

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH KATHERINE JEFFERTS SCHORI

SUBJECT: BISHOP KATHERINE JEFFERTS SCHORI, THE PRESIDING BISHOP, WILL DISCUSS “RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE”

MODERATOR: SYLVIA SMITH, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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SYLVIA SMITH: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon. I’m Sylvia Smith, the Washington editor of the Ft. Wayne *Journal Gazette* and president of the National Press Club.

We’re the world’s leading professional organization for journalists. And on behalf of our 3,500 members worldwide, I’d like to welcome our speaker and our guests in the audience today. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit us at www.press.org.

We’re looking forward to today’s speech, and afterward, I’ll ask as many questions from the audience as time permits. Please hold your applause during the speech so that we have as much time as possible for questions.

I’d like to explain to our audience, the TV audience, the radio audience, that if you do hear applause, it may be from guests and members of the general public who attend our luncheons, not necessarily from the working press.

We’re celebrating our 100th anniversary this year, and we have rededicated ourselves to a commitment to the future of journalism through informative

programming, journalism education, and fostering a free press worldwide. So I welcome you.

I'd also now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. From you're right, Camille El Hassani, deputy program editor of All Jazeera English; Maureen Shea, director of government relations for the Episcopal church and a guest of our speaker; Jeffrey Bartholet, Washington bureau chief of *Newsweek*; and Canon Charles Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop and a guest of our speaker.

And skipping over the podium for a moment, Angela Greiling-Keane, chairwoman of the Speakers Committee and a reporter at Bloomberg News. And skipping our speaker for just a moment, Andrew Schneider of Kiplinger Washington Editors and a Speakers Committee member who organized today's event. Thank you very much, Andrew. Neva Rae Fox, public affairs officer of the Episcopal church and guest of our speaker; Louis Victor Priebe, owner of PRiebe PR and a governor of the Club; Laura Kraus, producer of CBN News; and Joey DiGuglielmo, features editor of *The Washington Blade*. Welcome to you all. (Applause.)

Thanksgiving Day marked the passing of the Reverend George MacPherson Docherty, aged 97. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, he served for more than a quarter century as pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian church. Over the course of his career, he worked alongside religious leaders, ranging from Martin Luther King, Jr., to Billy Graham, and formed relationships with numerous presidents.

And you may wonder why I'm talking to you about him. He's perhaps best remembered for a single lasting contribution to American heritage. A sermon he delivered on February 7th, 1954 with President Eisenhower in attendance led directly to the legislation to include the phrase, "under God" in the pledge of allegiance.

Reverend Docherty's contribution has not stood unchallenged. In 2002, atheist Michael Newdow sued his daughter's school district over the teacher-led recitation of the pledge. The ninth circuit court of appeals ruled two to one that Congress's insertion of the phrase "under God" into the pledge violated the Constitution.

The case went to the Supreme Court, which overturned the decision on the grounds that the plaintiff lacked standing to sue. The high court did not directly address the issue of whether god should be mentioned in the pledge, let alone the lightning rod issue of religion in public schools.

Whether the context of education or family planning, Civil Rights or foreign policy, the role and influence of religion in our democracy remains a fiercely debated issue. The Episcopal church is now caught up in just such a controversy. In 2003, the Episcopal convention elected Gene Robinson of New Hampshire to become the church's first openly gay bishop. Robinson's consecration, along with the decision of some Episcopal bishops to allow the blessing of same-sex unions has led to rifts, both within the Episcopal church and across Anglican community, of which it is the U.S. province.

The most recent such case broke less than two weeks ago, when a group of Episcopal conservatives claiming 100,000 followers announced the formation of a rival Anglican church of North America. Leading the Episcopal church through this storm is the Most Reverend Katherine Jefferts Schori.

Initially trained as an oceanographer, an accomplished pilot, she became active in the church following the death of a friend in a plane crash. She was ordained as a deacon and priest in 1994 following her graduation from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. She was consecrated ninth Episcopal bishop of Nevada in 2001. And in 2006, she was elected to a nine-year term as the 26th president bishop and primate of the Episcopal church, its first female leader.

She joins us today to discuss the role of religion in the public square. Please join me in a warm National Press Club welcome to the Most Reverend Katherine Jefferts Schori. (Applause.)

KATHERINE JEFFERTS SCHORI: Thank you. It's a delight to be here. And I'm very grateful for the invitation.

Well, is there anxiety in this town, especially as the machinery of government shifts gears? I'll warrant that there will continue to be anxiety until the new Administration settles in, at least several months from now. Who's going to sit in which seat at the table? Who's going to be or feel excluded? What last minute actions will the outgoing Administration take?

Perhaps the first role of religion in such times is to be a messenger, like one of those biblical angels who starts out by saying, "Fear not. Don't be afraid. This whole thing is a lot bigger than you are." Yes, change is coming and it will drive some people crazy, and at the same time, not go far enough for others.

In more secular language, we might say, "Don't sweat the small stuff." And more of it is small stuff than you might expect. At the same time, the religious voice will remind you that how you deal with the small stuff does not affect you alone. Your actions may have consequences beyond your wildest imagining.

That brief introduction might be a helpful framework for what I'm going to assert is the proper role of religion in the public square – diagnosis, linked with both challenge and encouragement. Walter Brueggemann calls it prophetic critique and energizing. It grows out of a particular world view, a *weltanschauung*, if you will, that has an idea or ideal of what the world is supposed to look like.

That world view is rooted in divine revelation, both in a scriptural tradition and in later encounters with the divine. The prophetic role is to point out the discrepancy between that sacred vision and what the world around us actually looks like, and then to go on to challenge the status quo and to encourage movement toward that dream. This is a framework that's probably most familiar in Judeo-Christian terms, but it is, by extension, applicable to the third Abrahamic faith and to others of the world's great religious traditions, to Hinduism and Buddhism, and Sikhism, and to Baha'i. Not all variations of the great traditions put much emphasis on the prophetic strand. Some may instead choose to focus on a separatist or a sectarian vision of the holy reel.

But every faith tradition has a vision of how the world's meant to be, and a diagnosis of separation from that reality. The psychic energy that underlies that kind of vision is what might be said to distinguish a religious from a philosophical tradition. A religion tradition asserts that divine warrant and/or transcendent reality trumps any merely earthly philosophy. It's the difference between saying that the dream of god is for a world where all live together in peace and harmony with justice, and a philosophy that asserts that every person should seek to maximize his or her resources.

We live in a nation that appeals to both. Our founders had some sense of a utopian dream and a desire to encourage life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Yet it was abundantly clear at the start that some had the full rights of citizens and others did not. It's taken several centuries and countless lives and the prophetic witness of many appealing to sacred tradition and a dream based in Scripture to open those rights to others, among them men who were not landowners, slaves, and women.

A transcendent trajectory that continues to challenge the status quo comes from a religious foundation. And I would assert that it's the most essential role of religion in the public square. In my own tradition, that trajectory is based on the twin beliefs that every human being is a reflection of the divine, is of ultimate worth in him or herself, and that human beings only reach their full meaning in relationship with others in community.

That tension is not easily held in this land, particularly in its political system. It may lie at the root of our persistent affection for a two-party political system. Even though the basic platforms of those two parties have changed over the decades, sometimes radically, we haven't let go of the dichotomy. We have a schizophrenic relationship with the caricatures of America as a Christian nation and the land of the free, free to exploit and accumulate whatever we can.

The sacred voice continues to challenge both unfettered individualism and the idea that any present reality can be identified with the sacred ideal. That sacred ideal in the Abrahamic faiths looks like a peaceful society where no one is in dire want, where all have equal access to justice, where each is truly free to seek her or his highest purpose in this life.

The religious role in public life is to continue to challenge the larger society on behalf of all who do not yet live in a world like that. And because there are some who don't have access to that world, none of us can be assured of living in peace.

The illusion of peace and comfort that some may have is just that, an illusion. Because until all live in peace with justice, none of us will. The role of the religious voice is to advocate for the left out, the voiceless, the marginalized, and all who do not yet have access to what we call the goods of life. It includes a significant part of what government deals with – healthcare, poverty, homelessness, returning veterans, the mentally and physically disabled, with access to decent education to all, with meaningful employment.

It also has to do with our relationships with the rest of Creation. For as the systems of this planet sicken and die, we surely shall become moribund as well. And some already are. That prophetic voice thinks in the long- as well as in the short-term, for it holds up a vision of what the ideal looks like, and the discrepancy between that and what obtains in the present. It is willing to put limits on individual license for the benefit of the larger community.

None of those stances is particularly popular in a system that lives from election to election, or lobbyist to lobbyist. But that religious voice lives in hope, eternal and sometimes foolish hope, that change toward that vision is possible. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

I would assert that the global interest in our election just past is based on that kind of hope for a different future, so much so that President-Elect Obama is sometimes referenced with quasi-messianic epithets. He is not our ultimate deliverer. But his ability to gather the people of this nation and this government

around a larger vision and longer-term future reinforces the hope for which people around this planet yearn, and in a real way, makes that hope more effective.

The religious vision, whether it's fully conscious or not, has helped the world to diagnose present social reality as sorely lacking in transcendent values. That hunger and yearning is binding people together in ways we haven't seen for some time. That binding together with hope for a different future is the basic meaning of religion. The challenge for any government or administration is to do that in a way that does not pander to limited and sectarian interests, which lies at the root of our doctrine of the separation of church and state.

I would argue that there are appropriate and inappropriate roles for religion in the public square based on just that. When the religious voice argues only for a narrowly sectarian view, it belies its identity and its transcendent origin, and becomes no different from the dairy lobby or an earmark request for a new bridge. They may be important causes. They may be concerned for some of the least and lost and left out. But they don't challenge the whole society to a more transcendently compassionate future.

The proper role for religious diagnosis, challenge, and encouragement has something essential to do with offering a larger view of reality, with challenging a politics of the individual to consider and care for the needs and rights of other individuals and groups, or, in other words, understanding the wellbeing of the whole as having some higher call on public consideration than a narrowly individual concern.

We're talking about a public policy that pays attention to the wellbeing of the whole community. Why is this important? Our national experience with terrorism has a great deal to do with social disruption in other parts of the world, with a lack of hope among young people, and the lack of equitable distribution of the world's resources. Our immigration challenges have the same bases in reality. So do the violence of our inner cities, and the suicide rates on Native American reservations.

Each of those immensely challenging realities needs responses that address the grim hopelessness underlying them, rather than Band-Aid responses to symptoms. The disease, not the symptom, needs healing. And neither this nation nor the world will find healing until we begin to address the interconnections between violence and hopelessness.

The blessing buried in our current economic crisis is connected to that reality. When one part of this nation or world suffers, we all do. We no longer live in a hermetically sealed nation or economic system, if we ever did. Protectionist and isolationist policies are not going to heal us. We're all going to be affected by

massive layoffs in the manufacturing sector and in the financial sector. The same maxim applies to us in this country as is often quoted in the developing world. When the U.S. sneezes, Haiti or Honduras gets a cold. Our national policies have given Cuba something more like terminal pneumonia. The talents and gifts of both nations have something to offer each other if we could get past *el bloqueo*, what they call the blockade.

Our policy towards Israel/Palestine has not managed to achieve much progress in several years, despite the significant energy expended by the outgoing Secretary of State. This world will be a much safer and saner place when all parts of the world have more open borders, when Cubans, Israelis, Palestinians and ordinary Americans understand and experience their interconnectedness.

The same reality must inform how this nation begins to deal with ecological realities. We really can't fool Mother Nature. And her ire keeps rising along with her temperature. We're all in this together. And the sooner we acknowledge that reality and begin to live corporately, the sooner we will be able to address the ongoing damage.

In spite of what Lynn White had to say in 1967 about the origins of the ecological crisis in the Judeo-Christian tradition, there are other strands in that tradition that value the non-human creation for what it can show us of the divine. It's not just human beings who image god. And some of those who claim Genesis as sacred scripture can see that human beings are meant to tend this earthly garden, not destroy it.

The religious community is increasingly mobilized to challenge the larger society to care for this Earth and for all its inhabitants. And you will continue to hear that prophetic voice in coming years. The larger role for the religious voice will be to continue to remind us of our interconnections. This is one serendipitous opportunity for religion and science to walk as partners. Each form of wisdom or knowing teaches about interconnection, and the reality that an action in one place has consequences, often unforeseen consequences, in other places and times.

Science and religion can even use the same kind of language. Reality is one, or ultimate reality is one, or reality is ultimately one. And that's where I'd like to leave you, members of the press and other media, with a challenge and an invitation. Your vocation is to tell the world what's what and what reality looks like today. Keep looking for those interconnections. Keep backing up to see a larger picture. Show us how small actions have larger consequences.

I'd also like to challenge you to consider the possibility of a prophetic role for the media. You know what investigative journalism can achieve. Watergate comes to mind. So also does the picture of a child alight with burning napalm that

so galvanized this nation during the Vietnam war. Your ability to offer, not just scandal, but real critique of unjust systems and policies can help to change the world. You're pretty good at digging out corruption scandals. But how often do you look deeper at the network that permits and encourages selling the public legacy?

The noble tradition of your profession would challenge you to keep digging. Your work is a vocation of service to the whole of society, not just your advertisers.

Finally, I'd remind you that the other side of prophetic critique is encouragement and hope. It says that a different world is possible, and it offers examples — those small and seemingly mundane stories of human courage in the face of adversity, of the power of the community in the face of greed, of lives transformed by the intervention of strangers. You have the ability to encourage a hurting and despairing world.

I offer you a highly parochial example. On two occasions in the last few days, leaders in my own church have said to me, "You know, the church only makes the front page if it's about cism(?) or sex, and in the current era, preferably both." The reality experienced by most Episcopalians, and indeed, most faithful people is of their congregations gathering for weekly worship, saying their prayers, and serving their neighbors nearby and far away. That service happens in remarkable and profound ways — building schools in Africa, clinics in Haiti, digging wells in the Philippines, as well as in prodding our legislators to attend to issues of climate change, access to healthcare, and funding AIDS work in Africa.

It is the rare few who are consumed by conflict. And they tend not to last. For intense and prolonged conflict is not life giving. Help us tell the stories of transformation, of moving toward that hopeful future for which the world hungers. Help us tell the world that fear is not the answer. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. SMITH: Thank you so much. Much food for thought there and many questions to ask. Often politicians refer to this as a Christian nation. Is that a correct label numerically? And even if it is, should politicians use this in discussion of public policy matters?

MS. SCHORI: It may be a correct description of the majority of Americans. And it depends on which part of the country you live in. But there are more Jews in The United States than there are Episcopalians today. I think there are roughly equal number of Muslims and growing number of Muslims. But the largest chunk of the population with whom we are often concerned are the ones who list 'none of the above', the un-churched, those who are not religiously

affiliated. And in some sense, I think that's the largest, the fastest growing part of the population.

Should politicians use this Christian nation in discussions of public policy? I think it's actually somewhat inaccurate, even when you're talking about the founders of this nation. A number of them were clearly Christian men. Some of them were probably more appropriately called deists.

MS. SMITH: You referenced this a little bit. And I wondered if you could maybe amplify a little bit. What was it like-- and I'm talking about on a personal level-- to preside over a service as you did in October, in which the Episcopal church apologized for its centuries of support of slavery?

MS. SCHORI: We're a people of sacrament, of making-- of doing things with created stuff in a way that expresses inner realities. It was a way for us as a church to apologize and lament and repent for centuries of injustice in this country, injustice from which the church benefited, from which members of its clergy and members of its laity benefited, and from which some institutions of this church continue to benefit because of their roots in that ancient past. It's a formal way of saying, "We're on this journey. We haven't arrived at an end to it. But we're going to keep on working on it."

MS. SMITH: Did you have any-- Was it somehow personally moving? I was really interested in what you as a woman felt when you were participating in that.

MS. SCHORI: I was surprised, frankly, by the emotion that was exhibited, not only people in tears throughout the service, but the great joy that erupted through the course of that service. It was as though, when we were finally able to say publicly that we grieve this and we will do what we can to heal, that it released an enormous burden.

MS. SMITH: And have you seen any changes within your church, then, as a result of this?

MS. SCHORI: More and more dioceses and congregations are beginning to ask about their own histories in relation to slavery or the oppression of other groups of people. I think that's where we're going to see this church working in the coming years. It's certainly a piece of our consciousness raising about how we see the image of god in all of our neighbors, whatever color or race or ethnic background, or gender or size or shape they may be. It's a continuing reminder to us that all are god's children.

MS. SMITH: If the role of religion, as you said in your speech, is to challenge society on behalf of those without, that is, without access, voice, et cetera, how then do you explain the popularity of churches that celebrate and even encourage personal wealth, achievement?

MS. SCHORI: They're often most effective in the sense of gathering communities in populations who don't have access to the goods of life. A few people profit in those operations. It's less often the breadth of the congregation who profits, even though they're-- congregations are engendered and encouraged by a sense of hope that all members will be able to achieve that kind of wealth.

MS. SMITH: Do you feel that religious beliefs such as Mitt Romney's being a Mormon and rumors that Barack Obama was a Muslim play too big, too small a part in the past campaign? Or are those kinds of questions, whether they're accurately phrased or not, really valid to be discussed in the context of a presidential or other campaign?

MS. SCHORI: Well, my encounter with most of those questions was that they were-- or statements, was that they were used in a manipulative way. They were not used in a sense of true curiosity, trying to understand the candidate better. They were used as a way to denigrate a particular candidate for his views. And I don't think that's appropriate.

MS. SMITH: Then how much information about a political candidate's religious belief does the public have a right to know? And more importantly, for those of us in our profession, what are the best kinds of questions to ask candidates in that arena?

MS. SCHORI: I think it's always important to ask a candidate where her or his values come from. What is it that under-girds your sense of a good society? What's your vision of what this land should look like, and how your government might make a difference in that? So I think those are probably more fruitful than asking particular theological questions.

MS. SMITH: But for instance, there are some for whom some matters of public policy are absolutely intertwined with their religion. For instance, I happen to cover a Congressman who has said from day one that he, because of his religious perspective, is, and always will be, a supporter of Israel. And if people don't like that, don't vote for him.

MS. SCHORI: I think that's actually helpful journalism. An informed public can cast a more informed ballot.

MS. SMITH: Questioner says, President-Elect Obama has emphatically stated that he isn't a Muslim. But other than Colin Powell, there haven't been many defenses of Muslims. What should Americans know about Islam? And how can religious leaders educate the public? And do you even see that as your responsibility?

MS. SCHORI: I think it's the responsibility of all faithful, religious leaders in this country to educate their parishioners or encourage their parishioners to be educated about other faith traditions. Episcopalians are sort of notoriously broad-minded about such things. We think it's important to understand other people because we learn more about ourselves and our own tradition in the process. It's in that relational encounter that we discover more about what it is that we believe, and it's also an invitation for us to see god at work in somebody else.

MS. SMITH: Can you give us some examples of how that education might have been accomplished or is being accomplished in Episcopal churches?

MS. SCHORI: Sure. There's a very creative thing going on in Omaha called the Tri-Faith Initiative. It's an Episcopal congregation and a Jewish congregation and a Muslim congregation that are seeking to build a building together. It will have worship space dedicated for each. And obviously, if you think about it, they worship on different days of the week. They can share administrative space and meeting space and parking space. And simply their gathering, even to begin to talk about this, has opened the minds and the questions of many around them.

MS. SMITH: That sounds sort of administrative. But how does it work on a congregation to congregation basis?

MS. SCHORI: They've had to learn about each other's traditions just to begin these conversations. They've had to learn, for example, that Islam comes from the same root as Shalom, that it comes from submitting yourself to god in the interest of peace, and begin to learn more about their own traditions and how all three of those are very intimately related.

MS. SMITH: This questioner, I'm curious whether you agree with this premise. But the questioner says, in the popular culture and the media, the conservative Christian viewpoint predominates. How can the liberal Christian viewpoint find better expression?

MS. SCHORI: Well, I think we've seen something of a transition just through the last campaign season. We've begun to see a broader understanding of what religion means in the public square. We've begun to see a wider variety of

Christian perspectives. I would hope that we might come to see some equal breadth in terms of Jewish perspectives and Muslim perspectives, and perspectives in other faith traditions that none of those faith traditions is monolithic.

MS. SMITH: This question might have come in response to the previous one. The questioner wants to know, what can we do to convince Muslims not to resort to violence against the other?

MS. SCHORI: Challenge Christians and Jews not to resort to violence against the other. It's an ancient human failing to define ourselves as against those people over there. The other is the traditional enemy. And when we understand the enemy or know the enemy, he, they soon become tablemates.

MS. SMITH: You said you're concerned about a growing number of un-churched people. What's wrong with not having a faith?

MS. SCHORI: All of us human beings ask questions that those within the faith tradition would call spiritual questions, like, "What's the meaning of life? Why am I here? What am I supposed to do with what I have or am?" I think that spiritual hunger for searching for answers to questions like that is evidently growing in this society. Most religious traditions think they have something to offer that kind of hunger.

MS. SMITH: But what if those un-churched people aren't looking for it in the context of a church? I mean, you said that you were concerned about the growing number of un-churched people, but why?

MS. SCHORI: I'm concerned about it in an evangelical sense, in the sense that it's an opportunity that's crying out for response. I'm not saying that un-churched people have to turn up in my church on Sunday morning. I'm saying that it's a place where the kinds of conversation that we have in the Episcopal church or other congregations have in their midst might be welcomed, not necessarily in the cause of conversion, but in the cause of serving the larger public.

MS. SMITH: So how do you do that PR? If you're not necessarily looking to increase membership, but simply to offer a location for people to have those kinds of conversation, how is your church or others for that matter making that case to people who do not have a church?

MS. SCHORI: Well, one of the ways we do it is talking to you, hopefully in a way that can tell a broader story than the conflict story. We think we have a great deal to offer, particularly younger generations who are passionate

about changing this world, who are earnestly hopeful for a different future. We think that's an important part of the conversation.

MS. SMITH: Well, we've avoided the conflict question for long enough. What are the pros and cons of having two competing provinces in the U.S., and of having provinces defined for the first time by theology rather than geography?

MS. SCHORI: Well, one of the reasons for the ancient tradition of not having two bodies in the same place that are supposedly in relationship with each other is that when one body says they're not in communion with you, then they're functionally not a part of the same system. It's a disparity that doesn't make sense in our theological tradition. We've said for hundreds of years that bishops are responsible for certain areas of geography, and that the people in that area, together with the bishop, are evidence of the church. If there are some people in the same area that claim they're of the same tradition, but aren't willing to be in relationship, that's an oxymoron to us.

MS. SMITH: Maybe not to them.

MS. SCHORI: Maybe not to them, but in the Catholic tradition-- and Anglicans are part of the Catholic tradition-- it violates the really root belief that we can be one in a place. When there are two bodies in the same place that say they're not in communion with each other, then functionally what you've got is two different religious traditions. It's an ecumenical relationship rather than a communion relationship.

MS. SMITH: And ultimately what's the matter with that?

MS. SCHORI: It's not a problem. We're in full communion with the Lutherans. But we acknowledge that we're separate bodies, that we have different identities.

MS. SMITH: I've gotten several questions along the line of this — I'm told that the average Sunday attendance in Episcopal churches has dropped dramatically in the last five years. Average age is rising. What's the reason for this? And a number of questioners have suggested the reason for this is in fact the lawsuit and the other controversies. How do you cope with those demographics? And are they much different from other denominations?

MS. SCHORI: They're not significantly different from the other mainline denominations. Our statistician finally produced some numbers for me when I asked him, how much of our numerical decline is due to demographic structure? He was able to tell me that if nothing else were going on, we would

lose 19,000 members a year, simply because more people die than are born and baptized to members of our tradition.

And until about the year '99 or 2000, we were keeping up with that. We were roughly stable. And we were keeping up with that 19,000-member a year decline through conversions and through transfers from other Christian denominations. And that's the challenging piece for us, and for all of the other mainline denominations now.

My tablemate was able to share with me that the Press Club has similar challenges in terms of generations, because older people join things. And younger generations don't. And the same realities impact the churches.

MS. SMITH: A number of questioners have asked something like this — why has the Episcopal church failed to follow the path of negotiation in light of the biblical injunction to avoid litigation?

MS. SCHORI: Well, we tried for a very long time to negotiate and came to a place where there was no willingness to negotiation. So at that point, you ask the courts to enforce the law of the land.

MS. SMITH: And how destructive to your organization as a church, as a singular entity, do you think this litigation will be ultimately?

MS. SCHORI: I actually think we're past the worst of it. We've had positive results in a number of cases. The ones, the large ones hanging fire at the moment are the ones in California (and a decision from the Supreme Court is expected within a couple of weeks) and the one in Virginia. And that will undoubtedly be appealed to the Supreme Court in Virginia. It's interesting that it's based on a statute that was passed during the Civil War to permit bodies to divide on the basis of attitudes towards slavery. So we think when we get past a couple of these big ones, that there will be relatively little left to deal with.

MS. SMITH: The questioner wants to know, is the ordination of female priests part of the reason for the insurrection within the Episcopal church?

MS. SCHORI: It's a very appropriate question. Every significant change in the church's history has produced some departure. There was a significant departure in the 1870s over the theology around baptism. And that's actually one of the splintered groups that has joined this Anglican church in North America. There was a significant departure when we adopted a new prayer book in the late 1970s. There were people who left when we began to ordain women. There were, you know, some people who left this church when we began to provide a more

equal place for people of African-American heritage in this church. So it's an ongoing struggle.

When the body moves to a new place, some people decide that their spiritual journey needs to take them in another direction. And our job at that point is to bless their journey and remind them that the door's open and the light's on.

MS. SMITH: I think you're trying to suggest that change is hard. No other organization experiences that. Do you observe, stereotypically of course, any particular difference between the way people who have been actively religious all their lives approach their faith and those who discovered their spirituality and religiosity in adulthood?

MS. SCHORI: I don't think so. I think it has more to do with what William James would have called the twice born and the once born. There are people who are amazingly observant and faithful and thoughtful who have been religiously convicted all of their lives as far back as they can remember. And there are people of equal fervor who have, you know, come to the faith in their 20s or 30s or 40s or 50s or 80s. There are people who have been born into the church and wandered off into other places. There are people who have come for a season at another time in life, and have been fed, and then wandered off into another place. So I don't think it has to do with the timing of adopting a spiritual tradition.

MS. SMITH: What is the church's, speaking broadly, role in the current economic crisis? Are more people seeking churches in uncertain times? And how is the financial crisis affecting the Episcopal church?

MS. SCHORI: Whenever there is significant crisis in the larger society, most religious communities see an upsurge, both in attendance and in seeking the human-- seeking to have their more physical needs filled. You know, attendance at soup kitchens is up. The need for shelter and housing is up. The need for job counseling services is up. All of the kinds of ministry in the world work that churches do are experiencing significant increases in need.

We don't really know how the financial crisis is affecting the church at the level that I see. I certainly hear parish clergy expressing a great deal of anxiety about what their budgets are going to look like for the next year. But the history of religious giving in this country, over a very long period, shows that times of economic crisis, churches and religious communities are the last, and probably the least affected by giving. People are still generous. People understand that their neighbors need help, and they feel the need to offer that help.

MS. SMITH: The National Cathedral's financial tightness has been covered in the local media. What is the church's role in shoring up the Cathedral's finances?

MS. SCHORI: Encouragement. (Laughter.) I'm serious. We don't have a direct financial connection. Our role as the larger church is to encourage people to be aware of the ministry of the National Cathedral, the way it serves, not just this community, but the whole country. It holds an unusual kind of role in that sense, because we're a multinational church. We have congregations in 16 different countries. And to call our central Cathedral the National Cathedral, you know, that prompts some interesting questions. But there are people in Taiwan and people in Haiti that look to that place as a center of spiritual leadership, and are supportive of it.

MS. SMITH: And it's made of Indiana limestone. Couple of questions, very interesting, I think. How do we know when god is speaking to us? One person's voice of god could be attributed to Satan's deceit by someone else. And another person says, much in the same vein, "You spoke of the prophetic voice. How do we know when the voice is authentic?"

MS. SCHORI: How do we know when that inspired or apparently inspired voice is authentic? Is it congruent with a long tradition. And that is why we look back to foundational documents of faith. Is it congruent with a prophetic biblical tradition? Is it congruent with the prophets of our own day? Is it congruent with at least some portion of the community? If a prophet is crying lonely words in the wilderness and there's no one to hear, maybe not. Maybe not. Is the prophet's voice continuous? Does it continue to pique people? If it's a one-shot flash in the pan, maybe not.

MS. SMITH: Surely you're not saying that just because people respond, is the definition of authenticity.

MS. SCHORI: No. I'm saying that a persistent message that does generate some response from a portion of the community is more likely to be prophetic than someone who may be crying in the wilderness, but nobody is hearing.

MS. SMITH: At the time of your election, you told an interviewer that the fracas over it was an example of (and I'm quoting here) "the evil one who is at work here, distracting us from our central focus, which ought to be feeding the hungry, relieving the needs of the poor, healing the sick. This obsession is keeping us from doing that. To focus on issues of sexuality when people are dying is a distraction from our mission." Is that still your view?

MS. SCHORI: I think I'd nuance it by saying that dealing with issues of sexuality is a part of our mission. It's not the whole of it. And when we turn it into the whole of our mission, we've created an idol. And some parts of the Anglican communion have responded to it like an idol.

MS. SMITH: Well, who has made it the central part of the mission then, if not you?

MS. SCHORI: The people who are consumed by it.

MS. SMITH: Okay. And so then the questioner asks, does god want same-sex couples to formalize their unions or commitments? Or does he care? Do the biblical institutions for marriage apply to same-sex couples?

MS. SCHORI: Oh, which biblical institutions for marriage? Solomon's many, many, many wives? The concubines? The slaves who bore children for their male masters? There are some very odd images of family life in the Bible. And when people talk about family values, I want to know which ones.

When I look at the challenges that the gay and lesbian community, and their supporters have brought to the church over the past several decades, I have heard a prophetic voice crying, that has gathered a community of support and has asked that community of the whole church to look at its own tradition, to critique its present reality on the basis of that tradition. Do we consider some members of the body more equal than others? Do we consider that some rights of the church are available to some and not to others? We're at least asking hard questions. The church as a whole hasn't reached a conclusion about this. But we're asking very challenging questions.

MS. SMITH: What is your view about faith-based initiatives? I'm talking about government faith-based initiatives, especially the perspective that churches are discriminated against if they are blocked from public grants if they have only members of their faith on their staffs, or if they proselytize the participants.

MS. SCHORI: Well, it's interesting you should bring this up. Our office of government relations was talking about this, this morning. And I said that this whole thing just makes me twitch. The idea that faith-based initiatives should have a special entrée to government funding makes me twitch. I think there have always been routes by which all public service organizations, including churches and mosques and synagogues can attempt to access public funding for the good of the whole community. And life would be much clearer if we lived in a system like that.

It makes me twitch when we fund with public funds a group that will only hire its own members, or attempts to use public funds to present a sectarian view. I just don't think it's an appropriate use of public funds.

MS. SMITH: What about those studies that purport to show that particularly in drug rehabilitation that faith-based programs in prisons are more successful in getting people off drugs and keeping them off drugs after they leave prison, and it is central to the program that it is religious?

MS. SCHORI: Mm-hmm. But it doesn't have to be a single image of religion. It can have a breadth of application, to serve a variety of human beings, of which all communities are composed.

MS. SMITH: Is it your hope then that the Obama Administration will not have or will not continue the Bush Administration's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives?

MS. SCHORI: I hope they're asking questions about that structure.

MS. SMITH: Do you think there is a relationship between public morality and private morality?

MS. SCHORI: There's a gospel passage that says, "Those who are faithful in small things are also more likely to be faithful in large things." At the same time, we're all sinners. We all have faults. We all go astray in a variety of ways. But there is, I think, an expectation and an appropriate expectation that integrity pervades all parts of life, and that when we err, we're willing to own up to it in a public way.

MS. SMITH: Can you comment on reports that an organized effort, questioner says, led by "the fellowship" to cause a schism in all mainstream Protestant denominations?

MS. SCHORI: I don't know the identifier of the fellowship. But there's some pretty good evidence that a group of wealthy people has been, for some time, trying to destabilize several of the mainline denominations. And very interesting book was written about it several years ago called *Hard Ball on Holy Ground*.

MS. SMITH: Questioner wants to know, do you feel the Episcopal church is prepared to receive younger believers looking for a more liturgical structure worship in polity?

MS. SCHORI: Yes. Actually, that's probably the kind of believer we're generally more ready to receive. It's the young believer who's looking for a different structure of worship, a more open structure of worship, that many Episcopal congregations find it hard to invite in. That said, I've seen some really wonderful examples of less structured, less formal worship opportunities that are filling significant needs, and inviting seekers in. So again, we're a church of the breath. We're a wide tent. We've got something for many, many different kinds of people.

MS. SMITH: Someone wants to know, how do you plan to observe Christmas?

MS. SCHORI: Well, I'm not going to give you too much detail. But I was supposed to go to Kuwait and Iraq with the bishop who serves the chaplains, particularly the Armed Forces chaplains. But we weren't able to get permission to go. So one of the reasons I'm down here, we were going to do some of that work before Christmas. And I'm going to go back to New York and spend Christmas there. And my husband is coming, and our daughter and her husband are coming. So we'll have a family Christmas for the first time in quite awhile.

MS. SMITH: We're almost out of time, but before asking the last question, couple of important matters to take care of. First, let me remind our members of upcoming speakers. On Friday, we have Paul Krugman, professor of economics and international affairs at Princeton, and Nobel Prize winner. On January 13th, we have James Mulva, president and CEO of ConocoPhillips. He'll discuss achieving energy security and addressing climate change. January 23rd, we have Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. He is the Senate Republican leader.

And now, I'd like to present you with the coveted National Press Club coffee mug. (Applause.)

MS. SCHORI: Thank you. Thank you.

MS. SMITH: And my last question is this: what do you pray about that might surprise us?

MS. SCHORI: Hmm. Well, I pray for people who consider me their enemy. And that started quite a long time ago. I think god gives us difficult people for a reason. They seem exceedingly challenging to us because of something within us that responds. And praying for those people is a necessary part of the spiritual journey.

MS. SMITH: And is it hard?

MS. SCHORI: Ah. Not when it becomes a discipline. No.

MS. SMITH: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Id' like to thank you for coming today. Thank you so much.

I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members, Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. And thanks to the Press Club Library for its research.

A video archive of today's lunch is provided by the National Press Club Broadcast Operations Center. Many of our events are aired on XM Satellite Radio and available for free download on iTunes, as well as on our website. Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and videotapes by calling 202.662.7598 or going to archives@Press.com.

Thank you very much for attending today, and we are adjourned. (Gavel sounds.)

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