

**Grace Discussion Group: Dr. Fredrica Thompsett**, Mary Wolfe Professor of Historical Theology, Episcopal Divinity School. This is a written account of the main points of Dr. Thompsett's talk and responses to questions. "The history of Christian Leadership in the Anglican Tradition, with special attention to the Episcopal Church." October 15, 2006

Dr. Thompsett gave us an outline that covered the following ten historical "highlights":

#### Origins

- 1) The Biblical Covenant between God and the people of God. The loving affiliation between God and people is recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures. We are created and chosen by God.
- 2) The Incarnation of God in Christ who "became flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14]; God comes again as a Nazarene carpenter.
- 3) Formation of Christian leadership in Jesus' baptism; the sacrament that recognizes what God has already done in creation by linking God and people together in love.

#### Anglican Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century

- 4) Making the bible available in the languages of the people; the translation of all the sources of our faith into the language of the people so that no one is excluded
- 5) Encouraging full participation in common prayer; the translation and writing into English of the Book of Common Prayer

#### The heritage of the Episcopal church in America

- 6) Direct Lay participation in the decision-making councils of the church, echoing the work of the founding fathers of our country.
- 7) The witness of women leaders in the growth of the church; women as founders of churches and missionaries
- 8) A growing witness for civil rights and for racial justice
- 9) The full participation of women in Episcopal church life; the ordination of women
- 10) The rediscovery of spirituality as an everyday practice; the importance of carrying our faith with us into our daily lives and the struggles of the world.

She then asked us to extract from this discussion what we saw as the core values of our tradition. These were some of the answers:

- √ Inclusivity
  - Recognizing and appreciating the gift of every person
  - Seeing Jesus in our neighbors
  - Seeking to serve Christ in all persons
- √ The importance of the Incarnation
  - The inextricable bond among heart, mind, soul, and body
  - The importance of the everyday lives of our children
  - We are the Church of Christmas
- √ Democratic principles of governing ourselves
  - *Vox populi/Vox dei*
  - Encouraging the participation of all

- Taking up our own responsibilities in ministry, rather than electing someone else to do it.
- ✓ Undertaking ministries of social justice
  - Our authority comes from our baptism
- ✓ Humility in the context of the larger world and the environment
  - Working against the perception that we are the church of the rich

This list gives us the gist of what went on but not the humor, wit and wisdom of our speaker. Thompsett's sermon enlarged on these ideas, asking the central questions of this process that we are undertaking at Grace this year: "What do we wish to pass on to our children? How do we educate them in this faith that sustains us?" Her sermon will be posted on the Website, as will this outline and that of Steven Charleston's discussion presentation.