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## Tradition has its place

### Anglican archbishop pleased new members seek old ways

By JOHN PRZYBYS

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When Archbishop James Eugene Provence visits St. George's Anglican Church in Las Vegas this weekend, he's sure to be impressed with what he sees.

If nothing else, that's because, the last time he saw it, St. George's was nothing more than a plot of bare desert ground.

"I remember going out with my predecessor, Archbishop Robert Morse, to look at the site where St. George was going to be built," Provence recalled. "So I saw it before the desert was all covered up with a building."

Provence is head of the Anglican Province of Christ the King, a denomination made up of traditional Anglican churches. On Sunday, he'll celebrate a 10:30 a.m. Choral Mass at St. George's, 7676 W. Gilmore Ave.

The trip will mark Provence's first visit to St. George's since the church's consecration. The Rev. Gordon Hines, St. George's pastor, said St. George's was founded in 1990 with about a dozen members.

In its early years, members met in homes, other local churches and an elementary school cafeteria and were served by mission priests. In 1997, Hines -- who had been traveling to Las Vegas from Arizona to say Mass -- became the church's full-time pastor.

St. George's today has about 200 members, Hines said, and in 2001 saw completion of the first phase of a three-phase building program.

St. George's belongs to the Anglican Province of Christ the King, founded in 1977 by members and clergy of six former Episcopal parishes who disagreed with doctrinal and liturgical changes adopted by the Episcopal church the previous year.

Provence -- who also serves as bishop of the denomination's Western diocese and as rector of a parish in San Francisco -- said the Anglican Province of Christ the King today has about 4,000 members who worship in more than 40 parishes across the United States.

Provence said during a recent phone interview that the denomination, while still relatively small, is growing. What's "fascinating," he continued, is that -- in his own parish and, from what he hears from other priests, in their parishes, too -- "most of the people who are joining are younger."

Many, he suspected, are attracted by "the traditional form of worship, using the Elizabethan language, which means you leave what you normally do at the door."

The churches use the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and, Provence noted, employ the Anglican church's "rich musical heritage" and "traditional approach to holy Scripture and theology."

"People are seeming to say: 'I need this anchor. Everything in the world right now is changing, everything I trusted is falling apart. I've got to grab on to that which does not change.'

"And, basically, I tell them: 'That's God. God does not change.' "

"During the '60s, '70s and part of the ' 80s, we were the old curmudgeons who would not let go of the old ways," Provence noted. "Now people are saying: 'Thank God you have not changed. We need this stability.' "

Yet, Provence said, "if this were merely nostalgia, we would have been wrong to have broken with the Episcopal church. We broke over solid theological differences."

In 1976, the Episcopal church "took a sharp left turn," he said, "and the view of the apostolic ministry changed and the view of the sacraments changed and the view of authority changed."

Even now, more than three decades after the denomination's founding, Provence said it sometimes poses a challenge to explain to newcomers exactly what "Anglican" means.

On the other hand, he added, that "does give us an opportunity to provide some education," not only about the Province but about Anglican history and tradition.

But, this weekend, Provence is simply looking forward to seeing what St. George's parish has done with that piece of bare desert ground.

"I've been familiar with (St. George's) project from its inception, but it will actually be my first time to see the completed project," he said. "So I'm very eager to get out and see what's going on."

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