthermore, any physiological study of men's and women's bodies shows they are clearly intended for each other. The homosexual population is also well known for increased risk for numerous health conditions: AIDS, depression and other psychiatric illnesses, suicide, and drug and alcohol abuse.

#3 Homosexuals "can't change"

Numerous scientific studies and special cases show that changing one's sexual orientation is indeed possible.

Sources:

1. Dr. Bill Maier, Vice-President/Psychologist, Focus on the Family.
2. National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH): www.narth.com.



A Message from the President

THE REV. CANON DAVID C. ANDERSON,
AAC PRESIDENT AND CEO

We are in the midst of a critical period of Anglican realignment in North America. On the international front, the Province of Nigeria met in Synod Sept. 10 – 15 and voted to redefine their relationship with other Anglican Churches. The province voted to revise their constitution, deleting references to “communion with the see of Canterbury” and replacing them with “communion with all Anglican Churches, Dioceses and Provinces that hold and maintain the Historic Faith, Doctrine, Sacrament and Discipline of the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church”. The Synod also emphasized the 1662 version of the Book of Common Prayer and the 39 Articles of Religion.

In late October, Global South leaders will meet in Egypt for the third gathering of Anglican Encounters in the South. Some news accounts last month characterized this meeting as a planned coup d’etat to wrest control of the Anglican Communion from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Archbishop Akinola, however, set the record straight, explaining that provinces were gathering to focus on matters of the “common historic faith”. I believe we can certainly expect discussions about the larger church and the Communion to include the current theological and doctrinal crisis precipitated by actions of the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) and the Anglican Church of Canada, and I urge you to pray

earnestly for this meeting.

The AAC is planning for our presence at General Convention 2006 where ECUSA must make the choice once and for all about walking together or walking apart. The world will be watching, the Communion will be watching, and no fudge will be acceptable. Depending on ECUSA’s final decision, every diocese, church, family and individual will have to make a choice: Will they walk the ungodly path of revisionism into decay and decline, or will they walk the path of faithfulness and experience God’s blessing in their obedience? We will be working hard to ensure that every individual has the facts necessary to make an informed decision, helping them to understand the issues and what is at stake. This will involve traveling around the country visiting as many groups or congregations as possible as well as producing resources for the faithful to use to help others make a godly choice.

On the heels of General Convention, we begin to look toward Lambeth (2008) and all that implies. We also await the aftermath of the Civil Partnerships in the UK and its sure detrimental effect on the Church of England. Primates have decried the decision of the English House of Bishops, and we can expect this issue to have prominence in the months to come.

The battle for the soul of the Church is being fought on many fronts. Never have the prayers of the faithful been more important. Never has it been more critical for the faithful to unite in purpose and action. Join with us at the AAC as we work domestically and internationally for the coming realignment. ♦



Four Anglican Archbishops Receive 2005 Kairos Journal Award

BY CYNTHIA P. BRUST, EXEC. EDITOR

Four leading Anglican archbishops were presented with the 2005 *Kairos Journal* Award at a dinner on Thursday, Sept. 8, 2005 at the Metropolitan Club, New York. The Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, Archbishop of All Nigeria; the Most Rev. Henry Luke Orombi, Archbishop of the Province of Uganda; the Most Rev. Gregory James Venables, Archbishop of the Southern Cone of South America; and the Most Rev. Datuk Yong Ping Chung, Archbishop of the Province of South East Asia were honored for their bold and consistent stand for historic orthodoxy in light of theological decline in the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) and the Anglican Church of Canada.

“The *Kairos Journal* Award is given to individuals who demonstrate exemplary fidelity to the authority of Scripture and exceptional pastoral courage in their efforts to restore the prophetic voice of the Church,” said Journal publisher Emmanuel A. Kampouris. “I am delighted to present these outstanding individuals with the 2005 award.”

Honorees were further chosen based upon their discernment of, and response to, what the Journal calls the “*kairos* moment”—a moment of cultural crisis demanding timely action from the Church. In stirring presentations outlining the current crisis in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada, author and social critic Os Guinness and theologian and author J. I. Packer introduced the award recipients to a gathering of over 200 interdenominational clergy and Christian leaders. Each archbishop then offered a “word to the church”, calling pastors to seize the *kairos* moment.

“What affects one part of the Christian Church affects us all,” Mr. Kampouris said. “We hope this award will offer encouragement and support not only of our four honorees and others within the Anglican Communion fighting for orthodoxy but also for clergy across denominational lines who are striving to transform the moral conscience of our culture.”

Archbishops Akinola, Orombi, Venables and Yong, all part of



(Photo courtesy of Parker Williamson, The Presbyterian Layman.)

The four recipients of the 2005 Kairos Journal Award—all leading Anglican archbishops—gathered at a press conference preceding the award dinner: (from left to right) the Most Rev. Datuk Yong Ping Chung; the Most Rev. Henry Orombi; the Most Rev. Gregory Venables; and the Most Rev. Peter Akinola.

the Global South, have been at the forefront of the crisis within the Anglican Communion precipitated by actions of ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada. The American and Canadian provinces have embraced theology and practice contrary to Scripture, Anglican teaching, and historic Christianity. Archbishops Akinola, Orombi, Venables and Yong, as well as their respective provinces, have declared broken or impaired communion with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada and have urged the two churches to repent. The Global South makes up the vast majority of Anglicans world-wide and is the fastest growing segment of the Anglican Communion.

“It is extremely significant that the highly esteemed *Kairos Journal* chose to recognize Anglicans with their first awards,” said the Rev. Canon David C. Anderson, American Anglican Council (AAC) President and CEO. “The Journal is not formally affiliated with any denomination, but clearly they consider the crisis within Anglicanism a threat to the larger Christian community – a battle for the very soul of the Church. The *Kairos Journal* is an invaluable resource, and I encourage all of our clergy to subscribe without delay.”

The *Kairos Journal* is an on-line resource for clergy with subscribers in over 80 countries. The Journal seeks to equip and support pastors and church leaders as they strive to transform the moral conscience of the culture and restore the prophetic voice of the Church. The Journal may be accessed at www.kairosjournal.org. ♦

MOST: “Letting the Voice of God Speak” in Film

BY JENNIFER M. ABEL, EDITOR

In collaboration with SARAH WHELCHER, AAC 2005 SUMMER INTERN

In the media-saturated world of today, negative messages and depressing news abound. Uplifting, family-friendly movies and shows are sparse (ask any parent), and Biblical messages are even harder to come by. Compared to the quantity produced, the selection of quality, positive media productions is miniscule.

A diamond in the rough may still be found, though, in the entertainment industry. Film director Bobby Garabedian sees a need for quality films with positive messages in today's media glut, and he has responded with a 33-minute award-winning masterpiece film: *Most*. Produced in 2003, this unique film portrays the Gospel message in a refreshing and original manner and is appropriate and inspiring for people of all ages at any stage of their spiritual lives. *Most* has already touched a diverse and great number of individuals so far, even winning some to Christ.

Most: the Plot

A foreign film shot in the Czech Republic and Poland, the film's title means “bridge” in Czech. *Most's* website says this film's bridge is “the bridge between now and forever” – a hint at the spiritual symbolism that dominates the plot.

Most's plot originates from an anecdote commonly related in both religious and secular circles; Garabedian heard it on the radio early one morning in 1995 and immediately knew he wanted to make it into a movie. So

as not to give too much away: the basic story is about a father, his son, and a choice the father has to make involving a train full of people.

Garabedian—who directed, co-wrote, and served as one of several producers of *Most*—says

he chose to make it a foreign film with English subtitles in order to emphasize images over words. As a result, the plot contains layered meanings (some obvious, some unintentional symbolism) and can have a wide range of effect on people.

The film's images are certainly unforgettable: the opening scenes show a man emerging from a winter fog as he walks the earth. Sweet, almost-sad music plays softly between the Czech dialogue. A feeling of coldness runs throughout the movie, from the landscape drained of color to the characters' pale faces, contrasting with the warmth and compassion of the two main characters—the father and son. As the two pass everyday people on the streets—a drug addict, a soldier and his wife, expatriate Americans, Eastern European girls—the film's viewers are brought close to the lives of the characters; they can relate to the hurt, loneliness, addiction and rejection evident in each life. In the end, the message of grace parallels the heart of Christianity.

The Effect

Most is a directorial debut for Garabedian, who was previously a student of acting and producer of music videos and commercials. His hope, in his own words, is to create quality films in Hollywood and “in the art, let the voice of God speak”—not to dub his films with a “Christian” label from the beginning.

“I think with [labeling] a lot of alienation happens,” Garabedian explained in an interview with the American Anglican Council on June 27, 2005. He emphasized that he wants viewers to experience *Most* from where they are in life, rather than putting the film in a pre-labeled box with a pre-determined message. His desire with *Most*, he said, was to make an artistically excellent film that “captured the spirit of God and would really provoke debate and questions.” From speaking with Garabedian, it is apparent that he has met his goal.

From its debut at the Sundance Festival to its nomination for an Academy Award (Best Live-Action Short), *Most* has been acclaimed by critics and the public alike. Garabedian and co-director Billy Zabka have heard numerous stories of the film's powerful effects on viewers' lives—from bringing them to Christ for the first time, to uncovering forgotten hurts and bringing healing in lives and relationships.

For those who know the Gospel, *Most* is a fresh vision of God's love and forgiveness; for those who don't, the film brings a new awareness of



Most

Film Specifications:

Czech Language/English Subtitles
33 minutes
Color
NR (Not Rated)
Released in 2005

Director: Bobby Garabedian

Producers: William Zabka, Bobby Garabedian, Michael Deffert, Ed Bernard

Original Score: John Debney

List price: \$19.95 (no tax except in Calif.)

Awards

- ★ 2003 Academy Award Nomination ~ Best Live-Action Short
- ★ Sundance Film Festival 2004: Official Selection
- ★ Palm Springs International 2003: Winner ~ Best of Festival
- ★ Maui Film Festival 2003: Winner ~ Best Short Film; Audience Award ~ Best Newcomers
- ★ Heartland Film Festival 2003: Winner ~ Crystal Heart Award

Website:

www.mostthemovie.com

Contact the filmmakers:
contact@mostthemovie.com

life and an occasion for reflection. We encourage you to share *Most* with your family, friends and congregations (see details in sidebar). In addition, in this day of media excess, encourage others in your community to create and support great art with hopeful messages such as *Most*. ♦



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Testimony (cont. from Page 1)

Although I have never regained memory of the moments before the crash, I am sure I was driving and probably in a fit of rage and despair, I decided to kill John and take my own life as well by crossing the tracks in front of that train. Aside from a concussion and a few cuts and scrapes I survived..."

Gert went home to recover after the accident, providing him with an opportune time for reflection. He knew he wanted "out" of his relationship with John but he wondered about the alternatives.

"... I knew I could be happy with someone who was strong, gentle, happy and confident and most of all, someone who really cared about me," he says, explaining his desires. Gert says none of the gay men he knew seemed happy; yet he felt trapped: "I was gay and I didn't know I could change!"

During this time, Gert began to sense God drawing him, although he was still in disbelief that God could forgive all he had done. He says he did not fully accept God's offer of forgiveness and healing at that time, but he did ask God to "help [him] straighten out [his] life."

"I knew I wanted out of the homosexual lifestyle—but I didn't know how I could do it or if it was even possible," he says.

Not long after, Gert met a woman named Margie who cared for him deeply. They fell in love and soon married. This, he says, is a "relationship that has grown and blossomed to become more than I had thought possible back in 1975."

After marrying Margie, Gert says he had not given full credit to God for changing his life, and he still experienced sexual temptation: "I struggled with the strong sexual addiction that I had allowed to run rampant earlier," he says. "It was not until our daughter ran away from home at age 15 that I fully surrendered my life to Christ's sovereignty."

From that point, Gert's story sings of victory: "God had been lovingly restoring me and freeing me from the bonds of that sexual addiction. He has turned me into a loving servant-hus-

band capable of looking beyond my own pressing needs and desires to those of others. I give him all the honor, glory and praise for the changes He has worked in my life."

Many others have stories like Gert's—stories that tell of Christ's freeing, healing and transforming power over the sting of sexual sin. While the details of each story differ, each one exposes the emptiness, shame and depression often caused by a homosexual or otherwise sinful lifestyle; and each tells of the glorious riches of God's grace that has redeemed them and brought eternal hope and fulfillment to their lives. This Gospel of Grace marked by transformation saves each of us and is the message we are commanded to pass on to others. ♦

Resources: Christian ministries offering "reparative therapy" to those seeking to turn from sinful sexual behavior:
(Note: Please see the AAC website's "Resource Center" for more complete information.)

Desert Stream Ministries

www.desertstream.org; (714) 779-6899 x1011 (Nat'l Coord.)

Exodus International

www.exodus-international.org; (407) 599-6872

Focus on the Family

www.family.org & www.lovewonout.com; (800) 232-6459

Life Ministries International

www.freedomeveryday.org; (866) 408-LIFE

Love in Action International

www.loveinaction.org; (800) 201-4129

Redeemed Lives Ministries

www.redeemedlives.org; (630) 668-0661

The American Anglican Council is a network of individuals (laity, deacons, priests and bishops), parishes and specialized ministries who affirm Biblical authority and Christian orthodoxy within the Anglican Communion. In response to the Lord's calling and by His grace, we commit ourselves to proclaim the Good News to every person and to reform and renew the Church of Jesus Christ. We are uniting in order to fulfill our apostolic mission and

ministry, working to build a faithful Anglican witness in America.

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