



President's Report

by Elizabeth Morris Downie

Our EFM group was struggling mightily with the question of hope last week. If you are aware of what is happening around you and all over the world, one member asked, how can you possibly hope? There is so much that is monstrously evil, partnered with great power. Where is hope, where is God, in all this?

Not all of us felt the struggle as acutely as she, perhaps because most are not as knowledgeable about the political and economic scene as she. And perhaps our innate tendencies and prior experiences predispose us to greater hopefulness. Some people just plain find it easier to hope than others when the skies are dark.

Years ago, at a time in my life when despair was oppressing my soul and there didn't seem to be a light at the end of a very long, very dark tunnel, a hymn literally taught me hope. Robert Bridges text, "All my hope on God is founded," set to Herbert Howells magnificent tune *Michael* (H-1982, No. 665). sung over and over again for several months, carried the certain knowledge of God's strength and trustworthiness into the core of my being, so that despair was driven out and I could truly believe that

"Christ doth call one and all: ye who follow shall not fall." Perhaps we can only experience radical hope after despair has bitten into us.

So as special diocesan conventions are held, and unkind behavior, false words, and rumors assault this church of ours, hold fast to hope! God is doing a

wonderful new thing, and while it may take a long time to sort it all out and come to clarity, the goodness of this new thing is already very apparent. "Evermore from his [sic] store new-born worlds rise and adore" (vs. 3).

The Episcopal Church has said with new depth and intentionality that *all* are welcome at God's table, *all* may exercise their gifts for ministry as they are called to do, *all* are blessed in loving.

However, we cannot float on clouds and play our harps just yet. There is a great deal of work still to be done both in education and advocacy before our vision is realized. One way each EWC member can help is to recruit at least one new EWC member, male or female. I was taken aback at General Convention by the number of feminist men I talked with who did not realize that membership in the Caucus is open to them also!

A contribution of any amount is sufficient for full membership in the Caucus, and will bring *Ruach* to the new member's mailbox. Every issue of *Ruach* contains our Mission Statement, and information about membership. Our extraordinary business manager, Bill Fleener, is happy to mail copies of our current brochure to anyone requesting them.

A strong membership base and a healthy bank balance will support the work we are called to do. Please make building the EWC base *your* project in the months ahead.

— a statement from the episcopal womens' caucus —

The Board of the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC - www.episcopalwomenscaucus.org) has read the anticipated report from the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA - www.anglicanmissioninamerica.org) on the Ordination of Women (<http://64.118.70.157/amia/w.pdf>) and responds with sadness and chagrin to the AMiA's October 31, 2003 Announcement on Women's Ordination. [see page 20]

How unfortunate, indeed, for Archbishops Kolini of Rwanda and Chung of SE Asia, sponsors of the AMiA, to "provide guidance to ordain properly qualified and called women as deacons but not as priests or bishops." In a missionary evangelical movement like AMiA, it seems to us an insult to the Body of Christ to claim to be open to the Spirit in the fullness of its vocational life, and yet deny that same fullness in the spiritual and vocational life of women.

However, what seems truly bizarre to us is their decision that "the two women who had already been ordained priests and had affiliated with the AMiA, will be permitted to continue their ministry as priests, serving on staff where called. However, women who seek affiliation with the AMiA, from this point on, who are already ordained as priests, will be asked to serve as deacons."

One small step for mankind, two giant steps backward for women.

It is the prayer of Jesus that, "We all may be one." It is the firm belief of the Episcopal Women's Caucus that as long as the cause of unity is carried on the backs of women, or any others not in power, the mission of Christ in the world will not be fulfilled.

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visit our new website

<http://www.ewc-ecusa.org>

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Letters to the Editor...

News from Bishop Jane Dixon

Dear members of the board, and all members of the Caucus,

I have been blessed to have a number of honors in my life and yet being honored by the Caucus at that incredible breakfast in Minneapolis will always be one of the most important to me. To have a group whose mission and ministry I so admire, thank me for my work for justice means so much I have not the appropriate words to express it. You brought me to the place that the Rt. Rev. Walter Righter said I would arrive one day; that it was a privilege to do the work I did as Bishop of Washington, Pro tempore. Thank you.

Retirement is a strange and foreign land for me. There is both cost and promise. The cost is that I miss the active ministry I had for almost 35 years as both lay woman and ordained person. I miss the struggle for justice and inclusion on a regular basis, and I miss the people with whom I worked and prayed and agitated. The promise is that I now have discretionary time to enjoy my family and friends, and I can say yes or no to the invitations I receive. And I will teach a course at George Washington University on women in religious leadership in the winter and spring. Also I have the freedom to consider two options being presented to me for work. That is really fine.

You have further honored me by inviting me to be a member of the board of the Caucus. Now I have a group of peers with whom to work and pray and agitate once again. Thanks be to God! I am convinced that the fear of inclusion of all God's creatures in the life of the Church and the world is having a deleterious effect on our society and community of faith. Thus to be joined with workers for justice is a great gift.

So many thanks for 30 years of support, for you in fact, helped make my ordained life possible, the wonderful tribute in Minneapolis, and for giving me a new band of sisters and brothers. I will be forever grateful.

May God bless us always,

+ Jane

Ruach welcomes your letters and comments. Please send them by email or regular post to Editors Katie Sherrod or Anne McConney at the addresses on the inside front cover. In the interest of including as many letters as possible, the editors reserve the option of editing for space.



General Convention 2003

Moving into the aftermath: an assessment

by Katie Sherrod

The best description of General Convention I've heard comes from Susan Russell, new president of Integrity. She compares it to Brigadoon, the mystical village that appears out of the mist, exists for awhile and then disappears again.

General Convention is an amazingly diverse interlocking four-part community—House of Deputies, House of Bishops, Triennial and the Exhibit Hall—that arises in the midst of a convention center in some major city every three years. For almost two weeks it is a thriving busy place filled with people intensely and often passionately absorbed in the community business one 18-hour day after another. Then *poof!* It's gone.

The work it does lives after it, of course, and the work of the 2003 Minneapolis Convention was as historic as that of the 1976 Minneapolis Convention. It's also had a similar impact, with many of the same voices who decried the actions of the 1976 convention now bewailing the actions of the 2003 convention.

If you don't know why, you've been living in a cave somewhere.

The convention consented to the election of Gene Robinson as bishop coadjutor of New Hampshire and recognized that same gender blessings are happening within the bounds of our common life, if not in every diocese and without an approved liturgy.

The Caucus' convention event was, as usual, packed. The Rev. Bonnie Perry's address [see page 6] brought people to their feet time and again cheering through tears and laughter. Life memberships were given to Ann Smith, former head of the Women in Ministry and Mission office and Barbara Schlachter, most

recently the Caucus' angel in the Diocese of Fort Worth; and past presidents Lyn Headley-Moore and Ginger Paul.

The new Joseph Award was given posthumously to Brian Bucklee for his untiring service to the Caucus. His wife, Sally Bucklee, former president of the Caucus, accepted it. The Mary Magdalene Award was given to Sally Johnson, whose work was almost

single-handedly responsible for the revisions in the disciplinary canons.

New officers also were announced. Elizabeth Morris Downie is the new Caucus president. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows continues as vice president, Ann Van Dervoort as secretary and Byron Rushing as treasurer. Jane Holmes Dixon, Carol Cole Flanagan and Elizabeth Kaeton are board members.

Not all was rejoicing.

The issue of women having full access to ordination in all dioceses of our church was kissed off with a tame resolution "celebrating the gifts" of ordained women. One felt the shades of Minneapolis 1976 weeping.

Caucus members were evident everywhere in key places—as bishops, as deputies, as chairs and members of critical committees, as witnesses, as spokespersons, as worship leaders, as quiet strategists and legislative activists. As always, the Caucus booth was the meeting place where messages were left, stand-up strategy meetings were held and friendships made and renewed.

Caucus members participated in The Consultation, a group of progressive organizations that includes Integrity, Episcopal Urban Caucus, Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Union of Black Episcopalians, Episcopal

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Ecological Network, Episcopal Society for Ministry in Higher Education, *The Witness*, Episcopal Network for Economic Justice, Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry, and Province 8 Native American Ministries Network.

Caucus members also were part of the Claiming the Blessing collaborative that did vital behind-the-scenes work as well as upfront work with media on Robinson's consent and same gender blessings. Once again, progressive organizations lived out the belief that "Justice IS Orthodox Theology" proclaimed on Caucus tote bags seen everywhere at Convention.

There were many moments of grace, especially that displayed by nearly all the convention participants during the tense hours when last-minute allegations against then bishop-elect Robinson arose. The processes set up to handle such allegations swung into action—processes that Gene Robinson had helped develop. The speed, transparency and grace with which the investigation proceeded were reassuring to Convention participants and frankly astonishing to the national me-

dia who watched it unfold.

But it also was wonderful to witness just how quickly the members of the national media realized there was no substance to the allegations, no matter how hard David Anderson of the American Anglican Council tried to convince them otherwise.

As one reporter from a national paper remarked to me as he walked away as Anderson was holding forth: "I've been spun by better people than this."

There were predictions of schism, walkouts, and tears after the vote on consent to Robinson's election were announced. World reaction was strong enough to prompt the Archbishop of Canterbury to call a special primates' meeting in October to consider the ramifications of this convention.

But through it all, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold saw "an incredible strength and joy despite the difficulties of some of the decisions we have had to make and the painfulness some of these decisions have caused within the community."

Headstrong Daughters Celebrate at Caucus Breakfast

"My first impression of the Episcopal Church was that it was a place of radical hospitality and profound inclusivity," said the Reverend Bonnie Perry of the Diocese of Chicago, keynote speaker at the Episcopal Women's Caucus Breakfast Sunday.

"Imagine my surprise," she said as the audience laughed, when she discovered this was not the case in the whole church. But it was the case in enough places and at enough times, she said, that it gives us all glimpses of the Kingdom of God, and keeps us all working to make her first impression a reality for the whole church.

Two newly created awards were announced. The Magdalene Award is given "to lift up and celebrate a ministry that would not ordinarily be well known. The recipient of this award is a woman whose unflagging dedication and leadership transcends cultural standards, strengthens and builds up the disciples of Christ, and provides for them through her own resources and witnesses to the power of the resurrection." The first recipient of the Magdalene Award is attorney Sally Johnson, for her years-long work on Title IV.

The Joseph Award is given "in the spirit of Mary's spouse to a man who has been a faithful companion to women on our journey of faith." The recipient of this award is "one who defies conventional wisdom and cultural standards in order to confront prejudice and obey the Spirit of the God of in-

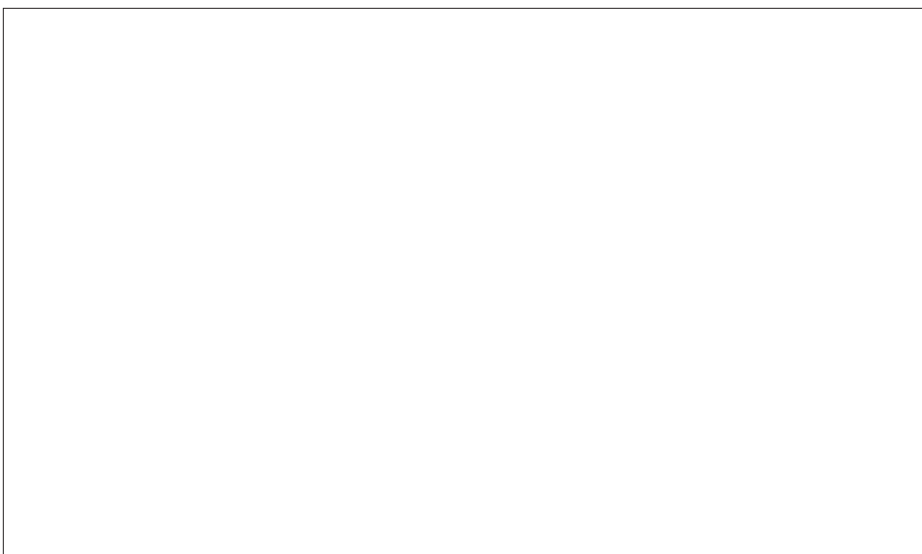
ternate love, liberation, justice, reconciliation and peace." It was given posthumously to Brian Bucklee, late husband of past EWC president Sally Bucklee. Brian Bucklee was the unanimous choice of the board because of his "self-sacrificing love [and] his ministry and companionship with Sally to further the ministry of Jesus Christ through the mission of our work."

The Caucus also honored the recently retired Jane Holmes Dixon, bishop suffragan of the Diocese of Washington. Life memberships were given to Bishop Dixon and to Mary Adelia McLeod, retired bishop of Vermont, as well as to the Reverend Barbara Schlachter, for her work on the Caucus' Angel Project and to past president Lyn Headley Moore. Ginger Paul, the outgoing president, also was honored with a life membership. She was given a crystal bowl engraved with a quote from Sirach: "Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter, else, when she finds liberty, she will use it."

The Reverend Elizabeth Morris Downie is the new president, the Reverend Ann Vandervoort is the new secretary and the Rt. Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon is a new board member. The Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows continues as vice-president and the Hon. Byron Rushing continues as treasurer.

Perry was introduced by Caucus Board member, the Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, who gave her the ultimate Gen-X accolade: "She kicks butt." And now, let us all go forth and do likewise.

New Caucus President Elizabeth Downie (left) shares a moment at the Caucus breakfast with outgoing President Ginger Paul



Griswold himself was a tower of strength and grace, rising to the occasion at this critical juncture with exactly the right words and actions time after time.

Robinson was one of 10 bishops whose elections were to be confirmed at the

convention. He's also a divorced father of two who's been in a committed gay relationship for more than a decade. That made him the target of conservatives who say the Episcopal Church has strayed from biblical teachings and traditional church practice.

The House of Deputies approved Robinson in a vote by orders by a 3-2 margin. But the day before the House of Bishops was set to vote, an e-mail accusing Robinson of "inappropriate touching" surfaced, and the American Anglican Council also made allegations that a ministry for young gays and lesbians Robinson helped establish now had a Web site with links leading to adult-content sites.

The bishops' vote was postponed while Presiding Bishop Griswold ordered an investigation.

In less than 24 hours, Bishop Gordon Scruton of Western Massachusetts announced he had found "no necessity to pursue further investigation" and no cause for preventing bishops with jurisdiction from going forward with a vote on consent. Bishops then approved Robinson's election by a vote of 62 to 43.

The vote used up a lot of courage.

Thus, when the resolution dealing with same gender blessings hit the House of Bishops, one could sense that many of the bishops had scared themselves by their prophetic act of the previous day and simply

couldn't summon the courage to do it again by authorizing the development of optional liturgies to be included in the Book of Occasional Services.

But enough courageous brothers and sisters in purple stood firm to help hammer out a compromise resolution. The deputies concurred with the bishops in adopting the substitute resolution recognizing "that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our

common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions."

The resolution also commits the church to "continued prayer, study and discernment on the pastoral care for gay and lesbian persons." As part of the process, a commission appointed by the presiding bishop will compile and develop resources "to facilitate as wide a conversation of discernment as possible."

To search a complete list of convention resolutions, go to http://gc2003.episcopalchurch.org/gc2003/386_502_ENG_HTML.htm.

Another story by Katie Sherrod, covering the consecration of Gene Robinson, appears on page 17

"The speed, transparency and grace with which the investigation proceeded were reassuring to participants and frankly astonishing to the national media."

Visit our new website— <http://www.episcopalwomenscaucus.org>

Radical Hospitality, Profound Inclusivity

Good morning!

It is an awesome thing to stand in a room filled with so many of my heroes.

It is awesome and, truth be told, a tad bit terrifying. So pray with me please:

Gracious God, may we live without fear knowing that you love us, you protect us, and you long for us to live out your hope for our world. Amen.

About 10 years ago a young woman called and asked if we might have lunch. She was in seminary in the ordination process. Over lunch she said to me, “I wanted to talk with you because so many of the women priests I’ve encountered in this diocese seem to be angry, and you don’t.”

I stopped eating and I started teaching. Political lesson Number 1: never confuse the presence of humor with the absence of anger.

Secondly, I consider myself to be the third wave of women priests. I was ordained in 1990 by Jack Spong and by the time I was ordained the Diocese of Newark had largely and successfully settled the question of women’s ordination. Then in 1992 I moved to Chicago, where the issue was not nearly so settled.

It is a very good diocese now because of a lot of hard work that has happened in the last 10-15 years.

But in 1992 it was a diocese where the memory of women being transferred in and out on paper and in person in order to be ordained was not all that distant. (Although the system worked and women were ordained, don’t ever think that it wasn’t painful.)

Chicago was a diocese in 1992 where there were no women rectors. It was culture shock for this girl from Newark. So I looked at that young woman and said, “I may not seem angry, but that’s because so many of our sisters have used their anger to trample the barricades of the system so that you and I can have the privilege of being ordained.

“Make no mistake,” I said. “It is their anger that has pushed back the waters of oppression so that you and I can walk through on dry land. I’m not angry. I’m profoundly grateful.” (The lunch finished up pretty quickly after that.)

I’m also grateful to you all for something else. In 1986 I was a student at Union Theological Seminary. I was a Roman Catholic and it was dawning on me that what I had known since I was eight was undeniably true—I was, in fact, a lesbian.

I knew that as a woman and a feminist the Roman Catholic Church was going to have a hard time with me—but as a lesbian the hierarchy would despise

me. I knew that as sure as I knew I had a call to the priesthood.

I remember standing on the corner of 122nd Street and Claremont Avenue in New York City, and thinking that, in spite of it all, maybe—just maybe—there was hope. That maybe I could find a home in the Episcopal Church.

Why did I think that? Because I knew women I had been introduced to—women straight and gay—whom I deeply respected, women who were doing exciting, creative and life-changing work in the Episcopal Church. These women gave me hope—just when I thought part of my life was falling apart, these women gave me hope that I could be a feminist...that I could be a lesbian...that I could be a priest.

Many of those women are sitting in this room today—and I am profoundly grateful. You changed my life.

I have to tell you that was my initial perception of the Episcopal Church. I believed that it was a place of radical hospitality and profound inclusivity. Ordained women were accepted and gay and lesbian people were mainstream—that’s what I thought. Imagine my surprise when I learned otherwise.

Imagine. That is actually what I invite you to do now—imagine. I want you to imagine the Kingdom of God, the Commonwealth of God. Imagine what you want the Episcopal Church to be. Imagine that place of radical hospitality and profound inclusivity. Imagine the table in the Kingdom of God.

Who’s breaking bread together? Who’s sitting at that table next to you?

Fill that table with your heroes, with your loved ones who have died, the people that you like—oh, and the ones you dislike, they’re there too, because it’s the Kingdom of God—God’s kingdom, not yours.

Imagine the kingdom of God—that table—the bread you’ll break, the stories you’ll tell, the dishes every single one of you will wash together.

Imagine. William Blake, the 18th century poet said that “Imagination is evidence of the divine.”

Imagine the kingdom of God in your community. We see bits and pieces and slices of it all the time. Imagine what it would look like full time.

Here are some snippets of where I’ve seen it throughout our church.

Imagine, if you will, the joy and delight on the faces of a lesbian couple who on their 15th anniversary receive a card congratulating them—from a Japanese-

a breakfast talk by Bonnie Perry

American couple in their 80s who were married at that church 50 years before.

Imagine.

Imagine a church on the verge of closing, a matriarch, her two sisters and her daughter having given everything they have to keep the place afloat. Imagine the bishop coming to tell them it's over and in the course of the conversation realizing that the church where her daughter was married and her son was buried won't be around for her to be buried from. When that sank in, imagine the matriarch saying, "Wow—I guess we really have died."

And imagine letting that settle over the room and then the wisdom and vision of the bishop saying, "You know, as Christians we have a belief about that. If you died you can rise. The problem is when you're dead and you think you're alive."

Imagine that congregation, being raised from the dead and, seven years later, when the woman died, imagine having her memorial service on a Sunday Morning at 10 o'clock—during the main worship service—with an overflowing crowd including people who had never met her and yet knew that the parish existed because of her.

Imagine.

Can you imagine a girl being baptized at age eight and, three years later, her father dying and the church gathering to bury him. Two years after that, the same young woman being confirmed, with a mentor so truly connected to her life that, when that young woman's mom became ill, she stayed with her mentor until her mom recovered.

Then, in a moment of teenage carousing, it was the mentor she called to drive her home. It was the church and her mentor she turned to when her mom got remarried and she was unsure of the whole thing.

"Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support this person in her new life in Christ?"

"We will."

Imagine a woman, after having seen Gene Robinson interviewed on 'Good Morning America,' getting into her car and driving over to the local Episcopal church—a church she had driven past countless times without stopping—and imagine her pulling up in the parking lot, knocking on the church door, asking to see a priest. And when the priest appears, saying to her, "I want to be a part of the church that chooses someone like Gene Robinson to be a bishop. Can I take Communion this Sunday?"

Imagine

Can you imagine the kingdom of God. Can you imagine a church that is active, vibrant and alive, a church that takes seriously its ability to make use of multimedia resources to help us see the holy in our midst? Every week during Lent, instead of reading the psalm, their eyes and ears are treated to a prayer rich with images and music, prompting them to encounter God's work in the world. Visuals just like the ones we've been seeing during noonday prayers.

Can you imagine the installation of a dean, followed by a neighborhood block party and barbecue, bringing together a spectrum of the city to dance in the streets as one?

Can you imagine a New Year's Eve when 300...400...500 people from the community are lined up outside a congregation's door, waiting to bring in the New Year by walking a labyrinth?

Can you imagine a small anticultural parish raising a boatload of money to send their priest and a parishioner—who happens to be an African-American and a doctor—to west Africa to offer medical attention at an Anglican mission?

Imagine a hard-living homeless man—in various stages of sobriety—being the first one to hug a newly ordained priest and the entire congregation standing around rejoicing.

Can you imagine, my friends, the slices of the kingdom of God in our midst?

It is the notion, the hope, the faintest tendril of smoke, that our church may be a place of radical hospitality and profound inclusivity, that keeps us going.

It's why I believe we're all here because we've all felt at one point or another that sense of profound love that includes us and transforms us.

We're here this morning—the Episcopal Women's Caucus and friends—not because we enjoy beating our heads against the bureaucratic walls of the church but because we can imagine the kingdom of God—God's commonwealth.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is calling all of us to create and proclaim a church of radical hospitality and profound inclusivity, a church where there are no outsiders.

We can imagine it.

We can see it

With God and each other, we can make it so.

Amen

Across the Country, Editorials Weigh in on Episcopalian Convention

by Jan Nunley, ENS

“Looking at the vast collection of coverage this church has been getting,” Dean George Werner told the Episcopal Church’s House of Deputies in remarks on the last day of General Convention, “this Sunday may be one of the greatest if not the best missionary Sundays in the history of the church.”

Judging from Sunday editorials, stories, and online sermons, Werner wasn’t far off. If you put the words “Episcopal” and “gay” into the powerful Google News search engine on the Sunday after convention adjourned, you could easily come up with more than 5,000 “hits” in a quarter of a second, in online editions of newspapers ranging from the *New York Times* to the *Taipei Times*.

And the reactions ranged just as widely.

The *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, hometown newspaper of General Convention’s host city, featured half a dozen op-ed pieces both lauding and lamenting what the visitors had done.

“Indeed, the Church has been shaken this week. It was shaken when the Church acted to change its views of slavery, and it was shaken when the church acted to change its views on the role of women,” wrote Bishop James Jelinek. “I trust that a living God will once again stand to tell us we are beloved, and how much He longs for us to be one. The response is up to us.”

“...The Episcopal Church, to its credit, has courageously faced up to a question that carries considerable risk to its temporal well-being,” said the lead editorial, entitled “Episcopalians: An enriched debate on homosexuality.” “Our point is not to comment on the propriety of a religious body’s beliefs, but to express admiration for the American church’s robust discussion on a topic so concurrent with secular strains.”

Retired Episcopal priest Anthony Morley commented that “Episcopalians can take credit for keeping focus on how people should live and love together, rather than just on sex alone. But they and everyone else need to remember that religion is about the whole of life.”

“Episcopalians’ inability to defend core doctrine suggests that mainline American churches are losing their theological moorings, and increasingly falling prey to the prevailing winds of secular culture,” countered Katherine Kersten, senior fellow at the Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis, in “Gospel of inclusion shortchanges scripture.” “The gospel of inclu-

sion preaches a reconstructed, therapeutic Jesus, who accepts us exactly as we are. Traditional Christianity, however, holds that Jesus calls us to repentance of sins, and to transformation in accordance with God’s will.”

Even an editorial on Minnesota politics cited the controversy as an example of how “spin has replaced fact.” “Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly did a segment last week on New Hampshire’s new gay Episcopal bishop and the pornographic Website ‘that he founded.’ It was a flat-out lie, but no

“This Sunday may be one of the greatest...missionary Sundays in the history of the church.”

one seemed to care,” said the unsigned editorial.

Further afield, some editorial writers took potshots while others lofted praises. In the *Chicago Sun-Times*, columnist Mark Steyn, describing himself as “an adopted New Hampshireite,” referred to Robinson as “the most celebrated symbol of Granite State manhood...the Great Gay Face.”

“If Bishop Robinson feels God working invisibly in him during gay sex, good luck to him. In older times, he and his partner would have set up their own church founded on the principle thereof,” Steyn wrote. “But back then the Episcopal Church still understood itself to be part of the Kingdom of God, not a federation of self-esteeming cantons where a sacrament is whatever turns you on.”

“...Now, the undisciplined want their own leaders who not only say they understand human frailty, but who have embraced it and use [it] as a platform for leadership in the church,” wrote Yolanda Henderson in the *Leaf-Chronicle* in Clarksville, Tennessee. “But as leaders of the flock, your path comes with expectations that cannot give way to political correctness... Perhaps a man’s greatest work is done when he remains in the congregation — encouraging others in their trials and taking time to restrain his own.”

“The angry reaction to the Episcopal Church’s recent brave decision to appoint an openly gay man as a bishop shows again how often religion follows when it should lead,” Presbyterian Bill Tammeus wrote in the *Kansas City Star*. “Religion, while honoring its valid traditions, should help people live fuller lives of love and service. That’s what the Episcopal Church has done by making Gene Robinson a bishop. That decision reflects what is best and most healthy about religion, whether

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Episcopal Conservatives Call for Action Against General Convention

After two days of hearing speakers denounce actions of the 74th General Convention, call for intervention by other Anglican primates in the American church, and advise redirection of funds by individuals and parishes, the majority in a gathering of some 2600 Episcopalians and others signed on to "A Place to Stand: A Call to Action" at a special meeting in Dallas, sponsored by the American Anglican Council (AAC) and Christ Episcopal Church of Plano and held October 7-9. Signed copies were to be presented to the special meeting of the primates in London.

The document repudiates both General Convention's acceptance of the election of a gay priest to be bishop coadjutor of New Hampshire, and passage of a resolution recognizing same-sex blessings as part of the church's common life.

It demands that the leadership of the Episcopal Church "repent of and reverse the unbiblical and schismatic actions of the General Convention" and promises to redirect financial resources "that support the unrighteous actions" of General Convention.

It also appeals to the primates to discipline bishops who supported the two resolutions, and to "realign" or effectively replace the current structures and governance of the Episcopal Church with a new body reflecting conservatives' values.

At the meeting's final session, the declaration was read aloud in the manner of the Prayer Book's baptismal covenant, as participants were asked, "Do you so affirm?" and responded, "I do."

The AAC's "A Place to Stand" meeting, in the weeks months before General Convention, grew from a modest gathering of like-minded leaders at a prominent parish in the Dallas suburb of Plano to a conference hosting several thousand, fueled by conservative outrage over the church's refusal to repudiate all homosexual conduct. Most see that refusal as a rejection of clear Biblical teaching, though their opponents say it's a matter of differing interpretations of the Bible's few passages dealing with the subject.

Security was tight for the conference. No one was allowed inside the meeting without a conference badge. In order to get one, non-media participants paid a fee of \$125 and were required to sign the AAC statement of faith, also entitled "A Place to Stand," drafted by John Rodgers, former dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry and now a bishop of the dissident Anglican Mission in America. That meant that many interested observers were turned away, including a delegation of two bishops and two priests asked to at-

tend by Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold and House of Deputies president George Werner.

Executive Council member Dr. Louie Crew, denied media credentials by conference organizers, came anyway as part of an alternative "hospitality suite" run by dioceses and groups that favored the actions of General Convention. Crew said he was confronted in the hotel by an AAC "security officer," a reserve policeman in a Dallas suburb, and ordered not to engage conference attendees in conversation. The officer said his orders came from "officials of the AAC." The incident is reportedly under administrative review by the officer's supervisors.

"This is not an official meeting," declared the Rev. David Roseberry, rector of Christ Church, who resigned as a deputy and walked out of General Convention after the Robinson vote in August. "We've had those who have tried to make it an official meeting by sending representatives or observers and we have said, no thanks. You are not delegates, you are not deputies—you are bearers, bearers because you bear the burden of this hour."

"We've been clear with those who cannot sign the statement for whatever reason that they are welcome to join us for dinner, for tonight's service, but our proceedings are ours," Roseberry added. "We must be free to have a family meeting without having to defend or explain our beliefs to the person sitting next to us."

In his opening address, Anderson strove to portray the gathering as a diverse one. To a crowd that seemed largely white and middle-aged, he said, "We have not been as effective as we wish in getting our message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Anglican tradition to several different communities.

"We welcome people of many orientations," he added. "Our members in the AAC and those of us here do include gay and straight and ex-gay people who are committed to a biblically moral life."

Anderson's introduction was followed by a series of speakers presenting their take on the events of the 74th General Convention. Diane Knippers, president of the Institute for Religion and Democracy, began by laying responsibility for the church's direction at the feet of its leadership, composed of the "upper middle class American elites" of the Baby Boom generation whom she said owed their moral worldview to a "depressingly dated" 1960s "free-love mentality."

The Rev. Kevin Martin, director of Vital Church Ministries at the Plano parish, said that "the language

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of mission was replaced by political correctness” at General Convention.

Speaking of his experience in the House of Bishops, Bishop Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh, AAC first vice president and chairman of the AAC bishops network, characterized it as “absurdity.” “Our leadership were deaf to one another, deaf to the Word, deaf to the tradition, deaf to the Communion. And we were deaf to each other,” he said. “In our debates we talked past each other all the time.”

On the second day of the meeting, speakers addressed the two issues most pressing for the gathering: the proposed intervention by the primates, and what to do about redirecting energies for mission and funds for programs. Bishop Robert Duncan told the gathering he expects the primates to come down hard on ECUSA, demanding repentance and reversal of General Convention decisions on sexuality—but if they don’t, he predicted, the Anglican Communion will split in two, with the “Western” provinces of North America, Britain and Australia in one, and the “global South” African, Latin American and Asian Anglicans in the other. The latter would eventually recognize the AAC’s network of “confessing” American churches as their own.

After lunch, another panel advised participants on alternative ways to do mission, ministry and stewardship. “Brothers and sisters, we are not leaving Anglicanism. We are Anglicanism,” said the Rev. James B. Simons, rector of St. Michael’s of the Valley in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, to applause. “We need to rethink and move in a new direction and find a new way, a way which values repentance as well as liberation,

conversion as well as tolerance, and which understands that a therapeutic model of ministry is worthless without the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.”

The Rev. John Guernsey, rector of All Saints in Dale City, Virginia, presented what he called a theological justification for redirecting funds and mission energies away from the national Episcopal church.

“Is there an unconditional demand in Scripture that Episcopalians give to those who have overturned biblical authority and faith and order?” Guernsey asked. “I suggest that there is no such mandate.”

The Rev. Ruth Urban of St. Peter’s by the Lake in Brandon, Mississippi, directed the group to five areas of need to which their offerings might be redirected, including the AAC, a list of AAC-affiliated ministries, various overseas needs, church planting in “revisionist” dioceses, and evangelism.

In the final session, conference participants heard letters of greeting from various groups and churches, including the Vatican’s Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, writing on behalf of Pope John Paul II and assuring them of “heartfelt prayers” for the meeting. The National Association of Evangelicals and the Fourth National Evangelical Anglican Congress also weighed in with supportive letters.

According to organizers, the conference drew a total of 2,672 participants, including 46 bishops—24 from the Episcopal Church—799 priests, 46 deacons, and 103 seminarians. People from 600 parishes in every state and diocese attended. Some 200 congregations out of the 7,347 in the Episcopal Church actually belong to the AAC, with another 300 “supporters.”]

The Presiding Bishop’s Statement on AAC

My initial response to the meeting of the American Anglican Council just ending is that, regardless of what has been said or concluded, those gathered in Dallas are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Baptism establishes an indissoluble bond between those who are baptized and the Risen Christ. So too baptism binds us together in such a way that we cannot say to one another “I have no need of you.”

It therefore concerns me deeply when Christians use inflammatory rhetoric when speaking of one another or issue ultimatums. In such a climate, mutual pursuit of ways to build up rather than tear down is made more difficult, and the vast deposit of faith upon which we all agree is obscured. At the same time, we must acknowledge and respect our brothers and sisters who feel alienated by certain actions of the recent General Convention. We must take seriously their grief and anger and seek as best we can to stand with them.

I would like to add one further thought. I have just returned from giving a retreat to a group of Episcopalians engaged in social service ministries within the United States and Latin America. They are working to transform the world, sometimes person by person. This is the ministry of reconciliation to which all persons of faith are called, and it is the mission of the Episcopal Church today and the primary focus of most of its members. Division and splintering, while much in the news, are not the spirit which gives life to our church.

In a letter I sent last week to bishops of the Episcopal Church I expressed my hope that the reconciling energy of the divine compassion may flow through our church and our Anglican Communion and witness to a way of being that gives hope to a world so in need of love. This continues to be my hope.

The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold

Three Days in Dallas

A Statement by the Episcopal Women's Caucus, Integrity, and Other Concerned Observers

During these three days in Dallas, the American Anglican Council has made it clear that it is bent on destroying the Episcopal Church unless it can remake it in its own image. This comes as little surprise. The foundations and individuals who fund the AAC, and who subsidized this conference, have no interest in the health or integrity of churches. Their track record makes clear that their aim is to discredit or destroy those who oppose them in America's political and cultural debates.

Many faithful Episcopalians oppose in good conscience the action taken on majority votes by the democratically elected members of our General Convention. But we would not find ourselves in this highly polarized situation were it not for the millions of dollars poured into the AAC and similar organizations by the likes of the Scaife, Bradley, Olin and Coors foundations, which have underwritten so much of the agenda of the radical right. That Howard Ahmanson, heir to a savings and loan fortune, a proponent of teaching creationism in our schools, and formerly an advocate of replacing the American legal system with "biblical law" is the AAC's most generous financial supporter should give even the most conservative Episcopalians reason for pause.

While the AAC's willingness to destroy the church if they could not take it over was predictable, the extent of its recklessness was not. In a speech on Tuesday Bishop Robert Duncan made clear that if Rowan Williams the archbishop of Canterbury does not bend to his will, Duncan and his allies will attempt a "realignment" of the Anglican Communion which would inflict tremendous pain on just about everyone except Robert Duncan and his allies.

In this new alignment, the AAC claims, a handful of American dioceses and a number of Anglican

provinces from Africa, Asia and South America, would break away from the existing church and constitute themselves as the new embodiment of Anglicanism in the world.

This plan would set off years of legal and ideological battling in the many provinces that would remain within the existing church. But more to the point, it would utterly devastate those provinces that chose to join forces with Duncan and the AAC. Eight provinces almost certain to remain within the existing Communion provide more than 80 percent of its budget. Much of that money advances the church's mission in the developing world. Individual western churches provide more support to churches in Africa and elsewhere than any of the dioceses currently aligned with the AAC.

The American church has made it clear that its support of the gospel in the global south is not restricted to dioceses that agree with it on issues of homosexuality and women's ordination. But expecting it to remain in partnerships with bishops who are promoting schism in the United States may be expecting too much.

Conservative Episcopalians in this country, and conservative bishops abroad need to make a prayerful decision about whether they want to be aligned with the radical right. Whatever their convictions about Gene Robinson or the blessing of same sex unions, they need to examine whether this radical course of action, advanced on behalf of ideologically-driven secular foundations with no interest in the well being of the church, is wise, whether it is compassionate and whether it is Christian. Anglicanism was born in the conflict of the Reformation. There has always been room for differing views and vigorous debate as we strive to discern the leading of the Spirit. We will not sacrifice our tradition to please a well-financed few.

“Anglicanism was born in the conflict of the Reformation. There has always been room for differing views and vigorous debate as we strive to discern the leading of the Spirit. We will not sacrifice our tradition to please a well-financed few.”

Primates Meeting at Lambeth

The primates of the Anglican Communion emerged October 16 from a closed two-day meeting at London's Lambeth Palace, headquarters of the archbishop of Canterbury, with a strong statement on what they perceive as threats to unity.

The special meeting was called by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams to address "controversial decisions by the Diocese of New Westminster" in Canada to bless same-sex unions, and the confirmation of the election of an openly gay bishop by the Episcopal Church's General Convention in August.

"These actions threaten the unity of our own Communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ's Church, our mission and witness, and our relations with other faiths, in a world already confused in areas of sexuality, morality and theology, and polarize Christian opinion," the statement said.

The statement said that the actions in Canada and the US "could be perceived to alter unilaterally the teaching of the Anglican Communion...Whilst we recognize the juridical autonomy of each province in our Communion, the mutual interdependence of the provinces means that none has authority unilaterally to substitute an alternative teaching as if it were the teaching of the entire Anglican Communion." Such decisions "jeopardize our sacramental fellowship with each other."

The 37 primates representing the provinces or autonomous churches of worldwide Anglicanism argued

that "each province needs to be aware of the possible effects of its interpretation of Scripture on the life of other provinces in the Communion." The statement made it clear that the primates reaffirmed the resolutions from the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops stating that homosexual behavior is contrary to Scripture and that blessing of same-sex relationships was not acceptable.

At the same time the statement pointed to another resolution that calls on the church "to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and to assure them that they are loved by God" and full members of the Body of Christ.

The statement also warned that the consecration of the Rev. V. Gene Robinson as bishop in the Diocese of New Hampshire would signal that the church has "reached a crucial and critical point," one that could place the future of the Anglican Communion itself in jeopardy. "This [pulling away] will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and further issues as provinces have to decide in consequence whether they can remain in communion with provinces that choose not to break communion with the Episcopal Church USA," said the primates.

The primates asked the archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a commission "to consider his own role in maintaining communion within and between prov-

Pope Tells Archbishop Gay Priests a Threat

Pope John Paul II has warned the new Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, that "new and serious difficulties have arisen" in relations between the two Churches.

In what correspondents say was an indirect reference to homosexual clergy, the Pope told Archbishop Rowan Williams that Christians had to be protected from he called erroneous and misguided interpretations of the faith.

"These difficulties are not all of a merely disciplinary nature; some extend to essential matters of faith and morals," Pope John Paul II said.

There was however some progress on another stumbling block in Catholic-Anglican relations. In a prepared statement Dr. Williams said he would respond to the Pope's invitation for suggestions about the future of Papal primacy.

The 15-minute private audience was the first time the two men had met. They exchanged gifts

and Dr. Williams wore the Episcopal ring given to one of his predecessors by the late Pope Paul VI, and a gold cross which the present Pope sent him on his enthronement earlier this year.

On Friday, Cardinal Walter Kasper told Vatican radio he had expressed "concern" to Dr. Williams on the issue of homosexual priests.

He said it was "not only an internal problem of the Anglican Communion, but it also impinges on our ties". Analysts say the words are likely to add to Dr. Williams' difficulties on the issue.

The heads of the Catholic and Anglican Churches first met face-to-face in 1960, and this has since become a regular event. A spokesman for Lambeth Palace said: "The fact that there are now routine visits is something that would not have been the case even 20 years ago.

"It is a very recent thawing of relations between the two Churches."

Story from BBC NEWS:

inces when grave difficulties arise.” The statement concluded, “It is clear that recent controversies have opened debates within the life of our Communion which will not be resolved until there has been a lengthy process of prayer, reflection and substantial work in and alongside the commission.”

In comments at a closing press conference, Williams said that “what we have achieved has been hard won but we found the will to keep working together.” Noting that the meeting “has certainly been anything but easy and not without pain,” he added that “it has been honest and open and I hope we have grown in some real shared understanding as a result.”

Williams said that “we have grown closer together rather than, as many people predicted, further apart during this meeting”. Yet he admitted that “issues around homosexuality will continue to be difficult and divisive for the Anglican Communion, as they are for many Christians. It will continue to cause pain and an-

ger and misunderstanding and resentment all around.” Williams also said that the final statement “renders talk of winners and losers irrelevant.”

Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold agreed with Williams that it was “a difficult but truthful meeting. We work in very different contexts,” he said, so what may be good news for one province can turn out to be bad news for another province.”

Underscoring the comments by Williams, Griswold said that “sexuality issues are far from settled” but that “the Anglican Communion is not static but dynamic” in the way it addresses issues.

Archbishop Drexel Gomez of the West Indies, a leading spokesman for the conservative primates, was asked at the press conference if he thought the statement would fall apart if Robinson were consecrated. He said that “we will follow the process” and wait for the commission report. “That’s what I expect to do.”

Archbishop Robin Eames’ Address to the Media

The media attention has been overwhelming and it was necessary to hold a press briefing at 4pm in the courtyard of Lambeth Palace where an unscripted statement was delivered by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Robin Eames, on behalf of the primates meeting. The full text of the statement follows:

“I think we wanted to give you an update on how things are going. We are now seven hours into the meeting. The meeting has combined worship, prayer, bible study and discussion and, at the present time, the Primates are all here, bar one who just has a problem unrelated to the subject or anything like that.

“We are telling the story of how the Provinces of the Anglican Communion have reacted to the developments that the Archbishop of Canterbury thought necessary to bring to our attention. Those stories represent the cultural differences right across our Communion, the reaction the Primates have had in their own countries and nations, and also the opportunity to show that there is an underlying anxiety right across the board to maintain the Anglican Communion.

“I have to say that in all my experience of these meetings, I have never attended or been involved with one where there is such openness, frankness and honesty. And also, one where each and every Primate has been given the opportunity to respond in his own way to the question that has brought us together. I have also to say to you, that the anxiety to maintain the Anglican Communion, contrary to many of the predictions which your profession may well have shown to us earlier on, I

have to say to you that that was unfounded because there is a tremendous anxiety to maintain the Anglican Communion on a basis of collegiality, cooperation and the common faith.

“Now, as I say, we are seven hours into the meeting. The programme is permitting the telling of those stories, as we put it. And I cannot tell you any more at this stage of the agenda, simply to say that we are still at that point. How long it will take, I wish I could tell you, because seven hours is quite a long time of intensity and I am sure you will understand, having waited out here in the wind, that seven hours is seven hours! But I would like to stress once more, that the Archbishop of Canterbury who is chairing this meeting is very anxious indeed that every possible opportunity is given to individual Primates to express the concerns that they have, which are varied, which in some cases are totally coloured by the culture of that country. But above all else, it is a very open and a very, very serious meeting.

“Now, I want to get back to what is happening. I’ll take three questions and I’m not having any favourites!”

Question: Will this eventually come to a vote? How will this be resolved?

Answer: I can’t honestly answer that, because at the moment, it’s a case of telling the reactions, telling the stories. But if I were to hazard a guess, I would say it’s moving towards a consensus situation. Now what form

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that consensus will take obviously won't become obvious—if it is to become obvious—until tomorrow. But certainly, at the moment, it's very, very much an honest expression of concerns.

Question: Are you a betting man? Could you let us know what you think the odds are of coming to a consensus that keeps the Church together?

Answer: In Northern Ireland terms, I'm known quite simply as the divine optimist! And I don't know whether that classifies me as a betting man or not, but I would say I am optimistic that the Anglican Communion will emerge from this stronger than it has ever been. What I would also like to predict is that there will be much

greater honesty than perhaps we have had up until now. *Question: What is the next stage once you have heard the stories and the reactions.*

Answer: Well I can answer that. The next stage is to reflect on what we have heard from the various Provinces. The process has simply been one after the other going through the 37 or so provinces. And obviously we want now the chance to reflect on what we have heard from our colleagues. So the next stage will be building on the current session that we are having.

“Now can you be good enough to let me go back because, as I said it's a very, very open session and I would like to thank you for your patience.” [ACNS]

International Reaction to Robinson Consecration: a Spectrum of Opinion

The November 2 consecration of the Rev. V. Gene Robinson as bishop coadjutor in the Diocese of New Hampshire brought swift and varied reactions from Anglican leaders around the world—and dire warnings that the future of the Anglican Communion is in jeopardy. At the same time, it was evident that not everyone was prepared to rush into schism.

A statement, issued by Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria “for and [on] behalf of the working committee for the Primates of the Global South,” said that they were “appalled” that the Episcopal Church USA “ignored the heartfelt plea of the Communion not to proceed with the scheduled consecration” and the “clear and strong warning of its detrimental consequences for the unity of the Communion.”

As a result, “A state of impaired communion now exists both within a significant part of ECUSA and between ECUSA and most of the provinces within the Communion.” The statement urged the archbishop of Canterbury to “bring forward urgently a mechanism to guarantee adequate provision of episcopal oversight” for parishes and clergy within ECUSA and the Diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada.

In a radio interview, Akinola said, “We can no longer claim to be in the same Communion. We cannot go to them and they cannot come to us. We will not share communion. We have come to the end of the road.”

When pressed about what such cutting of ties meant, he said that the Kenyans would not accept any support from the Episcopal Church, including missionaries. “The devil has clearly entered the church. God cannot be mocked,” he said.

As a columnist in the *Times of London* pointed out recently, “The Anglican Communion has been out of communion with itself since at least 1989 when the American Church appointed Barbara Harris as its first

woman bishop. What's one more schism among such friends.”

Archbishop Gregory Venables of the Province of the Southern Cone in South America added his voice. “The United States have declared independence. I think the chances of consensus are very slim. We are having a time of separation and thinking. We are not saying it is a divorce yet.”

Archbishop Peter Jensen, who branded Robinson as a “bishop of disunity,” said that he expects two distinct strands of Anglicanism to develop as a result of the sexuality controversies.

In New Zealand, Bishop Thomas Brown said that, while he was opposed to the consecration, the church should not dwell on its divisions. “The church is not so much a place to stand and divide as it is a place to love and unite.”

According to Archbishop Drexel Gomez of the Province of the West Indies, a majority of Anglicans would be willing to sacrifice their financial support rather than accept the consecration of Robinson.

Funding agencies have made it very clear, however, that support is not conditioned by theological agreement. Akinola has warned of a financial backlash “against the financially weak church in Africa” if its opposition was too loud.

The issue was addressed at a recent meeting of the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA) in Nairobi. Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold sent a letter challenging rumors that the Episcopal Church “has threatened African primates with withholding our support. The Episcopal Church has no ideological litmus test for overseas partners and has ‘punished’ no one for holding different opinions of church order.”

The Rev. James Calloway, director of grants
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What the Church Needs Now....
a sermon about the recent primates meeting
by Michael W. Hopkins

It was a strange day this past Thursday, waiting in the sun and the cold wind along the Thames River outside Lambeth Palace, the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury. We were a mixture of press and those of us waiting to react to what the 37 men meeting inside would have to say about the future of the Anglican Communion. Passersby could tell something was going on, although it was clear to me that most of them had no idea, and found the scene a bit odd.

Between giving interviews and pacing, I found myself fantasizing more than once during the day that I was one of them, blissfully ignorant of the goings on across the road in the palace. What would life be like to have no more than a vague awareness of the Church at all? Sometimes I think I would end up feeling closer to God than farther apart.

I guess one could say I was fading in and out of melancholy, ready at a moment's notice to be disappointed again, knowing that the best of what the men across the road could say was that the Episcopal Church was in its autonomous right to ordain lesbian and gay people, even though it caused the larger Church great pain and was not acceptable.

A priest from Minnesota I know and his wife stopped by to see if there was any news. They just happened to be in London on holiday. As if sensing exactly my mood he said something like, "This must be hard for you." I put on my brave, in control, face. "I gave that up long ago," I lied. "They can say whatever they want. This Sunday I'll be with my people around our Altar and all will be well. Nothing will have changed for us."

Now that last part wasn't exactly a lie. Truth to tell, I could not possibly have kept up my public witness over the past seven years without having this place, you, this Altar, to come home to. It is what has restored and sustained me over and over again.

But I have needed restoring each time I have done these things, even coming back from the last Gen-

eral Convention when we had taken a big step forward. Even now coming back from this last meeting where things went about as well as they could have.

You see even in these steps forward I experience a diminishment of my humanity, and a betrayal of the baptismal promise of human dignity. I am not as a gay man treated fairly by this Church, and my own honesty and integrity continues to be used against me. It was not lost on me that in all the pain experienced all over the Church acknowledged by the Primates, the pain of an entire class of people who continue to be treated as less than human received no word. No one said it was wrong, or that they even had "regret," that one of their own, the Archbishop of Nigeria, had publicly called gay and lesbian people "less than dogs."

In one sense the continuing "miracle" of Anglicanism happened this past week. Unity held, a statement was made in which both sides of a disagreement could find something to agree with and something to disagree with. I myself stood in front of reporters and told them that I could live with it. (It still amazes me that reporters care what this kid from the boonies of Western New York actually thinks about anything). I told them it was a good thing, and the hope of unity was preserved again. I wasn't "spinning" or even lying. I believe what I said.

And yet . . . do you understand what it costs to say these things—even to believe them—when you are talking about the Church remaining in a place where it is theologically correct for some to also believe that your relationship with God is bogus? That you are simply not worthy of the fullness of life because of your supposedly chosen lifestyle?

In all the honesty among the 37 men last week, where was that honesty? We were told that they spent most of the first day telling stories about how the decisions of this past summer were affecting their provinces. I'm glad they were telling stories. I'm personally

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about gay people and not with them.
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A Sermon on the Primates' Meeting

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convinced that God most has a shot at telling us and showing us good news when we tell stories. But who was there to tell my story? Or, for that matter, who was there to tell the stories of the community of lesbian and gay Christians in Uganda that Integrity has supported for the past three years, whose only "conversation" with the church has been to receive total condemnation and ostracism? And who was there to tell a story with a feminine touch? No one.

They committed themselves once again to conversation with gay and lesbian persons, as they did five years ago at the Lambeth Conference, but they have yet to have one as a body and I know of only one of the 38 provinces who had not had a significant open dialogue prior to Lambeth 1998 who has had one since. One. Brazil. Gentlemen, you need to prove to me that you are not bald-faced liars.

They set up a Commission to talk over the next 12 months, the only practical thing to come out of their statement, because some talking needs to be done. But what is the Commission going to talk about? Enhanced responsibility for the Archbishop of Canterbury. The potential authority to intervene in the affairs of a member province. They set up a sure process to talk about their authority. No process to carry on the conversations with gay and lesbian people they have promised time and time again. And you expect us to take you seriously? To cede you moral authority over us just because you say so?

The saddest moment of the two days for me came on the first day when Archbishop of Ireland Robin Eames briefed the press on how things were going so far. "I believe the Anglican Communion will emerge stronger from our time together." Language like this was repeated at the final press conference as well. Here we have a problem.

I am, as I have said to you on more occasions than any of us can remember, that I am an Episcopalian and an Anglican on the cellular level. That means, among other things, that I have enormous respect for bishops; I consider them to be essential to the church's life. But God save us from bishops who confuse themselves with the Church. There is a fundamental problem when 37 men, important as they are, confuse themselves with the Anglican Communion. And we, of course, feed into that when we wait outside for hours

on end for them to speak.

And they want more authority? What I want from them is not more authority. I want some humility. I want some very clear consistent signals, in action, that they understand their ministry to be as servants to the People of God. They will never have any real authority until they truly take on Jesus' priestly mantle of service.

I can justify this little tirade this morning quite easily from the readings we just heard. The call to humility rings through and through.

Who is this who darkens counsel without words of knowledge? (I should have carried that around on a piece of poster board outside Lambeth Palace). . . . Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant.

This is the way of Jesus, the (dare I say) clear teaching of Scripture. This clear teaching does not shine through the statement from the 37 men last Thursday. And their actions over the past five years have too frequently been a repudiation of it.

It is a repudiation of servant leadership to talk about gay people and not with them. It is a repudiation of servant leadership to set up a mechanism to talk about enhancing your own authority and not to fulfill a promise to listen that is now five years old. It is a repudiation of servant leadership to say only how you will negatively receive Gene Robinson's ministry in the future and not also to trip over yourself to give him public respect as a brother in Christ.

If the Anglican Communion is going to put its energy into deciding who does and does not sit at the right hand of power, then I, for one, am prepared to wash my hands of it. What the Church does not need is more authority. What this Church needs is more humility. I'll pray for it for myself first, and Lord knows I need it. But it is also the only thing I believe can save this Communion right now.

For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Have You Seen Our New Website?

come and visit us at

<http://www.ewc-ecusa.org>

or

<http://www.episcopalwomenscaucus.org>

November 2, 2003

The Consecration of Gene Robinson



Now, fast forward from August to November 2 in Durham, New Hampshire, where a crowd estimated at between 2500 and 3500 gathered to hear words the entire Anglican world has been waiting for, some in eager anticipation, others in eager anger:

“Therefore, Father, make Gene a bishop in your Church. Pour out upon him the power of your princely Spirit, whom you bestowed upon your beloved Son Jesus Christ, with whom he endowed the apostles, and by whom your Church is built up in every place, to the glory and unceasing praise of your Name.”

With these words, Gene Robinson was consecrated a bishop, the first honestly gay man to be so consecrated in the Episcopal Church of the USA.

The radical conservatives have part of it right. The church will never be the same again. But this is cause for rejoicing, not schism. This occasion should mark the beginning of the end of the lying, the end of the fear and the shame and the sickness of the closet for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people in our church.

Gene certainly is not the first gay bishop in our

church. He’s just the first who didn’t lie about it, either to himself or to the church.

To paraphrase Muriel Ruykeyser: “What would happen if one gay bishop told the truth about his life? The world would split open.”

To those who rejoice at Gene’s consecration, the world has split open in wonderful ways, making room for people who have been shut out for much too long.

To those who are leveraging their anger at Gene’s consecration into cries for schism, this split-open world is letting in all kinds of people they simply don’t want in “their” church. These privileged white men see their hold on the church slipping away. They are desperate to hold on to what they see as their entitlement.

But on November 2, as I watched the newly consecrated Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson giving communion to the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris – the former “final crisis” of the conservatives – I knew I was looking at the future of our church.

And I rejoiced.

Note: This story by Katie Sherrod contains some material from Episcopal News Service

Amid Cheers and Protests, New Hampshire Consecrates a New Bishop

The Diocese of New Hampshire—and the Episcopal Church—has a new bishop. The Rev. Gene Robinson was consecrated Sunday afternoon, November 2, in a three-hour service at the Whittemore Center at the University of New Hampshire in Durham.

A congregation estimated at almost 3,000 braved the fall drizzle, and submitted to intense security procedures behind cordons of police, to join in consecrating the Anglican Communion's first openly gay bishop. In a glorious mixture of music, wise and humorous words addressed to the new bishop, the church welcomed the 993rd bishop in the American succession.

Yet the controversy surrounding Robinson's overwhelming election last June, and the debate at this summer's General Convention before he received the consents of the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, seeped into the service.

As the liturgy unfolded, everyone waited for the moment early in the service, after testimonials that Robinson had been "duly and lawfully elected," when Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold asks if anyone in the congregation "know any reason why we should not proceed."

As several groups came forward to make formal protests, Griswold asked the congregation to listen with "courtesy and respect" and avoid any demonstrations for or against the statements.

The Rev. Earle Fox of Pittsburgh said, "It breaks

my heart to be here." He said that Christians must condemn homosexual behavior and then he began to describe that behavior in lurid detail. Griswold asked him to "spare us the details."

Then Meredith Harwood, a parishioner from St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Ashland, New Hampshire, said that "to press forward with this consecration will be to turn our backs on Almighty God. This is the defiant and divisive act of a deaf church. The clear teaching of Holy Scripture in both testaments without exception is that sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong for the people of God, yet we are deaf to the Bible. The vast majority of Anglicans worldwide have told us not to take this step which many of them see as a scandal yet we are deaf to their cries. Again and again a significant number of our ecumenical partners have asked us to step back from this plunge into unrighteousness and their words have gone unheeded."

Bishop David Bena of Albany then stepped forward and read a statement signed by 36 bishops who said that "it is impossible to affirm a candidate for bishop and symbol of unity whose very consecration is dividing the whole Anglican Communion... This consecration poses a dramatic contradiction to the historic faith and discipline of the church. We join with the majority of the bishops in the Communion and will not recognize it. We also declare our grief at the actions of those who are engaging in this schismatic act." [to next page]

Gay Bishop's Ordination Voted Top Religion Story of 2003

The nation's leading religion reporters overwhelmingly chose the Episcopal Church's ordination of its first openly gay bishop as the top religion news story of 2003.

Bishop Eugene Robinson's election fueled threats of a schism both in the U.S. Episcopal Church and throughout the Anglican Communion, and spurred emergency meetings within the church.

More than 80 percent of the journalists, who all cover religion in the secular news media, also selected Robinson as their Religion Newsmaker of the Year, beating out Pope John Paul II, deposed Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, and National Council of Churches of Christ head Robert Edgar.

Members of the Religion Newswriters Association ranked 28 news items in a survey conducted Dec. 12 -16, 2003.

The complete rankings of stories, in order are:

1. Episcopal Church approves and then ordains first openly gay bishop, spurring threats of a schism both in the U.S. and throughout the Anglican Communion, and leading to emergency meetings. The bishop of New Westminster Diocese in British Columbia draws criticism for approving same sex unions.

2. Pending war in Iraq splits religious communities; most mainline denominations, led by the National Council of Churches, oppose it, while many evangelicals support it. Religious groups sponsor follow-up relief efforts.

3. Definition of marriage becomes a hot topic as the Massachusetts Supreme Court overturns a gay-marriage ban; a constitutional amendment on marriage is proposed after the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down a ban against sodomy in Texas, and Ontario's highest court legalizes gay marriage.

[Religion Newswriters Association:2003]

And After the Consecration



Griswold then said that, while he welcomed the objections from brothers and sisters, “We’re learning to live the mystery of communion at a deeper level” and the consecration would proceed. He then asked the congregation, “Is it your will that we ordain Gene a bishop” and the response, “That is our will” almost took the roof off the hockey arena.

In his sermon, Bishop Douglas Theuner of New Hampshire, who will retire in March and turn his responsibilities over to Robinson, had a few things to say about the office of bishop. After noting that “no doubt this is the largest gathering of Episcopalians in the history of New Hampshire,” he warned that “the burden you are about to assume is a very heavy one.”

Christ’s whole ministry was dedicated to the outcast and the marginalized, Theuner said. “And his wrath was directed at the religious establishment of his day.” He said that Robinson “will stand as a symbol of unity in a way none of the rest of us can,” in a way not found in the councils of the church before. “Because of your presence, the episcopate will be more a symbol of unity than it has ever been.”

As Robinson stood, Theuner urged him to seek “what I consider the most elusive of all Christian virtues—humility. Don’t let your great gifts set you apart from your brothers and sisters.”

After Robinson had received the symbols of his office, the presiding bishop presented the new bishop to the congregation. Choking for a few moments with the emotion of the moment, Robinson said that the oc-

casation was “not about me—it’s about so many people at the margins. Your presence here today is an invitation to them to move to the center.”

In a plea for reconciliation, Robinson added that “there are many faithful, wonderful Christian people for whom this is a time of great pain, confusion and anger. God is served by our being loving to them.” In reference to the crush of media covering the consecration, Robinson said that “the eyes of the world are upon us. We couldn’t buy this kind of publicity so let’s use it for God. So many people don’t know the love of God so let’s tell them about how God has saved us by reaching out to all who are hungry for God.”

In a statement released from Lambeth Palace, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams said, “It is clear that those who have consecrated Gene Robinson have acted in good faith on their understanding of what the constitution of the American church permits. But the effects of this upon the ministry and witness of the overwhelming majority of Anglicans particularly in the non-western world have to be confronted with honesty.

“The autonomy of Anglican provinces is an important principle. But precisely because we rely on relations more than rules, consultation and interdependence are essential for our health.

“The Primates’ Meeting last month expressed its desire to continue as “a communion where what we hold in common is much greater than that which divides us.” We need now to work very hard to giving

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American Canon Appointed to Post at Oxford Cathedral in England

The Rev. Canon Dr Marilyn McCord Adams was installed at Oxford Cathedral as Regius Professor of Divinity and Canon of the Cathedral on 18 January during Evensong. Canon Adams, an American, was appointed to the prestigious post by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as Oxford is a royal foundation. The Queen's mandate was read at the beginning of the service.

The Rt Revd Fred Borsch, former bishop of Los Angeles, and Mrs Barbara Borsch were present at the service as Los Angeles was Canon Adams' home diocese. At the same service, the Rev. Canon Dr. George Pattison was installed as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity and Canon, a post which was held by Archbishop Rowan Williams.

Anglican Mission in America Announces Policy on Women's Ordination

After an extensive and thorough process of study and reflection the leadership of the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA) has announced its newly adopted policy on the ordination of women.

Archbishops Emmanuel Kolini of Rwanda and Yong Ping Chung of South East Asia, sponsors of the Anglican Mission, have provided the guidance to ordain properly qualified and called women as deacons, but not as priests or bishops.

The decision follows two years of intensive study and input on the part of a special commission chaired by the Rt. Rev. Dr. John Rodgers. Bishop Rodgers, formerly President of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Pittsburgh, indicated that to his knowledge, it is the most extensive study and review of its kind on the issue of women's ordination.

Commission members, who represented a variety of views on the topic, read a large amount of background material, dealt with the biblical texts and considered the best way forward. Along the way a major

document was produced—likely the only one of its kind—outlining the various options, the pros and cons, and the exegesis related to each position. The report was then considered by the leadership of each AMiA congregation, and feedback was received. After this, the findings went to the House of Bishops in Rwanda in early October for their deliberation, and finally to the sponsoring Primates of the Anglican Mission for their decision.

As promised when the Anglican Mission was formed in 2000, the two women who had already been ordained Priests and had affiliated with the AMiA, will be permitted to continue their ministry as priests, serving on staff where called. However, women who seek affiliation with the Anglican Mission from this point on, who are already ordained as priests, will be asked to serve as deacons. Also as promised, women deacons will only be appointed to minister where they are openly received. *[The EWC statement in response to this policy appears on page 1.]*

Nova Scotia Elects Third Woman Bishop in Canada

The diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island has elected a well-known priest and social justice advocate as its suffragan, or assistant, bishop.

Susan Moxley is the diocese's first female bishop and only the third woman ever to be elected to Canada's house of 42 active bishops.

The lay and clergy delegates voted on the five nominee priests: Bishop-elect Moxley led on all ballots, though it took three ballots to elect her by a clear majority in both lay and clergy houses.

Ordained to the diaconate in 1984 and to the priesthood in 1985, Bishop-elect Moxley has a bachelor's and a master's degree in arts from the University of Western Ontario, a master's in psychology

and a Ph.D. in education and psychology from the University of Michigan. She received her master's degree in divinity in 1984 from the Atlantic School of Theology, where she served as a part-time faculty member from 1990-1996.

Bishop-elect Moxley will take up the suffragan position on 1 March 2004, assisting diocesan bishop Fred Hiltz in serving a diocese that comprises more than 300 congregations. She will be ordained and installed March 25, on the Feast of the Annunciation. She is currently rector of St Mark's, Halifax, honorary canon of the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Halifax, and a member of the international Anglican Consultative Council.

[from the Anglican Church of Canada]

New Canon Pastor Appointed at Canterbury Cathedral

The Rev. Clare Edwards has been appointed the new Canon Pastor at Canterbury Cathedral by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams. Canon Edwards has served as Rector of Bletchingley in Surrey since 1995.

She studied for the ministry at Lincoln Theological College and was ordained priest in 1994, having been ordained a Deaconess and then a Deacon since 1986. She is an Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral, has been Rural Dean for Godstone since 1998, and is also the Dean of Women's Ministry for the Diocese of Southwark.

Clare Edwards will take up the new post in early Summer. "It has been a hard decision to leave parish life but I will relish the new opportunities, meet-

ing those who work, worship and visit the Cathedral, as well as those in the wider Diocese" she said earlier today. "I hope to be able to have a part in the conduct of retreats and the spiritual growth of worshippers, and share in the spiritual life of this great Church".

The Dean of Canterbury, the Very Rev. Robert Willis, added, "I am absolutely delighted at the appointment of Canon Clare Edwards to be the Canon Pastor at Canterbury Cathedral. This is a new post and she brings immense gifts from her experience as a parish priest and Rural Dean. We look forward to welcoming her to Canterbury".

Although she has little spare time from all her Church activities, Canon Edwards' hobbies include wind surfing and bell ringing.

Melbourne Anglicans State Their Readiness to Ordain Women as Bishops

Anglicans in Melbourne, Australia, have broken ranks with the rest of the Australian church in approving the immediate ordination of women to the episcopate. The synod meeting took the surprising action even though it was predicted that it would wait for the synod of the national church next October. Instead they voted to consider women for vacant positions regardless of whether the national church approves.

The motion will most likely pit the conservative Diocese of Sydney against Anglicans in Melbourne. "We really do believe that God doesn't want barriers of gender in the priesthood," said the Rev. Charles Sherlock. "We hope we have come up with a proposal

that is phrased in a way that Sydney might let through. They might not support it but they might let it through."

If passed by the national synod the motion would allow each diocese to decide whether it would choose women bishops. Those opposed could then refuse to acknowledge the female bishops but also priests they ordain, further dividing the church.

In Australia about 12 percent of the clergy are women with 262 priests and 154 deacons. Although a motion to allow female bishops was presented to the national synod in 2001 it was withdrawn, despite significant support, because compromise made it unacceptable to both sides.[ENS]

Massachusetts Raises 18 Million to Launch the Barbara C. Harris Center

With a recently awarded \$500,000 grant in hand, the Diocese of Massachusetts is celebrating the successful completion of an \$18.4 million fund-raising campaign for its Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center. The brand-new facility, located near Greenfield, N.H., opened last summer.

The award, announced in November, comes from the Jane's Trust, a local charitable remainder trust. It is designated for financial aid to summer campers. The total project cost of \$18.4 million included \$13.4 million in construction costs, a \$3 million scholarship endowment and a \$2 million operating endowment.

The many-faceted campaign involved more than 160 volunteers working through numerous committees. The campaign represents the most money the Diocese of Massachusetts has ever raised toward a single project, with contributions from each of its nearly 200 parishes, missions and college chaplaincies.

"There was a lot of hard work and lots of people involved," said Bishop M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE, crediting in particular campaign chair Jack Cogan of Cambridge and diocesan chancellor George Kidder of Trinity Church in Concord. "I'm deeply moved by the generosity of people in this diocese."

Church of England Considers Women Bishops, Non-Geographical Province

by Matthew Davies

Several reports in the British press over the past two weeks have suggested the possibility of a third non-geographical province being introduced to the structure of the Church of England in response to the possible ordination of women bishops in the province.

The Rt Rev Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester, England, has chaired the working party on the Theology of Women in the Episcopate since it was created in July 2000, and the culmination of its work has resulted in a report being drafted for consideration. The House of Bishops of the Church of England met this week in the lead up to the annual February gathering of the General Synod in London, and one of the items on their agenda was the discussion of this draft report.

Head of Media Relations for the Church of England, Mr Steve Jenkins, said that the House of Bishops had been asked by the General Synod to produce a

report on the theological issues, considering all possibilities, as a background document to any future debate. "At the end of the report there is a table that represents all possible pastoral arrangements," he said. "At one extreme there is the option of no episcopal oversight, and at the other extreme there is the possibility of a third non-geographical province." The likelihood of one of these extremes being adopted is improbable.

The primary task of the working party has been to identify and examine the theological issues involved in the ordination of women to the episcopate. "It may be...that arising out of this, the working party will also be able to make practical recommendations," said Bishop Michael. "It is...for General Synod to consider the findings of the working party and to make appropriate decisions in the light of such findings."

International Response

for Trinity Church Wall Street, said in a presentation at the CAPA meeting, "We do not believe we have to see eye to eye with you on every issue to work with you around common mission concerns... You don't have to agree with us to be eligible for a Trinity grant."

The swirling controversy places more pressure on a special commission appointed by the archbishop of Canterbury. Archbishop Robin Eames of Ireland, appointed to head the commission—similar to the task he accepted in 1988 when the issue was the ordination of women—was cautiously hopeful. Noting that "we are moving into unknown territory," when asked whether a split was inevitable, he said, "I don't think you can prevent a realignment. I sincerely hope we can prevent what you call a split."

"We're still here, because we looked at ways in which the guidelines could be accepted across the world to maintain the highest possible degree of unity—and I believe we can do it again," he said.

As he has in the past, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of the Province of the Church in Southern Africa struck a much more conciliatory note, offering his congratulations to Robinson and offering prayers for him.

Other voices were delighted with the consecration. Dean Colin Slee of Southwark Cathedral in London said that Anglicans should rejoice that "at last there is an open and honest consecration of a homosexual bishop within the church. There have been many

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before but they have not been honest or open."

"His ministry will inspire lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual Christians with new confidence that we have a full place at the communion table of our Lord," said the Rev. Colin Coward, director of Changing Attitude, a British organization of Anglican bishops, priests and lay people that promotes a more open attitude in the church.

"This consecration is God's way of making the church come to terms with homosexuality," said Christopher Ssenyonjo, a retired Ugandan bishop. "Bishop Robinson did not elect himself, he was elected by others. To me it seems God inspired them to vote that way."

Connecticut Clergy Refuse to Sign Marriage Licenses

Approximately a dozen clergy from Connecticut and Massachusetts were in attendance for an announcement: group of Connecticut clerics have decided to refuse to sign marriage licenses for heterosexual couples until unions between same-sex couples are legally recognized. The announcement of gay union support was not spearheaded by one denomination. The clergy involved in this protest include Unitarian Universalists, a Presbyterian minister, a rabbi, and ministers from the United Church of Christ. Many of the clerics plan to continue officiating weddings, but will leave the signing of the legal document to a justice of the peace.



Aeveternitas

*...Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun
And left the vivid air signed with their honor*

STEPHEN SPENDER

The Right Rev. John M. Burgess 1909-2003

The Rt. Rev. John Melville Burgess, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and the first African-American diocesan bishop in the Episcopal Church U.S.A., died on Sunday, Aug. 24, 2003, in Vineyard Haven. He was 94.

Bishop Burgess stood among the last of the Episcopal Church's great progressive bishops of the 20th century. He was known for his witness for inclusion of racial minorities in church and society and carried out a lifelong ministry of seeking out the welfare of the urban poor, always working to draw his church outside itself. "I just wanted to prove that the Episcopal Church could be relevant to the lives of the poor," he said in a 1992 interview.

John Melville Burgess was born in Grand Rapids MI, on March 11, 1909, the son of Theodore Thomas and Ethel (Beverly) Burgess. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Michigan in 1930 and 1931 and graduated from Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge MA in 1934. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1935.

He began his ordained ministry at his home parish, St. Phillip's Church in Grand Rapids, and was then given charge of the mission church of St. Simon of Cyrene in a community outside of Cincinnati that he described as "the poorest of the poor." From St. Simon's he administered a social services center, medical clinic and day school in an effort to make the church a place that ministered to the whole person.

In August 1945, he married Esther J. Taylor in Fredericton, New Brunswick. An activist in her own right, Mrs. Burgess was arrested and put in jail in 1964 when she refused to leave the Ponce De Leon Motel in St. Augustine, Florida., after being told that she would have to eat in the restaurant kitchen.

Bishop Burgess served as the first denominational chaplain at Howard University in Washington DC from 1946-1956, a ministry notable for its outreach to students from Africa and the Caribbean.

Named a canon at Washington National Cathedral, where he served from 1951 to 1956, Bishop

Burgess used the national pulpit to heighten the social conscience of the Episcopal Church during a period in which the Supreme Court was moving to overturn the separate but equal doctrine that opened the way for the modern civil rights movement.

Bishop Burgess began his ministry in Massachusetts as archdeacon of Boston's missions and parishes and superintendent of the Boston City Mission. He restructured the organization according to his vision that it should be a catalyst for change rather than a social services provider, and renamed it Episcopal City Mission, as it is still known, so that it might enable work in urban centers outside of Boston.

Believing that ministry is best carried out at the parish level, he worked to develop an urban mission strategy that would engage city churches in the lives of the poor. He was not daunted by resistance from clergy whose urban congregations were dwindling but who were nonetheless more comfortable with the status quo than seeking out the welfare of racial and ethnic minorities. He advocated the church's support of mission in the city. "I think that any church in a poor urban area which says that they can go it alone has not developed a big enough program. Their program ought to always be bigger than their resources," he said.

In September 1962, John Burgess was elected bishop suffragan of the Diocese of Massachusetts on the first ballot. He was consecrated on Dec. 8, 1962, at Trinity Church in Boston. He was honored by *Time* magazine in January 1964 with other African-Americans who had "broken barriers, earned positions of trust and become part of the leadership community in the U.S."

On June 7, 1969, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts elected him bishop coadjutor, to succeed the Rt. Rev. Anson Phelps Stokes, Jr., as the diocese's 12th bishop, making Bishop Burgess the first African-American in the Episcopal Church to head a diocese. He was installed in January 1970, at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston. "I hope that we will not lose sight of the fact that our true and essential mission

continued on next page

Bishop John Burgess.....cont.

is to the world and not to ourselves,” he said in his first address as a diocesan bishop.

Upon Bishop Burgess’s retirement in 1975, the Joint Urban Fund that he had initiated at Episcopal City Mission was renamed the John Melville Burgess Urban Fund in his honor. The fund, which makes grants available to community groups addressing causes of poverty, is considered a ground-breaker in grant making to community organizers.

Bishop Burgess never lost hold of his vision for what the church could be. “We are realizing more and more that we are one world,” he said. “and that we cannot exist apart from the welfare of all mankind. We’ve always had a theory of the so-called Kingdom being made of all kinds of people, but now we are confronted with the reality of it.”

Bishop Burgess was active in the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. He served the Episcopal Church on numerous national commissions and boards. A strong supporter of the Union of Black Episcopalians, Bishop Bur-

gess was honored over the years with a dozen honorary degrees.

After his retirement he taught at Yale’s Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven CT, serving for a time as its interim dean, and was the board chairman at St. Augustine’s College in Raleigh, NC. He was a mentor to countless young clergy of all races who were committed to social justice causes and urban ministry. He was an assisting bishop in the dioceses of Washington, Connecticut, North Carolina and Curacao. His writings include *Black Gospel/White Church*, published by Seabury Press in 1982.

The Burgesses moved from Connecticut to Martha’s Vineyard in 1989 and were members of Grace Church in Vineyard Haven where Bishop Burgess was honored on the occasion of his 90th birthday with the dedication of a new stained glass window bearing his likeness. He is survived by his wife, Esther and two daughters, Julia Burgess and Margaret B. Harrison

by Tracy J. Sukraw, Editor of Episcopal Times, Diocese of Massachusetts

Sonia Francis 1942-2003

Dr. Sonia Francis, whose career at the Episcopal Church Center spanned 37 years and the terms of four presiding bishops, died of heart failure at her home in New York on Oct. 16. She was 61.

She retired from her position as the presiding bishop’s executive director of program in March after a leave of absence, during which time she was hospitalized and treated for multiple myeloma.

During a visit to Minneapolis for this summer’s General Convention she was honored by her colleagues in Episcopal Communicators, the national association for church-based communications that she helped establish in 1971.

Her lengthy career at the church center began in 1966. After serving as a radio and television specialist, she was appointed executive of the communications office at the Church Center in 1983 and was instrumental in planning and launching *Episcopal Life*, in 1989. In 1995 she was appointed director of program.

She remained involved in religious communication within the denomination, the Anglican Communion and wider ecumenical circles. She specialized in documentary film and the emerging video technology.

With the National Council of Churches she served on various key committees, including broadcasting operations, and held positions with the World Association for Christian Communication, the National Acad-

emy of Television Arts and Sciences and the Religious Public Relations Council.

In 2000 Francis received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Episcopal Divinity School in Massachusetts “for distinguished witness and service in church and society.” The biography added, “Yours was a family where multiculturalism was normative.” Francis was born in Honduras to Jamaicans with links to Cuba and Bengal. After graduating from an English-speaking boarding school in San Antonio, Texas, Francis served in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) from 1960-65. She was also a professional performing artist in voice, drama and dance.

“This diverse background has given you a unique ability to understand people from many different cultural backgrounds, and has helped you serve as a bridge-builder between persons and organizations in the church,” the biography said.

Former colleague Kris Lee, now on the staff of the Anglican Communion Office, said that “Sonia was among the very first denominational communication executives in the early 80’s to produce network radio and TV spot campaigns for evangelism and for social justice causes.

She was also a striking media performer and I remember well that evening when she received a standing ovation for her singing tribute to Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning at his final General Convention. At

the Episcopal Church Center, Sonia championed the need for collegial partnerships with other departments by creating an extremely successful inter-unit group for planning and evaluating communication projects.”

Several former colleagues also pointed out the significance of her career in the life of others. Bishop Arthur Williams, interim director of ethnic ministries, said that she has been “an effective and persistent presence on the national church scene—and we will miss

her warm and welcoming ways. Over these years she has served as a wonderful role model for black women, in the church and in society.”

At her retirement, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold said in a note to staff and the Executive Council that “Sonia has been a valued friend and colleague to me and a true servant of the Gospel.”

A memorial service was held at the Episcopal Church Center on Thursday, October 30, 2003.

The Rt. Rev. Robert L. DeWitt 1916-2003

The Rt. Rev. Robert Lionne DeWitt, bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, 1964-1974, died November 21 in Saratoga Springs, NY. A requiem Eucharist was celebrated at the Philadelphia Cathedral on November 29. The Rt. Rev. Charles E. Bennison, Jr. was the celebrant; the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris preached.

At age 48, DeWitt was the youngest bishop the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania ever elected. A quiet and low-key New Englander, he surprised many with his relentless battle for women’s rights, racial equality and anti-Vietnam War stance. At Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia in 1974, he was one of several bishops who first ordained 11 women as priests.

As Andrew Wallace wrote in *The Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine*: [DeWitt] delighted in getting the church, himself and his pastors involved....[He] endorsed the activities of those acting out of conscience rather than rules; he believed that ministering to the poor, the oppressed, the young and black is more important than trying to preserve the comfort of those already in the pews.”

After the women were ordained, the Episcopal Church grappled with whether the ordinations were valid, finally deciding they were “valid but irregular” at the church’s 1976 national convention.

At the 1999 celebration commemorating the event, DeWitt said: “It is ironic that what happened 25 years ago here at the Advocate was for a time seen more as an issue of three misbehaving bishops than as a breakthrough created by 11 pioneering women. Make no mistake, the event was a creative action of, by and for women. The bishops were only accessories.”

When he assumed office as bishop, race riots were erupting in Chester, Pennsylvania. He supported the efforts of racial justice there, even taking a midnight ride to Harrisburg to ask then-Governor Scranton to intervene. A year later, he became a significant force in supporting those attempting to break the will of Girard College’s founder, a document that excluded blacks from attending the school. He also encouraged the Rev. Paul

Washington, rector of the mostly black, inner-city Church of the Advocate, to become involved in racial justice issues.

When the Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) presented its Black Manifesto in 1969, demanding \$500 million in reparations from churches throughout the country for black economic development, DeWitt urged parishes and clergy “to engage in a creative dialogue” with BEDC leaders. As a result, the diocese’s 1969 annual convention created a Task Force for Reconciliation, and its 1970 special convention approved creating a Restitution Fund and a diocesan-wide education program. By 1976, the diocese had given \$525,865 in black community development grants and educational grants to 400 black students.

Opposed to the Vietnam War, DeWitt brought onto his staff as urban missionary, the Rev. David Gracie, who was known to counsel young men about the draft and the option of draft resistance. According to Richard Schneider of the Diocese of Pennsylvania’s History Committee, conservatives argued that churches “should preach the gospel and leave politics to the politicians,” and disaffected Episcopalians formed such groups as the Voice of the Catacombs and the Episcopal Renaissance.

Looking for ways to bring the church and society closer together, DeWitt resigned as bishop in 1974 to become editor of *The Witness* magazine and president of the Episcopal Church Publishing company. He retired from those positions in 1981 and moved to Isle au Haut, Maine, an island in the outermost reaches of Penobscot Bay. He then wrote *Ebb Tide* about dealing with his wife’s Alzheimer’s condition and *Turning Pages*, a series of short essays, songs and poems.

He was awarded honorary degrees from Episcopal Divinity School, Haverford College, LaSalle University, Lincoln University, Philadelphia Divinity School, Temple University and Virginia Theological Seminary. He was awarded the Peace Award from the SANE

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Toronto Same-Sex Blessing Takes Place Quietly

A Toronto parish has performed what may be the first public blessing of a same-sex union in Canada's largest diocese.

Alison Kemper and Joyce Barnett, two Anglican deacons who have worked actively for the recognition of same-sex marriage, had their recent civil marriage formally blessed on Sept. 6 at Toronto's Church of the Holy Trinity, a downtown parish with close ties to the city's gay and lesbian community.

The couple, who have two children and have been together for almost 20 years, were married in a

civil ceremony at Toronto City Hall in June, just days after a ruling by the Ontario Court of Appeals allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry.

"What happened to us was substantial and something of great joy, and we wanted to celebrate that with our religious community and our friends and neighbours," said Ms. Kemper, who is executive director of the 519 Church Street Community Centre.

"We're deeply grateful that we had that opportunity," she said. "I felt that it really expressed the big tent of the Anglican Church."

Robinson Consecration.....continued from page 19

new substance to this, and to pray for wisdom, patience and courage as we move forward."

The American Anglican Council (AAC), quickly issued a statement that said: "Today is a grievous day in the history of our Church. Heresy has been held up as Holy. Blasphemy has been redefined as blessing. The hope of the transforming love of Jesus Christ has been denied. Holy Scripture has been abandoned and sin celebrated over sanctification. The arrogance of the leaders of the Diocese of New Hampshire and the Episcopal Church is nothing less than stunning...."

"The time has come. Our family is now split and the whole cloth of the Anglican Communion is torn. Realignment has begun."

At the same time, Bishop Carolyn Irish Tanner

was one of the first bishops to issue a statement. She said that, "There has since been an escalation of angry rhetoric by those in this country and abroad who seem to be strategizing for schism. By planning for separate enclaves or parallel communions of like-minded people, it appears that they want to create a whole new church, one very different from traditional Anglicanism.

"Our church is, and has always been, the most comprehensive of Christian families, because we have sought to embrace theological and cultural diversity of the kind that has sometimes fractured other Protestant churches. Presently the issue has put us on a global and very public stage, but that appears to be the new element in our situation, not the challenge of abiding in our differences. Indeed, more than abiding." [ENS]

Editorials.....continued from page 9

or not most of the religious world recognizes it."

Syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. of the *Miami Herald* lampooned the charge of "inappropriate touching" leveled against Robinson by a Vermont man. "Let's agree on one thing right from the top: The arm is not an erogenous zone," Pitts said, adding that he hoped the accuser "had the good taste to be embar-

rassed by his own silliness."

"Once the furor dies down, the confirmation of the Reverend Robinson could attract more people to the church, gay and straight, because it will be seen as open and inclusive," commented an unsigned editorial in the *Baltimore Sun*. "Bishop-elect Robinson suggested Tuesday that his confirmation is part of a seismic cultural shift in which the country 'is moving into a kind of mature adulthood with the full inclusion of gay and lesbian folks . . .' That mature adulthood is long overdue."

Invoking the late Mike Royko's alter ego, Chicagoan Slats Grobniak, editorial writer Mike Kelley of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* painted the Episcopal Church as a broad tent — "like baseball. Who would ever think there'd be room enough here in the city of Chicago for such different groups as White Sox fans and people who like the Cubs?"

"So who are the White Sox people and which one of these Episcopal groups represents the Cubs?" I asked.

"Oh," Slats said. "Time will sort that one out."

The Rev. Jan Nunley is deputy director of Episcopal News Service.

Robert L. DeWitt *cont. from previous page*
organization in 1974 and the City of Philadelphia Human Rights award in 1973.

He was bishop suffragan of the Diocese of Michigan and rector and curate of churches in Michigan prior to coming to Pennsylvania.

He is survived by Barbara, his wife of 65 years and their five children—Rebecca, Laurence, Kathrina, John and Robert—as well as 14 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

Contributions may be sent to the Bishop Robert L. DeWitt Memorial Scholarship Fund at The Episcopal Divinity School, 99 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

'Via Media' Groups Resist Calls to Leave ECUSA

by Jan Nunley

In the past few months, as statements and meetings have proliferated for those objecting to the 2003 General Convention's two most controversial decisions and talk of realignment fills online weblogs (or "blogs"), lists and chat groups, another group of Episcopalians has quietly emerged, largely under the radar of the national news media.

Some members of the groups are happy about the consecration of an openly gay priest as bishop and the acknowledgement of same-gender blessings. Others are not, and still others say they aren't sure how they feel. But they say they are united in one belief: they want to stay in the Episcopal Church and keep sending a portion of their offering to its national missions and programs.

The grassroots movement doesn't have a name yet, but several of the groups have adopted a Latin phrase—*via media*. "The *Via Media* as theological method," says one group's website, "incarnates a Godly way of treating those with whom each of us disagree."

The major *Via Media* groups are located in the dioceses of Albany and Pittsburgh, where special conventions were held following General Convention to consider resolutions disassociating those dioceses from the New Hampshire consecration and making contributions to the national mission programs optional for parishes.

But other *Via Media*-type organizations are springing up in the dioceses of Central Florida, Fort Worth, Springfield, and San Joaquin, all of whose bishops are or have been associated with conservative groups such as Forward in Faith (FiF) and the American Anglican Council.

They join existing groups and independent church publications of long standing such as *Network News: Voices of the Rio Grande*, published by the Episcopal Information Network in Rio Grande; *Covenant: A Commentary on the Church in Tennessee*; and *Nevertheless* in the Diocese of Texas.

Here's a brief look at the main *Via Media* groups in existence today.

Albany *Via Media*/Concerned Episcopalians of the St. Lawrence Deanery

When Albany's Bishop Daniel Herzog came back from General Convention, he called for a special diocesan convention to consider resolutions to "disavow" General Convention's consent to the election of Gene Robinson and acknowledgement of the practice of blessing committed same-gender relationships.

"The day after we received notice of this, John Sorensen [rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Plattsburgh] called me and we shared our frustration," said the Rev. James Brooks-McDonald, rector of St. Stephen's in Schenectady. "He asked me what we were going to do about it, and I suggested we organize a dissenting voice. It was in that phone call that John suggested we call it '*Albany Via Media*.'"

Brooks-McDonald emailed other clergy and organized a meeting at St. James in Lake George prior to the special convention. "John and I made it very clear that the issue was not Gene Robinson, but was whether the Diocese of Albany was going to stay in the Episcopal Church or not," Brooks-McDonald explained. A response to the special convention resolutions was sent to every parish, with an invitation to sign on.

"The response was greater than many of us had ever thought. By the time of the special convention we had over 350 names on the document."

Riffing off the American Anglican Council's statement "A Place to Stand," the Albany group called theirs "A Place to Kneel." "We are loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ in the Episcopal Church USA and our Primate, the Presiding Bishop. We recognize the General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA as the highest authority in the church," the document said. "Since any realignment or impaired

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"In my own naivete, I thought the core of the problem centered only about the gay bishop...

Now that we have been involved in the whole picture, we know it isn't just the consecration."

Via Media Groups

communion with other dioceses of the Episcopal Church affects our lives and our ministries, binds our consciences and violates the ordination vows of our clergy, Albany Via Media was created to keep the Diocese of Albany in communion with the Episcopal Church USA.”

Though their attempts to amend some of the special convention’s resolutions were defeated, Brooks-McDonald said he thinks their efforts “helped soften” the wording of the resolutions that eventually passed, “We noticed that in the laity it was relatively close.”

“In my own naiveté, I thought the core of the problem centered only about the gay bishop,” said Hallett Luscombe, a Trinity parishioner. “Now that we have been involved in the whole picture, we know it isn’t just the consecration.”

Her rector, Sorensen, said he’s involved because “every value and virtue essential to Anglicanism—the spiritual heart of our Anglo-Catholic diocese is being trampled. It tears me up.”

“This conservative effort to corral the support of foreign primates to censure the Episcopal Church is a betrayal of our most treasured Anglican principles. It’s religious terrorism of the worst kind.”

Another Via Media group in the Albany diocese, still in its infancy, calls itself Concerned Episcopalians of St. Lawrence Deanery. The deanery is home territory for Bishop Herzog, and according to member Joseph Liotta, the clergy are virtually united behind his positions—but the laity are not. “Many people in our deanery were dismayed to learn that our bishop is a member of the board of the AAC,” Liotta explained. “The special diocesan convention our bishop called was seen as a tool to implement the AAC agenda.”

Another St. Lawrence Deanery lay member, Suzanne Smith of Trinity Episcopal Church in Potsdam, said there is “a strong divide between the position of the bishop and clergy in our diocese and the laity in our church.

Neither of the Albany bishops responded to an email request for comment on the group.

Episcopal Voices of Central Florida

Like Herzog and bishop suffragan David Bena in Albany, Bishop John Howe of Central Florida called a special diocesan convention to consider resolutions of disassociation from the actions of General Convention.

“Our called special convention in September sent up alarm bells in that all of the resolutions, from my viewpoint, pointed toward what the ‘Catholic Encyclopedia’ calls passive schism: rebel against the authority, blame the other side, seek outside intervention, etc.,” wrote moderator Donna Bott.

Howe responded and met with the vestry during his visitation October 5. “Because I perceived a sense of conciliation along with conversation that led me to believe he would be the bishop to all people of the diocese, I withdrew the resolution,” Bott said, but in the meantime a group of concerned clergy and laity had convened and wanted to continue their conversations about the direction of the diocese. Four of the founding members of the group, now calling themselves Episcopal Voices of Central Florida, are also on the diocesan board.

“We are mainstream Episcopalians,” said Bott, a member of the diocesan board. “We oppose and will continue to oppose any attempts to take our churches, our property, our congregations, or our diocese out of the national church. Our bishop, John Howe, has stated that he wishes to remain in the Episcopal Church and we are here to support him.”

With the annual diocesan convention set for the end of January, Episcopal Voices is beginning a petition drive to assure that the diocese remains part of the national church.

In a personal reply to an email query, Howe wrote that in his opinion Episcopal Voices “is committed to preserving unity in the diocese and in the Episcopal Church.”

Fort Worth Via Media

Fort Worth Via Media’s website describes it as “an organization of ordained and lay Episcopalians in the Diocese of Fort Worth who are going to remain within the Episcopal Church of the United States of America.”

Acknowledging that some are “deeply troubled and grieved” by the actions of the 2003 General Convention while others “celebrate these actions,” the Fort Worth group maintains that it is uniquely positioned to know that opposite views can remain in the same fellowship. “We know this is possible to do, because since our diocese was founded in 1983, it has been ‘out of communion’ or in ‘impaired’ communion with other

“This conservative effort to corral the support of foreign primates...is a betrayal of our most treasured Anglican principles. It’s religious terrorism of the worst kind.”

Episcopal Progressives Declare Intention to Remain

parts of the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Communion over the issue of the ordination of women,” the group said in a press release issued December 5. “We also have survived intense disputes over the use of the Book of Common Prayer. Through all this, we have remained together. We know from experience that there is a via media between complete agreement and schism.

Members of the group have voiced objections to Iker’s signing the name of the diocese to a petition supporting a new “Network of Confessing Dioceses and Congregations” headed by Pittsburgh bishop Robert Duncan.

Asked about the group, Iker replied simply by email: “No comment.”

Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh

Perhaps because Duncan, a vice president of the AAC, has been one of the most outspoken proponents of “realignment,” the Via Media group in his diocese is one of the more vocal in opposition to it. Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh (PEP) began organizing even before Duncan declared his determination to “stand against the actions of [General] Convention with everything I have and everything I am.”

According to member Sue Boulden, the Pittsburgh group had its genesis in a regular meeting of the local Episcopal Women’s Caucus in September 2002, held the same day deputies to the diocesan convention received their information packets. The first resolution under consideration, modeled on a South Carolina resolution, was touted as an attempt to build a ‘firewall’ between self-described ‘orthodox Anglicans’ and decisions of the General Convention.

“When we women came together that evening and realized what was going on, we immediately called for an ad hoc committee to be formed,” recalled Boulden. The committee soon became known as Those Opposed to Resolution One (TORO), which lobbied unsuccessfully against the resolution.

“Following that diocesan convention, those of us who were the most involved felt we needed to come together on a regular basis to support each other,” Boulden said, and out of that grew PEP and the PEPChat list, which convened online prior to the 2003 General Convention.

But it was their bishop’s passionate statements

in Minneapolis that galvanized PEP members to take action. “I became increasingly alarmed by the many statements of our bishop, Robert Duncan, and the actions of the AAC,” said current PEP president Lionel Deimel. Following General Convention, he and a conservative friend, Celinda Scott, began circulating a petition for unity in the diocese, with the help of PEP members. Then PEP’s focus shifted to opposing the six resolutions proposed for the September special convention called by Duncan.

The PEPChat list now has participants from all over the country, and has provided advice and resources to groups elsewhere. The group is increasingly taking on an educational role within the diocese, encouraging parishes to support national mission programs financially and resist the inclusion of their congregations “in any network established by Bishop Duncan and the AAC,” said Deimel.

Like Gundersen, Jennifer Sinclair is a cradle Episcopalian, born and raised in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. When she returned to Pittsburgh after several years in London, she said, “I had no idea how far right the diocese had swung, or that my parish and beloved members of its clergy had gone along with it.”

For Sinclair, “Resolution One was the final straw. I church shopped for a couple of weeks, and landed at Calvary [Episcopal Church] one morning,” she recalled. People there “agree on the substantive issues—that the Gospel is about love, that the Creeds are sufficient statements of faith, that those things are more important than the details of the style in which one worships...Above all, we agree that the Scriptures must be read in the dual lights of Reason and Tradition.”

PEP member Karen Kapsanis joined PEP on the recommendation of a friend. “I don’t think the real issue for the AAC is homosexuality. I think the real issues are money and power, and the AAC and groups like them seem to think it is worth sacrificing ECUSA for money and power,” she wrote. “I feel that if there is anything I can do to make up for the damage that has been done, I need to do it.

Asked about PEP, Bishop Duncan’s secretary responded, “He has no comment.”

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“I don’t think the real issue...is homosexuality. I think the real issues are money and power and [these groups] seem to think it’s worth sacrificing ECUSA”

Remaining ECUSA, San Joaquin

Five priests in the Diocese of San Joaquin began the Remaining ECUSA web page after the Diocese had voted to withhold budgeted funds from the national mission programs of the church.

One of the Remaining ECUSA priests is the Rev. Mark Hall, rector of St. Anne's in Stockton, California. "St. Anne's is one of the 'liberal' parishes in the diocese, but that is a very relative term," said Hall. "Our vestry put our money where our voices are by passing a resolution at the last regular vestry meeting." The resolution, passed unanimously, declares that St. Anne's will designate an amount equal to 10% of its Diocesan Assessment for the year 2004.

San Joaquin bishop John-David Schofield did not respond to an email request for comment.

Episcopal Forum of South Carolina

"I think that all of us have had long-standing concerns that the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of South Carolina is much more concerned with being 'right' and 'pure' for the 'right' people than it is in what is addressed in the Beatitudes," said Thomas Myers Jr., a parishioner at St. Stephen's in Charleston, South Carolina and spokesperson for the fledgling Episcopal Forum of South Carolina. In the 1990s, Myers, the father of a gay teenager, founded We Are Family, a Charleston nonprofit devoted to helping gay and lesbian teens and their families. "For me, the resounding defeat of a proposed resolution committing us to continue to meet, study and pray was the final act that made me feel I had to do something."

"We are now in the process of establishing a steering committee and a plan for action, as well as holding a conference in February," said Myers.

Asked for comment on the formation of the group, South Carolina bishop Ed Salmon replied, "I have never heard of it."

Episcopal Free Speech of Springfield

According to the introduction on its Yahoo!Group page, Episcopal Free Speech was created "in response to allegations that the Diocese of Springfield is censoring the news that goes into [the diocesan newspaper]."

Wrote list member Jestin Trahan:

WE WANT OUR NEWSPAPER BACK.
WE WANT OUR VOICE TO BE HEARD AT THE
DIOCESAN COUNCIL.

WE WANT OUR VOICE TO BE HEARD
AT THE SYNOD.

WE WANT TO REMAIN IN ECUSA.
WE WANT OUR BISHOP TO GIVE US SPIRITUAL
GUIDANCE.

I have not talked to anyone who is in disagreement with the above demands."

By the October meeting, Trahan said, several

council members had either resigned or their positions "were terminated" by Springfield bishop Peter Beckwith. When a withholding resolution was brought up again, the newly constituted council passed it. "This seems to be a first step in working toward delivering our diocese to the AAC," Trahan maintains.

Other concerns include the cancellation of a new mission effort "because the priest in charge apparently disagreed with the bishop," Trahan said.

Beckwith did not respond to an email request for comment.

Pushing back

To date, the Via Media groups have been active primarily within their own diocesan boundaries, but that may be changing rapidly. Just as widespread email networks energized opposition to General Convention's actions, the same kinds of links are enabling those who want to stay in ECUSA to do some "pushing back" of their own.

In a news release dated December 16, three of the groups—Albany Via Media, Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh and Fort Worth Via Media—united to blast an online petition effort by the conservative coalition Anglican Mainstream, saying it "uses a dubious signature counting method that does not meet any Christian ethical standard." They based their objections on the petition's acceptance of a signature by a single individual—a bishop, parish rector or organizational officer—as representing the signature of every individual in the diocese, congregation or organization. "It matters not whether a bishop has limited the numbers of 'signatures' to the proportion he believes support his position," the release said. "The count was made without asking the individuals where they stood on this statement. Such 'mass signatures' account for over 97% of the total signatures on this 'petition.'"

Some members have also criticized a December 17 *New York Times* report indicating that 13 US dioceses had joined the new Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes. Within hours after the story broke, the communications officer for the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida informed other diocesan communicators that neither the Diocese of Southwest Florida nor the Diocese of Central Florida were allied with the network.

News reporters confirmed that the incorrect number had been given to the media by the network's moderator, Duncan, and by an American Anglican Council news release. According to the Diocese of South Carolina's canon theologian, the Rev. Kendall Harmon, only the dioceses of Pittsburgh, South Carolina, and Fort Worth have formally agreed to be part of the network.

— *The Rev. Jan Nunley is deputy director of Episcopal News Service.*

an editorial

Christ, Culture and the Episcopal Church

by Katie Sherrod

The conservative American Anglican Council claims “the Episcopal Church has caved into the secular culture” by consenting to the election of the first honestly gay bishop and recognizing that the blessing of same-gender unions is happening in some dioceses.

But it isn’t the Episcopal Church that is being driven by secular culture on the subject of homosexuality. Rather, it is the American Anglican Council’s outspoken allies in Africa, Asia and South America.

The Episcopal Church’s General Convention has taken deeply countercultural moves in affirming that gays and lesbians are cherished children of God entitled to full and equal inclusion in the Body of Christ. That kind of acceptance isn’t the case in most of the United States.

Popular culture may be fun to watch, but it doesn’t write the law. Despite the success of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, it still is legal in 36 states to fire people simply because they are gay. They can be denied access to housing with impunity in most cities and states. And, worst of all, they still are attacked physically and verbally on our streets because of who they are.

The American Anglican Council has been unhappy with the Episcopal Church’s moves toward the full inclusion of gays and lesbians for several years, and it has been fanning the flames of Anglican indignation in Africa, Asia and South America, where deeply conservative views on homosexuality are embedded in the cultures.

Now, they hoped to reap the harvest of that work and get what they wanted at the meeting of Anglican primates in London. They wanted to have the Episcopal Church’s leadership “severely disciplined” and to have themselves named the “authentic expression” of the church in the United States.

But statements from the American Anglican Council’s allies make it clear which views are the ones being culturally driven. The poster child for the enraged conservatives is Peter Akinola, the archbishop of Nigeria.

The Economist magazine recently quoted him

as saying, “I cannot think of how a man in his senses would be having a sexual relationship with another man. Even in the world of animals ... we don’t hear of such things.”

What the American Anglican Council doesn’t talk about is how such culturally driven rhetoric from its allies plays out in the lives of Africans, Asians and South Americans who are gay. Amnesty International’s 2001 report on torture and ill treatment based on sexual identity in those places makes for horrifying reading.

“Coming at midnight, they said, ‘We want to show you something.’ They took my clothes off and raped me. I remember being raped by two of them, then I passed out.”

That is the account of Christine, a lesbian who was tortured in a secret detention room in Uganda, where “homosexuality isn’t just a social taboo, it is a criminal offense.”

Amnesty International reports that at least 70 countries entered the 21st century with laws prohibiting same-sex relations. In some countries, same-sex relations will incur the death penalty. In other countries, the penalty for simply being homosexual is flogging. In Malaysia, same-sex relations are punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment and whipping.

Anglican religious leaders in those countries don’t protest such inhumane treatment. Indeed, they abet and exacerbate it with their fundamentalist anti-homosexual rhetoric.

Jesus Christ’s entire earthly ministry was profoundly countercultural. Time and again, he outraged the secular and religious leaders of his day by reaching out to those on the margins of the culture—to the untouchables of his day.

In this time and in these places where the culture and the church join hands to deny the very humanity of gays and lesbians, I don’t even have to ask, “What would Jesus do?”

Katie Sherrod, Ruach editor and a free-lance writer and independent TV producer, is married to an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth.



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