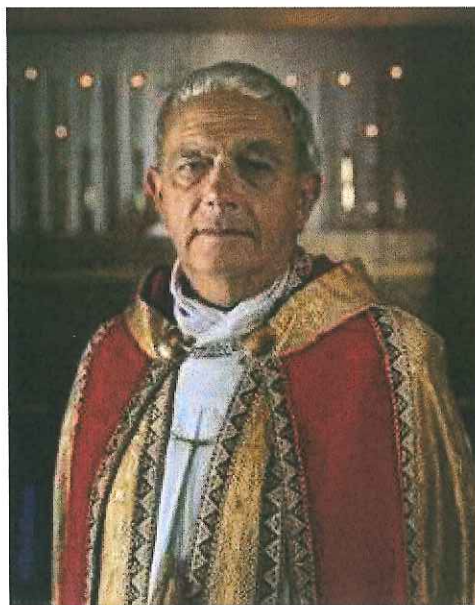


# Articles of faith



## [Ex-Anglican bishop becomes Catholic priest but remains member of Anglican religious order](#)

Ms Ruth Gledhill March 28 2012 4:47PM



As [James Bradley reports](#), the former Anglican bishop Robert Mercer has been received into the Roman Catholic Church. A few days ago, he was ordained a Catholic priest. Next week, his parish of continuing Anglicans who meet at the former Anglican church, St Agatha's in Portsmouth, will also be received into the [Ordinariate](#).

There are many interesting aspects to this story.

One is that for some years now, Father Robert has been a member of the Traditional Anglican Communion, which is divided over the Ordinariate. In Australia, where the main TAC body is based, they will not be moving over.

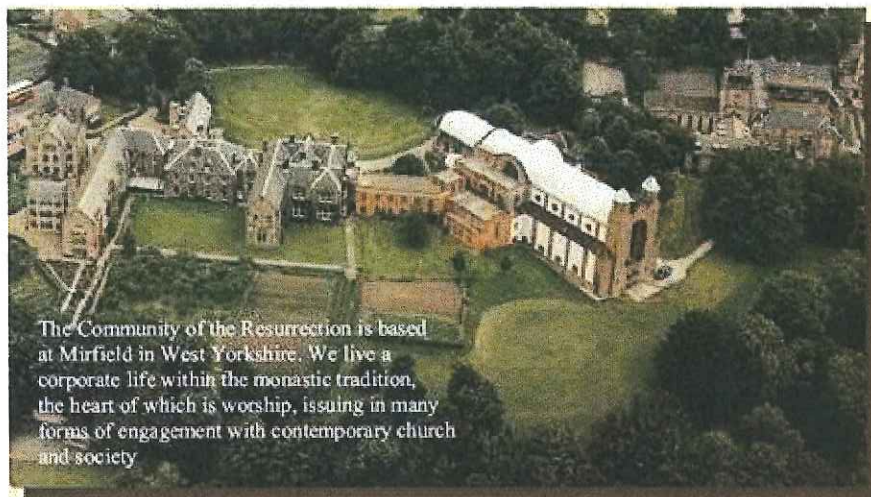
But in Portsmouth, where [St Agatha's survived against the odds](#) as a church, they are on their way. I am assuming - awaiting definite confirmation - that they will be taking St Agatha's with them. This beautiful, cathedral-style church with its rich Anglo-

Catholic heritage and its former Anglican bishop, allowed to carry on wearing his mitre and retain other episcopal signifiers as well as much of his Anglo-Catholic tradition in the Ordinariate, could hence become the de-facto cathedral church that was needed by the new body set up by the Pope for Anglo-Catholics departing the Church of England. Because it is no longer a Church of England church, the same issues over property do not arise as with the other parishes that have gone.



But there are even more interesting aspects to this.

Robert Mercer left the Anglican Church some years ago, after serving as Bishop of Mataberland. He moved to Canada where he became part of the Traditional Anglican Communion. He was however allowed to remain a brother of his Anglican religious order, the [Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield](#).



The Community of the Resurrection is based at Mirfield in West Yorkshire. We live a corporate life within the monastic tradition, the heart of which is worship, issuing in many forms of engagement with contemporary church and society

These columns from The Church Times in 1988 indicate how that decision was arrived at.



Candles blaze in St. Bude's Church, Fleet Street, London, for hostages in Lebanon, including the Archbishop of Canterbury's envoy, Mr. Terry Wahn. Mrs. Jill Morrell, girlfriend of kidnapped TV reporter Mr. John McCarthy, studies the flame.

## Australian dissidents aided by Bp. Mercer

**THE** Right Rev. Robert Mercer, C.B., the former Bishop of Maitland, has conducted a consultation for a breakaway group in Brisbane, Australia—without consulting Archbishop John Grinstead.

According to the Australian Church Times, Bishop Mercer, a member of the Community of the Resurrection, a British, non-Orthodox "within the congregation of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada." And the paper describes the Bishop's action as "a clear breach of courtesy and discipline."

Archbishop Grinstead, the Australian Primate—who is also Archbishop of Brisbane and Metropolitan of Queensland—has disapproved the Community of the Resurrection's mother house in Montreal where the Superior, Fr. Solomon Brien, C.B., and 100 monks, are the "dissident" were "detested."

St. Barry told the Church Times: "When a member becomes a bishop...we call them 'episcopal bishops'...he is not subject to the discipline of the Chapter and Synod or the way that normal members are. He keeps a modified role. The 'Primate' can, but I cannot tell you what to do, where to go, when to come back."

"I am not, 'Look here, you are discussing serious people in the Church, and the bishops, should you take notice of this fact'—in fact, I have to tell you this."

The St. Stephen's cleric this message to Bishop Mercer? Fr. Barry said: "The bishop, many of the monks are disappointed. He is not aware of this. But his response would be..."

## Blow to optimism in ordinand statistics

**I**n a stark reversal of the recent encouraging trend, the number of men accepted as ordinands dropped sharply last year, the

announcement for the non-episcopal clergy in the Church of England, down to its lowest level since 1970. Recruitment for the local non-episcopal ministry was halved, from eight to four.

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# Court will decide on 'gay' offices

A CONSISTORY court is to decide whether or not the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement may continue to occupy its offices in the tower of St. Botolph's Church, Aldgate, London.

"They have been there illegally for eleven years," the Archbishop of London, the Ven. George Carey, said on Wednesday. "I have suggested St. Botolph's to put in a petition for a faculty for the LGCM to use the offices. The application was made before Christmas, and subsequent to the application I entered my objection. That is how I precipitated a court case."

It was the Rev. Tony Higton's "notably" motion in the November General Synod which earned the spotlight on the LGCM's lease to the church, but Archbishop Carey, who has never met Mr. Higton, said, "It is vital that this is not seen as a witch hunt or a post-General Synod panic."

However, the Archbishop said he did object to the nature of the organisation — "otherwise I would have 'interposed' and not 'objected'." There is a difference, I am all in favour of their existing; but it is different when the organisation gains credit from being on church property.

The consistory court hearings with the Chancellor of the diocese of London, Chancellor George Newson, presiding, is expected to take place in March. Neither the Rector of St. Botolph's, the Rev. Nicholas Johnson, nor the Rev. Richard Keece of the LGCM, were available for comment to "Church Times" until this press.

# Help for dissidents by bishop

(Continued from Front Page, Col. 1)

that is necessary by me to go on about what he feels to be right.

Robert would say that he sees it as his duty to minister to a congregation in need, and that he cannot see the laity sheep looking on and not being fed. That is how to serve it, and that is the sort of language he would use. And the Synod said the Consistory was widened and that Archbishop Johnson and the diocese of Hildesheim were agreed.

Bishop Martin Jeff Mitchell of Canada in the interim to take up prominent work in the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada, which is part of the Continuing Anglican movement in North America, also served with the Anglican Catholic Church in the USA. He has probably Australia for his mother's help traditional Anglicans be left, would Arguably, as he has explained.

## No contact

Church Times also quotes a report in The Sun newspaper, Melbourne, which says that a representative of the Anglican Catholic Church has been formed there, and has held its first service in an empty Methodist church roomed from the British Church.

Apparently the Melbourne congregation had the church blessed by Bishop Murray, who also celebrated Eucharist there on December 10. The Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Rev. David Penrose, wrote to his clergy on December 10 saying that there had been no contact between himself and Bishop Murray, either before or during the Bishop's visit to the diocese.

But Archbishop Penrose added: "I am prepared to meet with any of those involved and to try to find a Christian and loving way of going up to the consistory and consistory needs involved; but I can do this more if there is no willingness to meet and to share."

He is not the first Anglican to convert to Catholicism and be allowed to remain a brother at Mirfield.

Augustin Hoey was the first. He left Mirfield when he was re-ordained and is now a respected priest at Westminster Cathedral.

Father Robert is the first to become a Catholic priest and be allowed to remain a brother of this devoutly Anglo-Catholic Church of England religious community.

The community, which has raised £650,000 for the refurbishment of its chapel but still needs a further £1.5 million and is about to relaunch its appeal, is housing him gratis in a flat it has bought for him in Worthing, Sussex, bought for £159,950 in 2006 so he could be near his ailing sister.

The Superior, Father George Guiser CR, told The Times after some consideration that the best phrase to describe his status with Mirfield was "emeritus". He is included in the figure of 22 members, who also include three novices, one due to profess in May. "We are very ecumenical," he said. "We do not regard the divisions between our churches as being as hard and fast as some might." The community is twinned with a Benedictine abbey on the continent, St Matthias in Trier. Father Robert is still referred to as "brother".

A spokesman for Forward in Faith said: "We are so pleased that the Community of the Resurrection appear to have found a means by which Father Mercer can remain a member, which was his heart's desire."

A spokesman for the Ordinariate said: "Fr Robert Mercer is now a Priest of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham and remains, by private and mutual arrangement with the Superior, affiliated to the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield. His affiliation with the Community of the Resurrection has no impact on his ministry as a Catholic Priest, as any vows he has previously taken are considered private."