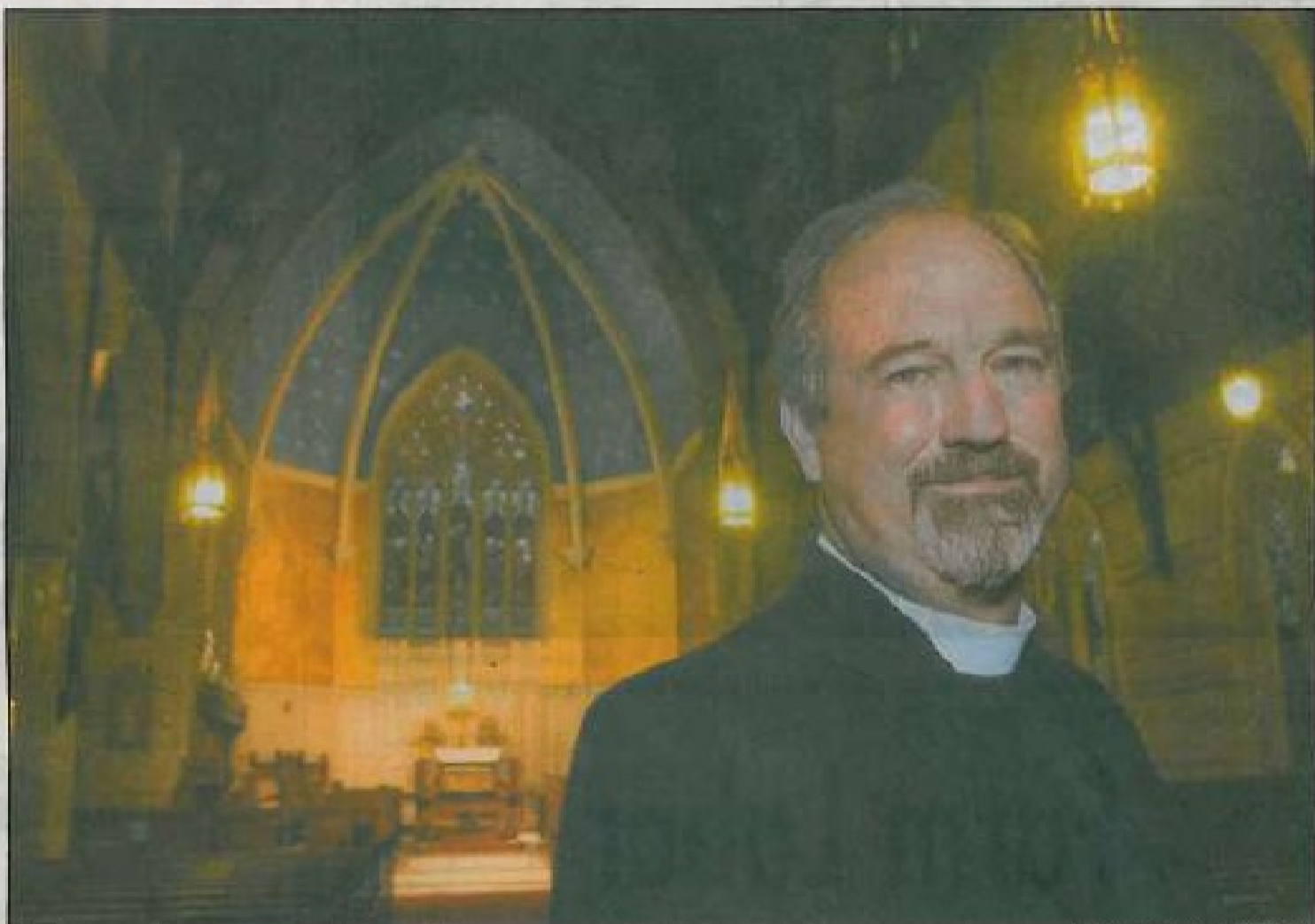


WHAT I BELIEVE



Gay Wats / The Post-Standard

THE VERY REV. Thomas Luck poses inside St. Paul's Cathedral, in Syracuse, where he is the dean.

'God Has an Infinite Embrace'

Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral proud of his church's diversity

By The Very Rev. Thomas Luck
Contributing writer

I have been raised in a particular tradition within Christianity, known as The Episcopal Church, that intentionally seeks to bring all people to the table, literally.

Our goal is to bring all people to God's communion table, allowing for a wide latitude of belief and practice.

On one hand, our tradition is distinctly Catholic, with all of the historical marks of Catholicism: bishops in apostolic succession going back to the apostles, priests, deacons, the seven sacraments, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and the centrality of the Eucharist, the Mass, in our worship.

Yet our tradition is also distinctly Protestant, giving primacy of place in doctrine to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and in supporting all Christians to follow their individual consciences.

At the same time, our tradition gives equal authority to the role of reason. We believe fully in the discoveries made by science, and in the learning of the social sciences. Therefore, by applying Scripture, tradition and reason, our church allows bishops, priests and deacons to be married.

Our church ordains women to all orders of ministry. Our church supports the use of contraception as a reasonable practice and encourages parents to plan carefully for their children. It is against canon law for our church to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, even having gay, lesbian, bi-

The Very Rev. Thomas Luck

Address: Syracuse.

Age: 54.

Family: Married with three children and a granddaughter.

Occupation: Priest in the Episcopal church and dean of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral.

House of worship: St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral
(www.saintpaulscathedral.org).

sexual and transgendered persons in partnered relationships among the clergy.

Our scientific study of the Bible shows that the Bible is critical of some sexual behaviors, that are both opposite sex and same-sex behaviors, when they are done out of lust and violence. And that the Bible does not address the possibility of two people of the same sex having a loving and wholesome relationship.

All of these particular elements are in some ways incarnated in the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, who is not only a married heterosexual woman, but who also has her Ph.D. in oceanography.

We Episcopalians say, "WE believe" when we say the Nicene Creed, because we celebrate our unity in Christ, a unity not found in agreeing with every point of doctrine, but because we believe God has made all people one people, and that all people who are baptized are members of the Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I am especially grateful to be in the particular community that I serve, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral. At St. Paul's one can find people of all kinds; committed Democrats and Republicans, married opposite-sex couples with children and married same-sex couples with children, old and young, rich and poor and of a variety of races.

We strive to be true to God's wide embrace by offering a variety of liturgical styles, from very ancient Latin texts to jazz to Sudanese drums. We strive to be true to God's wide embrace, God's vision that all people have lives of abundance, by working to end poverty around the world and in our own community, especially as the host site of the Samaritan Center, which has its space and utilities rent-free.

God is the creator of all that is and God is an infinite mystery. Our Church would rather say too little about what we know about God and God's will than say too much.

But this we believe: God loves what God has made and God has an infinite embrace. God has made all people as they are, and God desires to be in intimate relationship with all people. We believe that all people are invited to share in the intimacy of relationship with God by sharing in Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament of Bread and Wine, and by sharing this Communion fellowship with all.

To submit an essay for possible inclusion in "What I Believe," send it by e-mail to citynews@syracuse.com, or by mail to: What I Believe, The Post-Standard, P.O. Box 4915, Syracuse, 13221. Essays should be 500 to 700 words. Essays may be edited for brevity and clarity.