

The
Voice
of

Integrity

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The Voice of Integrity

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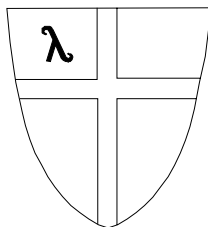
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Cover: Design for the 1997 General Convention Integrity Volunteer commemorative pin by Judith Bilinzsky

it's about being faithful

by Michael W. Hopkins

I know there are many in the homosexual camp who love the Lord Jesus as much as I do. I appeal to you, for your soul's sake: can you really be so sure you are right? Frederica Mathewes-Green, *United Voice*, Monday, July 21

In the wake of General Convention, many so-called "traditionalists" continue to sound the trumpet of there being two Episcopal Churches. The Episcopal Synod of America even wants to institutionalize this cry. All my good Anglican blood wants to resist this notion; certainly it stands against this drive toward division. Elizabeth's 16th century ideal of "one church for the whole realm" surely means in our context that we can stay in the same church while disagreeing on even weighty matters, doesn't it?

I think so. I believe so. Integrity continues to search for common ground at the same time that we work for change. But if working for change is hard (and it is) than working for common ground appears to be next to impossible. But I don't want to say impossible. That seems almost blasphemous. It sure is a puzzle though.

I got to thinking about these things reviewing the General Convention publications of the various "traditionalist" organizations. I ran across the above lines from Ms. Mathewes-Green. For me they encapsulate the difficulty in finding common ground.

How can we be so sure we are right? I'll be honest and say we can't be. But let Ms. Mathewes-Green be honest and say that she can't be either. If she imagines that she can, then she needs to take the advice of the title of the column in which the question appeared, "We need to learn humility."

Does this leave us in some kind of moral morass, that apocalyptic place the "traditionalists" keep saying we are almost (if not entirely) in where we have no sense of right and wrong? The same issue

of *United Voice* featured a cartoon called "The Legacy of Liberal Protestantism." The picture was the Ten Commandments with a "no" slash through them.

Not entirely knowing we are right or wrong doesn't put us in a bad place, either as individuals or as a Church. In fact, Ms. Mathewes-Green has asked the wrong question. She is asking the question of the Pharisees. She knows the right question, though, the question of her Lord and mine, and she answered it as well! "I know there are many in the homosexual camp who love the Lord Jesus as much as I do." That is the only question and the only answer worth anything.

Are you striving to be faithful? Do you believe that you are loved/saved in spite of everything? Do you know you don't deserve it? Do you know you get it anyway? Do you believe the cross turns the whole world (including its religion) upside down? Do you believe that cooperating with the power of God given to each one of us, we can set one another free?

What gay and lesbian people and others were testifying over and over again at General Convention—in committee hearings, on the floors of both Houses, in the hallways, on the streets, and in our glorious liturgy—was a resounding "yes" to all these questions.

Perhaps why we keep talking past each other is because Ms. Mathewes-Green and others want us to answer a question that neither we nor they can answer short of the Kingdom when we stop "seeing in a mirror dimly." Right or wrong? I see Jesus in the Gospels saying over and over and over again, "That is the wrong question."

It's not about being right. It's about being faithful.

Now can we have a conversation about that?



The Rev. Michael Hopkins is Integrity's Director of Communications and Vicar of St. George's, Glenn Dale, MD.

...do you believe that cooperating with the power of God given to each one of us, we can set one another free?

convention says "now, no, and

by Jan Nunley, *Episcopal News Service*

In the continuing controversy over the place of homosexuals in the pews and pulpits of the Episcopal Church, signals from the 72nd General Convention flashed green, red, and yellow: Now, no, and not yet.

"Now" to the option of providing health benefits for domestic partners of clergy and church employees covered by the Episcopal Church Clergy and Employees' Medical Trust.

"No" to extending pension benefits to surviving partners of lesbian and gay clergy.

"Not yet" to the church's blessing of same-gender unions.

Sexuality issues also forced the church to define what it means by doctrine ~ a direct result of the so-called heresy trial of retired Bishop Walter Righter, accused of violating church doctrine for ordaining a gay deacon. Righter was acquitted because the court could not find a specific doctrine on which to base charges.

On the last day, the convention also issued a highly unusual apology to lesbians and gay men inside and outside the church for "years of rejection and maltreatment by the church."

Health benefits for domestic partners

The option of offering health benefits coverage to domestic partners is not mandatory for any diocese of the church. Proposed by the Diocese of El Camino Real (California), the resolution followed a request by the diocese to include domestic partners in its medical insurance coverage from the Episcopal Church Clergy and Employees' Medical Trust.

The Medical Trust declined to provide the coverage until authorized by General Convention to do so, but deputy Carlson Gerda of the Diocese of Chicago reported that the trust is "losing dioceses who will not be covered by them because they do not offer" domestic partnership coverage.

Pension fund officials say they will follow definitions of domestic partnership common to the insurance industry. But opponents of the move, both bishops and deputies, argued that was too vague.

"Would this include individuals who have access to marriage but decide not to marry?" Montana deputy Ralph Spence Jr. asked. "If the church later decides to recognize same-sex unions, then should benefits be restricted to those who are married by the church, or have same-sex unions blessed by the church?"

headlines: art not science

by Kim Byham

As we know, many people never get beyond the headlines, so what appears there is very important. This may be particularly true when it comes to articles on religious issues—usually only a small percentage of readers make it beyond the headline.

It is interesting to see how various headline writers interpreted the narrow defeat of the same-sex commitment ceremony resolution at General Convention. The resolution, although it was supported by a strong majority of the deputies voting (perhaps 60%), failed to reach an absolute majority of deputations by a single vote in each order.

The Episcopal News Service press release for that day (Saturday, July 19) was appropriately labeled: "Deputies say 'not yet' to blessing same-sex unions." The following day's papers, however, varied markedly. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, on its front page, proclaimed: "Same-sex rite falls in church vote. Episcopalians were narrowly divided." Fair enough.

Los Angelians awoke Sunday to a wordy headline in the *Times*: "Episcopalians Narrowly Reject Call To Bless Same-Sex Unions. Priests And Lay Members In The Church's Highest Legislative Body Vote On Resolution. Advocates Say They Will Try Again At Next Gathering In 2000." Those in Memphis, however, reading a shorter version in *The Commercial Appeal* of the same article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* saw a much shorter and less accurate: "Episcopal Church Says No To Same-Sex Marriage."

Most of the Sunday papers ran a modified version of the Associated Press release that went out on Saturday entitled "Episcopalians narrowly reject same-sex marriages." AP-Online posted essentially the same article but labeled it: "Church Rejects Same-Sex Marriages." Most newspapers leaned toward the negative, but the conservative *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver headlined the AP piece: "Same sex marriages lose in church. But slim margin of vote by Episcopalians gives backers of proposal hope."

continued on page six

not yet" on sexuality issues

But advocates declared the lack of definition an asset, not a liability, for the plan. "It's not necessarily a gay issue," argued the Rev. Donor Macneice of Hawaii, one of several deputies who declared the health benefits option applicable to other kinds of relationships ~ including siblings or widows or widowers who may wish not to jeopardize benefits from a deceased spouse by remarrying.

No pension benefits for survivors

When it came to extending Church Pension Fund benefits to surviving partners of lesbian and gay clergy, the answer from General Convention was "no." Even a substitute resolution calling for study of the issue was defeated.

Proponents called the measure "a justice issue" unrelated to the theological questions surrounding the ordination of non-celibate lesbians and gay men.

"I certainly do not look forward to a time when I must live alone, but I know that I will have income if that should happen," said deputy Judy Fleener of Western Michigan, herself a clergy spouse. "We all know and acknowledge that there are gay men and lesbians who serve as clergy in our church. Please make survivor benefits available to their spouses now."

But opponents saw the resolution as an end-run around the theological and moral issue of same-sex relationships. "I have a very difficult time having the Pension Fund bureaucratic committee come up with definitions that'll be the teaching of this church," said Robert Royce, a deputy from the Virgin Islands.

Blessings in study ~ but not on hold

The church's "not yet" came in response to a resolution authorizing the development of liturgies for same-sex blessings ~ a measure defeated by one vote in both the clergy and lay orders of the House of Deputies.

Instead, the Standing Liturgical Commission has been directed to continue studying the issue and to report to the 73rd General Convention.

The vote on same-sex blessings came as anti-gay demonstrators from the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, led by the Rev. Fred Phelps, paraded outside the entrance to the Convention Center with signs reading "God's Hate is Great," "Thank God for AIDS," and "God Hates Fags." The group is the same one that demonstrated at the 71st General Convention in Indianapolis.

The Rev. Gerry Schnackenberg of Colorado called the resolution "a vote to reject the church's doctrine of marriage." Advocates disagreed. "We are not attempting to subvert the sanctity of marriage ~ far from it," said the Rev. Jane Garrett of Vermont. "We are asking to join in the support of the sanctity of marriage through full participation in it."

In response to a question from the bishops about whether the measure would mean a moratorium on blessings of same-sex relationships, Bishop Joe M. Doss of New Jersey said, "No."

Apology

Despite a lack of consensus on homosexuality, General Convention issued an apology to lesbians and gay men for "years of rejection and maltreatment by the church," while acknowledging "the diversity of opinion . . . on the morality of gay and lesbian sexual relationships."

"Being able to apologize is a spiritually healthy thing," declared Dr. Louie Crew, a deputy from Newark and founder of Integrity, an organization for gay and lesbian Episcopalians. Crew said he co-signed the resolution "not because lesbians and gays need this apology, but because the church needs to apologize."

But not everyone agreed. "I do not feel called upon" to apologize, said Bishop Charles Duvall of Central Gulf Coast. "It seems to me that if we are going to acknowledge a diversity of opinion (about morality), there is certainly a diversity of opinion . . . as to whether we have mistreated people."

Fallout from the Righter presentment

Several resolutions dealing with canonical changes had their origins in the heresy trial of retired Bishop Righter for ordaining a gay man in a committed relationship. The Court for the Trial of a Bishop concluded that Righter had violated no "core doctrine" of the church in doing so and dismissed the charges.

But at least two resolutions attempted a clearer definition of what constitutes "doctrine" and "discipline" in the Episcopal Church. The first located the "discipline" of the church in "the Constitution, the Canons, the Rubrics, and the Ordinal of The Book of Common Prayer."

The second defined "doctrine" as "the basic and essential teachings of the church" found in the canons of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles'

now, no, not yet...

and Nicene creeds, and in the sacramental rites, ordinal and catechism in The Book of Common Prayer.

Traditionalist bishops argued during the trial for a broader definition of doctrine that would include other statements, such as resolutions of General Convention and decisions made by the House of Bishops.

Resolutions that didn't pass

The debate over sexuality was noted as much for the resolutions that didn't pass as for those that did.

A resolution from Bishop William Wantland amending Canon III.14 to prohibit clergy from engaging in sexual relations outside heterosexual marriage never made it to the floor.

Another, from retired Bishop Gordon Charlton of Texas, defined immorality to include all forms of extramarital sexual relations but was amended by the Committee on Ministry to prohibit "infidelity, promiscuity and abusive behavior." The resolution was discharged by the deputies.

Three resolutions calling for the authorizing of rites of same-sex blessing were discharged or rejected. Two calling for pension benefits for the partners of lesbian and gay clergy were either discharged or rejected. One resolution calling for a 21-year moratorium on official ordinations and blessings of lesbians and gays while allowing "local option" and another allowing local-option blessings were also discharged.

Not just homosexuality

Homosexuality wasn't the only form of sexual conduct under scrutiny by General Convention.

headlines...

The Chattanooga Free Press headline of the AP article said "Episcopalians Nix Gay Marriages," while the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* said inartfully "Episcopalians oppose same-sex marriages." *The Sacramento Bee* made its position clear in a strange headline: "Gay-Marriage Pitch Rebuffed."

Others included *The Columbus Dispatch* with: "Church Rejects Gay Marriages," the *Austin American-Statesman*: "Episcopalians narrowly reject same-sex union [sic]" and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, joining the illiterate with: "Episcopalians reject same-sex unions."

The bishops turned down an attempt by the deputies to rescind Canon I.19.2, which says a bishop can recognize an annulment or divorce determined by a civil court "provided that the judgment does not affect in any way the legitimacy of children or the civil validity of the formal relationship."

A resolution expressing "grave concern" about partial-birth abortion "except in extreme situations" passed the convention. Parishes were urged to teach youth about "sexual abstinence, self-respect, resistance to peer pressure and respect to those who say 'no' to sex before marriage." And the church is being asked to identify resources to combat pornography.

The convention also:

- urged congregations to support "ways to encourage and maintain healthy marriages";
- recognized the importance of fathers in the life of families, and urged congregations to encourage the spiritual development of men;
- continued the Commission on HIV/AIDS;
- urged the church to examine the impact of HIV/AIDS as regards racism;
- continued provincial training in the use of materials developed by the church for the prevention of AIDS among teen-agers;
- continued commitment to a Christian response to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the nation and the world;
- and commended the National AIDS Memorial at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.



The Rev. Jan Nunley is communications officer for the Diocese of Rhode Island and is a Co-convenor of Integrity/Rhode Island.

On Monday morning, convention goers read a surprisingly moderate "Deputies demur on rites" in *Episcopalians United* daily. The next day, one of the two local lesbian papers in Philadelphia, *Au Courant*, took a very downbeat view in its headline: "Same-sex union blessing resolution defeated at Episcopal Convention. Division on issues of human sexuality is deep; church unity seen at risk." Beware getting your news about what happens on lesbian issues in the Church from the secular media, especially the lesbian secular media!



Kim Byham is a member of the House of Deputies from the diocese of Newark. He was the floor leader for lesbian and gay concerns at General Convention.

a joyous, provocative eucharist

by Randy William Ash and Michael W. Hopkins

Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, celebrating the Integrity Eucharist during the General Convention in Philadelphia (July 16), thanked the assembled crowd for their faithfulness and courage in the Church, which he said has been personally inspiring and a blessing to the whole Church.

The Eucharist was attended by over 650 people, including Dr. Pam Chinnis, President of the House of Deputies, Patti Browning, and three of the candidates for Presiding Bishop, Robert Rowley, Richard Shimpfky, and Herb Thompson. Candidate Frank Griswold sent his regrets due to a conflict. The site for the Service was the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany.

The celebration was a dynamic, joyous event, highlighted by boisterous singing, including an impromptu belting out of "Blessed Assurance" to extend the time for those gathered to receive Communion. Preaching, the Rev. Canon Elizabeth Kaeton, from the Diocese of Newark's Oasis Ministry, sang a refrain throughout her sermon as well: "We're gonna keep on walkin' forward."

Canon Kaeton called on gay and lesbian people in the Church to give up their victim status and follow Jesus' call to "Feed my sheep." What we have to feed the Church, she said, is a reuniting of the spiritual/theological and the sexual/erotic. She was clear to distinguish eroticism from pornography; that pornography is what results when healthy eroticism is suppressed. By "erotic" she means the great well-spring of desire for relationship that lives within us all, the drive for love that is the very work of the Holy Spirit within us.

"The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge. ...[When] we discover our most dearly held and terrifying truth, when we step into and embrace our erotic selves, we have touched our deepest spirituality, whose power it is to create new life.

"This is not new information. It is not even a new topic or issue. The ancient mystics often spoke of God as cosmic lover and Christ as eternal spouse. This is ancient wisdom which is born into our present reality through the midwives of pain and sacrifice. Somewhere, in our deepest places of knowing, hu-

man beings have always had this information. And we — lesbian and gay people — know a little something about pain and suffering. ...

"I want to challenge us to move away from our stance as victims and claim the Gospel promise of liberation. ... I want us to dare to look deep into the wellspring of our desires and longings and be intentionally provocative. I want us to continue the legacy of Jack Spong and drag the Church — kicking and screaming, if necessary — into conversations about that which no one else will talk. ..." [*An audiotape of this sermon is available, see page 42.*]

The celebration of the Eucharist was led by Presiding Bishop Edmund Browning who spoke briefly and shared this simple story: His son was asked by his own son what God looked like, to which he answered that he did not know. Then he asked him, "What does God eat?" Again he said he didn't know. Finally he asked his father, "What does God wear?" When he replied for the third time, "I don't know" his son (The PB's grandson) observed, "Dad, You sure don't know much about God!" He responded, "You may be right, but I know one thing—God Loves You!"

Browning turned that statement toward the congregation and said that he also might not know



griswold elected

by Mike Barwell, *Episcopal News Service*

Pledging to be “a presiding bishop who belongs to all,” Bishop Frank Griswold of the Diocese of Chicago accepted the 72nd General Convention’s election to lead the 2.4 million member Episcopal Church into the 21st century.

Griswold was elected the 25th presiding bishop today by 214 bishops gathered at historic Christ Church to choose a successor to Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, whose term ends Jan. 1.

Asked about his “perspective” on his new duties as presiding bishop, Griswold said during a news conference he “was mindful of the fact that Jesus, in calling a small group” around him, “chose one named Matthew, who was a tax collector, and one named Simon the Zealot....

“Matthew, as a tax collector, accommodated himself to the Roman government. Simon was at the opposite end; he dedicated himself to the end of Roman rule.” As “friends and collaborators,” Jesus chose two “who stood at opposite ends.” “I have to say that the church is destined always to contain within itself different perspectives and different points of view that are often diametrically opposed,” Griswold said. “We discover this truth through the process of conversation.”

eucharist...

much about God, but he was certain that “God loves each and everyone of us as well.” He thanked those present for being a witness to him of strength and perseverance and said that many times in his ministry he found inspiration in the expressions of faith of gays and lesbians. In the course of the evening, the congregation expressed their appreciation to him with at least 3 standing ovations.

During the announcements, Integrity President Fred Ellis made note that several of the worshippers and participants in the evening’s service needed to leave at The Peace, in order to testify at the Social and Urban open hearing on the blessing of same-sex unions.



Randy William Ash is a member of Integrity/Washington.

In characterizing himself as “an orthodox theologian,” he offered reassurance to conservative elements of the church while holding open possibilities for what would be perceived as liberal social actions. “All of us have truth to tell [and] dimensions of the Gospel to witness to,” he said.

Elected on third ballot

The election came on the third ballot when Griswold received 110 votes, two more than the majority needed for election. Four other bishops were nominated for the election: Robert Rowley of the Diocese of Northwest Pennsylvania, Richard Shimpfky of the Diocese of El Camino Real (California), Herbert Thompson Jr. of the Diocese of Southern Ohio, and Don Wimberly of the Diocese of Lexington (Kentucky). Thompson was the closest contender, receiving 96 votes on the third ballot. Next in line was Rowley with five votes, followed by Shimpfky with two votes. In the third ballot, no votes were recorded for Wimberly, and only 213 bishops voted.

Voting in the election were 214 bishops, including more than 60 retired bishops. Under the canons, all bishops — active and retired — are entitled to vote in the election of a presiding bishop.

On the first ballot, Thompson had the lead with 89 votes, followed by Griswold with 86, Wimberly with 14, Shimpfky with 13, and Rowley with 12. Griswold took the lead on the second ballot, receiving 106 votes to Thompson’s 96. Votes for the other three candidates dropped off dramatically with Rowley getting seven votes, Shimpfky three votes, and Wimberly two votes.

Following the announcement, the deputies voted in separate ballots in the lay and clergy orders to confirm the election. In the lay order, 112 dioceses voted with 94 lay deputations voting yes, 6 no, and 12 divided (a divided vote counts as a no vote). In the clergy order, 113 deputations voted, with 104 saying yes, 3 no, and 6 divided.

Greeted with standing ovation

Escorted by the deputation from the Diocese of Chicago, Griswold and his wife, Phoebe, were taken to the platform and greeted with applause and a standing ovation from nearly 2,000 deputies and visitors crowding the deputies’ assembly hall at Pennsylvania Convention Center.

presiding bishop

Standing with the Griswolds on the dais were their daughters, Eliza and Hannah, and Eliza's husband, Chris Allen. The presiding bishop-elect told the gathering, "When I was elected bishop of Chicago and was asked to begin to assist in preparing the ordination program, I decided I wanted to have in that program a card of some kind which could serve as a reminder of that day, both for the participants and for me. "I chose a quotation from South American Bishop Helder Camara:

The bishop belongs to all. Let no one be scandalized if I frequent those who are considered unworthy or sinful. Who is not a sinner? Let no one be alarmed if I am seen with compromised and dangerous people on the left or the right. Let no one bind me to a group. My door, my heart, must be open to everyone — absolutely everyone.

"I would amend that text to read 'the presiding bishop belongs to all,'" Griswold said to thunderous applause.

"I've had to live this text in excruciating ways," he said. "I've been stretched ... and I am the richer and deeper for it. Truth takes many forms and manifests itself in many ways, but ultimately truth is in the risen Christ. And we search for Christ in the life that we share. May God direct and bless us all."

Early reactions to election

Response to the election was swift — and largely enthusiastic. "It's very exciting," the Rev. Dennis Nichols, a visitor from the Diocese of New Jersey, said. "I think Griswold is the man for the job. [The late John E.] Hines was our last aristocratic bishop. Griswold fosters the image the church has traditionally looked for in a presiding bishop. He will be able to dialogue with the conservative and liberal agendas."

The Rev. Dane Bragg, a visitor from the Diocese of Southern Virginia, agreed, suggesting Griswold "will continue Bishop Browning's legacy of inclusiveness."

"It's a sign of hope for the church as whole," said the Rev. Sarah Conner, a visitor from the Diocese of Massachusetts. "I hope that the members of the church will support him in his ministry in the years to come."

"I understand he's a great reconciler and I think that's what's needed at this time," said the Rev. Julia

Phillips, a visitor from the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. "Since I've been here I've talked to people from all over the country in casual conversation and they all seem to think he'll be good."

Excitement about experience

"I think all of us who've worked for him feel that we're giving a great gift to the Episcopal Church, but it's a sacrificial gift," said Phoebe Pettingell of Three Lakes, Wis., who served three years with Griswold on the Standing Liturgical Commission. "He's somebody who is able to convey such a vision to everyone that you feel that you're working for love and you feel that you're inspired with a vision of God's kingdom," Pettingell said. "There's no question in my mind that he's the person who can give this church the vision that can remind us that we're in Christ and that whatever differences that

integrity responds

Following the election, a press release stated:

Integrity rejoices with the whole Church at the election of a new Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Frank T. Griswold, III, Bishop of Chicago. And we join with the whole Church in praying for him as he prepares to assume this new ministry.

We also rejoice in this election because Bishop Griswold has long been a supporter of the full participation of gay and lesbian persons in the life of the Church.

Although we understand he must be the Presiding Bishop of the whole Church, we look forward to working with him as we continue to work toward the fulfillment of the General Convention's 1976 resolve that gay and lesbian persons have a "full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church."

Today is a day to pray for the Church and for Bishop Griswold, and we are about that work.

In a letter of congratulations to Bishop Griswold, Integrity President Fred Ellis wrote:

On behalf of the members of Integrity and our many friends, I want to congratulate you on your election as the twenty-fifth Presiding Bishop.

We rejoice in your history of ministry with and to the lesbian and gay community within this church of ours. We look forward to the continuation of that ministry in your new office and the opportunity of meeting with you.

we have, we're united in the work that we do to be Christ's hands in the world."

Griswold also was credited by many for his strong ecumenical work, with Roman Catholic dialogues, ongoing leadership in conversations with the Russian Orthodox Church, and with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which is based in Chicago. The Episcopal Church earlier in this convention approved the Concordat of Agreement, legislation hailed as an "ecumenical breakthrough" and intended to move the two churches toward "full communion" by the end of the century.

Katie Sherrod, vice president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus from Fort Worth, said, "The caucus has felt all along that it could work with any of the five; they are all good, thinking men. . . . Obviously, Bishop Griswold is an excellent choice. I think he will continue the philosophy that there are no outcasts in this church," and someone capable of providing "that kind of balance is sorely needed in the church.

"His diocese has moved from a strongly Anglo-Catholic mentality to a much more inclusive, welcoming community," Sherrod said. "I think that kind of experience is badly needed in the church right now. I think he will take to heart the message that was given loud and clear in the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops on the ordination of women and will help implement that canon in a loving and caring way, but in a timely way. His experience will serve us all well . . . as all of us move toward full implementation of that canon."

Cynthia Black, president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, agreed, adding that Griswold's experience in the Diocese of Chicago "where when he arrived, there was not consensus on whether or not women should be priests," would help move the church forward. "Over time, with his good leadership with regard to ordination and deployment of women, he has found a way to work with both conservatives and liberals alike," Black said.

"I believe he will have a very positive influence on the church, especially dealing with those bishops who are having difficulty with the changes that are happening in the church."

Some cautions voiced

Conservatives in the church were swift to respond — some with significant support and hope for the future.

Bishop John Howe of the Diocese of Central Florida said Griswold "is an extremely gracious

leader within the church and an accomplished bishop, and I wish him well.

"A simple analysis of the vote on virtually all of the hot-button questions before this convention reveals an almost equal split," Howe said in an interview immediately following Griswold's remarks to the deputies.

"In most cases, the vote [at this General Convention] has gone in favor of the so-called liberal, progressive, or revisionist side," Howe said. "In some cases the vote has been in favor of the conservative or traditionalist side. But in virtually every case it has been only a hair-breadth victory," he said. "That is equally true of the election of the presiding bishop himself.

"From the very first ballot it was clear there were only two realistic candidates, one allied with each of these two constituencies," Howe said. "Bishop Griswold has, therefore, as his first order of business, reaching out to those on the other side of the great divide. If he does not do that, it is hard to see how these two constituencies will continue under one roof."

Hope for healing wounds

Some traditionalists expressed hope that Griswold would heal wounds from the past.

Diane Knippers, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy and a member of the board of the American Anglican Congress (AAC), a conservative coalition within the Episcopal Church, said in a press release:

"In the past several years, our church has been rocked with division and scandal — sexual, financial and theological," Knippers said.

"We have been too often embarrassed by the radical view of our leadership. And our faithful commitments to ethical teaching have been dismissed as fearful and even hateful," Knippers added. "We pledge to encourage and assist Bishop Griswold in the much-needed efforts to restore godly civility and common decency to the Episcopal Church."

"We believe that we've been marginalized under Bishop Browning's leadership and that the deck has been stacked against us," Knippers said. "What we really want is to be included in a representational way. We believe our views represent the majority of Christendom and the vast majority of Episcopalians, and we want a rightful place at the table. We're hoping that he will be more fair," Knippers said.

Roger Boltz, administrative director of the AAC, added, "It is our hope that he will be more commit-

esa covers righter luncheon

In our effort to impart the total experience of General Convention, we include, verbatim, reports that appeared in the daily convention coverage of the Episcopal Synod of America (below) and Episcopalians United (see page 14).

We will note that more than 200 people attended the Righter Luncheon, where Walter and Nancy were the surprised recipients of the 1997 Louie Crew Award for service to Integrity and its members. Walter and Nancy were given a standing ovation and both speeches were interrupted often by heartfelt applause.

'Church Coming Around, Bishop Righter Asserts' Foundations Daily/The Source Episcopal Synod of American/Prayer Book Society 7/23/97

Integrity, the Episcopal Church's gay and lesbian lobby, gave Bishop Walter Righter and his wife Nancy its sixth annual Louie Crew Award Tuesday for "distinguished gay and lesbian activity in the Episcopal Church."

The award is named for Louie Crew, Integrity's founder.

The church owns up

griswold...

ted to holding the Episcopal Church together and to improving our relations with other provinces of the Anglican Communion. Important steps to these ends would be to see that all points of view are fairly represented on national committees and to speak to the public on behalf of the whole church only when the whole church truly has one mind and voice."

Bishop Keith Ackerman of the Diocese of Quincy, recently elected to the Executive Council by the House of Bishops, said, "Ever since I was elected bishop of the Diocese of Quincy, Bishop Griswold has been extremely supportive and very kind. I am certain that his many talents and his deep spirituality will be brought into this office. I will commit myself to praying daily for God the Holy Spirit to guide him.

"I believe that he has a very deep spiritual life and I think that that will certainly be essential in any office in the church, especially as presiding bishop." Ackerman said.

"The only surprise for me is how many votes Bishop Thompson got," said the Rev. Peter Toon, president of The Prayer Book Society, a conservative group. "I think a goodly number of the bishops are afraid that the church is going far too quickly to the left and he [Thompson] seemed to be a break."

The retired Iowa bishop, who withstood attempts by moral traditionalists to try him for ordaining an active homosexual to the diaconate, praised the Episcopal Church for "owning up to the way God created the world."

He said he hoped the next General Convention, in 2000, would finally "restore the church to health by getting the gay and lesbian agenda dealt with."

Righter depicted "homophobia" and "misogyny" as twin dysfunctions whose psychological cause was hard to pinpoint.

He likened the length of time necessary to deal with the two issues as comparable to the time needed to throw off belief in a flat earth. But now, he said, "'We're dealing with a sea change, and it's rapid and fast."

The snowy haired bishop, who lives in New Hampshire, lauded Louie Crew for tireless support during the period when 10 bishops were working to have Righter tried for violation of church canons and doctrine.

Righter said \$250,000 had been raised for his legal defense and held in a fund administered by the Diocese of New-

continued on next page

Griswold, 59, is in his 10th year as bishop of Chicago. His term has been marked by greater acceptance of women priests, a shift to a voluntarily funded budget, a revamping of congregational development policy leading to self-sufficiency for assisted congregations, and more emphasis on the work



Mike Barwell was recently named Deputy Director of Communications at the national Church Center.

Chinnis re-elected president of deputies

(ENS) — Dr. Pamela Chinnis of the Diocese of Washington was unanimously re-elected to a third term as president of the House of Deputies until 2000. Admitting she was "almost speechless," Chinnis told deputies she was "deeply honored to be having the opportunity to serve you again this next triennium. I have come to feel that this House of Deputies is a very special place for me and I agree with the chaplain, who said during noonday prayers that 'you are my brothers and sisters.'"

browning bids farewell

Presented here are excerpts from Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning's Final Address to the joint Houses of Bishops and Deputies, and the EWC Triennial Delegates, at the 72nd General Convention. It is important to note that the portion of Bishop Browning's speech that concerned lesbian and gay issues, and that elicited the reporting from EURRR that follows, has not been edited and is presented in its entirety.

I want to return to the beginning — the day of my installation as your Presiding Bishop. On January 11, 1986, in the National Cathedral in Washington, I stood before you and challenged this church to be an inclusive church, and a compassionate church. I challenged us to become more who God intended us to become. This was an awesome and humbling thing to do. But, I was only the messenger. What I held before the church that day was not of my own devising, but rather the values of the Reign of God. They come from Jesus and are part of our inheritance. They belong to this generation, and to every generation.

When I was bishop of Okinawa, I had a congregation of people who were Hansen disease patients — lepers. At my first confirmation as Bishop, I asked that they not use the white linen cloths to cover the tops of their heads as they had done in the past, so that I might touch the heads of those confirmands. I did so because Jesus taught me to touch the lepers. It is Jesus, not me, who said — there will be no outcasts.

As I come to the end of my ministry as your Presiding Bishop, I offer again the same challenge. My dear friends, the gospel is always the same. The

imperatives don't change. The world changes. Needs change. New problems arise. We don't choose how the world will be in any generation. We are just called to live the imperatives of the gospel in the context of the world as we find it, in this day, in our time, in our place. ...

My dear friends and fellow survivors, we have been through a lot! Let me reflect on a couple of the issues that have been so contentious for us today.

We have made a great deal of progress on understanding that racism begins within the heart of each of us and the only way we can rid our church and our society of this evil is to transform our own hearts. I give enormous thanks to every member of this church who has struggled against this pervasive sin. This past January we inaugurated a church-wide anti-racism dialogue. It was an excellent beginning and something to build on. I commend the dialogue to all of you and thank the ad hoc anti-racism task force that Pam Chinnis and I called together. Through our staff, materials were developed and they will be updated and augmented as we go along. Until we have uprooted racism and banished it from our beings, the Reign of God cannot come. Full stop. Racism makes all of us less than we should be. We have also been in a struggle to discern God's will for the role of women in this church. I long ago reached the conclusion that God never intended that only half of the human race should run this world, or this church. And we now have over 30 years experience since women began entering into leadership at all levels of our common life. I hurt for those for whom this remains painful. But I also have no doubt that experience has affirmed the wisdom of our decisions. The ministry of women has brought a wholeness to our

luncheon...

ark - in whose behalf he acted when he ordained active homosexual Barry Stopfel.

Three thousand letters and calls from around the world poured into his home during this period, Righter said—only four of them critical of his actions. One of the four said, came from his own cousin.

A royal pain

Nancy Righter, the bishop's third wife, who shared the award with her husband, called the couple's ordeal "80 percent privilege, 20 percent royal pain in the * * *."

She expressed disappointment at the House of Deputies' narrow defeat last week of a measure to bless same-sex unions. "It's not what I wanted from the church," she said.

Feminist campaigner Katie Sherrod of Fort Worth opened the luncheon by invoking the blessing of the "Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker...Father and Mother of us all." In his benediction, Righter, stuck to the standard Trinitarian form.

[The invocation was from a contemporary version of The Lord's Prayer in the New Zealand Prayer Book. Katie used the entire invocation, however, only this part was quoted by ESA, Ed.]



ministry. Our experience has been a model for other provinces in the Anglican Communion, even in spite of our own rough patches along the way.

Let us focus for a moment on our struggles around sexuality. And what could be closer to us than something that is central to each of us, at the very root of our being. We actually do agree on most issues around sexuality. We agree on the sanctity of marriage. We agree that exploitative relationships and abusive relationships are evil. We have a message for our culture about this. We should be delivering it with unity and strength. Instead, we have been diverted by fear, and, let me name it, by hate.

And I have wondered if this diversion does not come from the evil from which we pray daily for God's deliverance. Our witness, which should and could be vigorous and strong, has been divided, and at times ludicrous, to our society, because we do not agree on what a "wholesome" relationship means. Some of the most extreme among us have used the disagreement within our body to foment difficulty and advance themselves and their causes. This is not of God. Surely, this is not of God.

I'm a traditionalist. That's right. I'm a traditionalist because I treasure and believe in the ethos of Anglicanism. As Anglicans, we discern God's will through Scripture, tradition and reason. However, some have chosen to embrace biblical literalism instead of our Anglican tradition. History tells us that biblical literalism was used to support both the practice of slavery and the denigration of women. We have moved past slavery and we are moving past the oppression of women. It is time to move past using literalistic readings of the Bible to create prejudices against our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. Biblical literalism may be someone's tradition, but it's not our tradition and it's time we came home to our Anglican roots.

Again I remind you: I did not choose these issues. Nor did you. They are the challenge of this generation given to us through the God of history. I believe with all my heart that for the most part, we are responding to them out of the gospel: not some literalist gospel, or a liberal gospel or a conservative gospel, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, whom we know and love.

And because we have persevered to discover what inclusivity and compassion mean for these times, I can offer real thanksgivings today. I give thanks and praise for the women who have enriched the ordained ministry of this church. I give thanks and praise for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters who serve this church so faithfully. I give thanks and praise to all people of color in this church, who make us so much more a reflection of God's creation. We are at our best when we can celebrate our diversity and find joy in our being together, joy and thanksgiving for the whole life of this Church and all its members.

I know that not everyone in this hall shares my views today and that some of what I say hurts.

But I also know that there are many here who do share my views. I have not been alone.

But that is not the point. The point is to see how we live together in this Church with our differences. ...

We have not put behind us all of the problems that beset us. That's no surprise. If we did, others would rise in their place as our focus shifted. It is no surprise that these disagreements are hurtful. Some are angry. There are serious differences present in this hall today. Sadly, I know that there are those who wonder if they have a home in the Episcopal Church anymore. But hear me again: for the sake of the gospel, we must stay in fellowship, read Scripture together, pray together, break bread together, and discern God's will for us, together.

Someone asked me how I want to be remembered. I hope I am remembered not just for what I professed, but because I worked for a Church where there is respect and room for everyone. ...

Be good to your next Presiding Bishop. Be cautious in your expectations. Do not look for a miracle worker. Do not look to him for all the answers. Pray that he knows the grace of God when he sees it. And most of all, love him. And know that the change from one Presiding Bishop to another won't make all things new. Only God does that. ...

Well, dear friends, it's time to wrap it up. I see the sunset on the horizon and it beckons me. I carry a heart full of thanksgiving today. I want to thank this church for the incredible gift of serving you as

It is time to move past using literalistic readings of the Bible to create prejudices against our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters.

see page 49 for details

Join Integrity!

and a membership form

presiding bishop's remarks spark protests in both houses

by Doug LeBlanc and David E. Sumner, *Episcopalians United*

Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning's last official speech to General Convention caused protests Friday in both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies.

Deputy Russell Reno III said Browning's remarks violated "The Covenant," a document urging charitable speech during General Convention. In the House of Bishops, approximately 40 bishops rose when Bishop Andrew Fairfield asked for bishops to stand if they found Browning's remarks hurtful.

During his address to both houses of Convention and to delegates of the Episcopal Church Women's Triennial meeting, Browning said that "fear," "hate" and "biblical literalism" contribute to the Church's divisions on sexuality.

"We actually do agree on most issues around sexuality," Browning said. "We agree on the sanctity of marriage. We agree that exploitative relationships and abusive relationships are evil. We have a message for our culture about this. We should be delivering it with unity and strength. Instead, we have been diverted by fear and, let me name it, by hate.

"And I have wondered if this diversion does not come from the evil from which we pray daily for God's deliverance. Our witness, which should and could be vigorous and strong, has been divided, and

at times ludicrous, to our society, because we do not agree on what a 'wholesome' relationship means. Some of the most extreme among us have used the disagreement within our body to foment difficulty and advance themselves and their causes. This is not of God. Surely, this is not of God," Browning said.

Many bishops and deputies applauded Browning's criticisms vigorously during the joint session on Friday morning. Browning's speech followed a series of presentations by members of Executive Council.

In later sessions, however, bishops and deputies expressed their dismay over Browning's remarks.

Reno, a deputy from the Diocese of Nebraska, rose immediately at the start of the deputies' afternoon session to present the following resolution: "This House is deeply disappointed that Bishop Browning has violated the Convention covenant by denouncing as hateful those who oppose his views on human sexuality and by describing those who are vocal in their opposition as being 'not of God.'"

A measure to amend the rules of order to discuss Reno's resolution did not receive the necessary two-thirds majority. Between 150 and 200 deputies voted in favor of that motion.

Bishops and deputies who agree to "The Covenant," a proposal from the Standing Commission on the State of the Church, pledge that they "will avoid pejorative labels for those who disagree with us" and "will not analyze the psychological or spiritual state of others."

"I came to this Convention with a great hope that we might recover our Anglican heritage of communal respect and mutual forbearance," Reno said in explaining his resolution. "I must say I was simply shocked by the Presiding Bishop's denunciations. I certainly respect and allow that he could speak to his own convictions. However, the violence of his remarks against those who have disagreed with him is deeply disturbing. I am especially disturbed that this violation of the Convention Covenant comes from the Presiding Officer of this Church."

"I felt hurt and offended and further marginalized," Fairfield told Browning in the House of Bishops, responding to his characterization of "biblical literalists."

Fairfield then invited his fellow bishops to stand if they were hurt by Browning's remarks. "Because

browning...

your 24th Presiding Bishop. And know this. I am thankful today not just for most of you, but for all of you, because together, as the baptized, we are more than a legislative body. We are the Body of Christ, walking in unity, though not uniformity.

I come to you today to say thank you for your prayers, and for being who you are to me. I will end this particular chapter of my ministry in a spirit of profound thanksgiving because I believe this church has been faithful. Around this hall this morning and across this church there are people who have day by day worked and prayed to usher in the Reign of God. And we know that, at the end of the day, we are in God's hands.

Continue this journey — in faith, and love, and joy. Seek consensus. Work toward reconciliation. Honor people where they are. And know that as this retiring bishop moves west with Patti, he does so with a promise that you will always be close to his heart and in his prayers.

God bless you.

integrity president helps celebrate browning's ministry

[On Sunday evening, 7/20/97, Edmond Browning was honored with a celebration of his ministry as Presiding Bishop. The theme for the evening was taken from Bishop Browning's new book 'No Outcasts'. A copy of that book, as well as a video of the same title, were given to those attending the celebration. Various speakers were interspersed with video clips from Bishop Browning's prophetic speeches concerning inclusion for lesbians and gay men, women's ordination, racism, and peace and justice issues. Fred Ellis, President of Integrity, was among those asked to speak. The following is the text of Fred's remarks.]

My friend Bishop Frank Vest of Southern Virginia reminded me, on occasion, that he knew me before I became an activist. I suspect that the Presiding Bishop sometime wishes that were still the case.

As I reflected on what I might say tonight that would bring the most vivid image of his ministry to the lesbian and gay members of this church to you, one image repeatedly came to mind.

In 1992, Integrity had its national meeting in Houston, and the Presiding Bishop agreed to come

preach and celebrate the convention Eucharist. He shared with us a very intimate glimpse of his family and how that image translated, for him, to the family of the church. He challenged us to enter into a reconciling ministry, both at that time, and as we continue to move through our life in the Episcopal Church. My dear friend, I would like to believe that we accepted your challenge and continue to do so.

My most enduring image of that night however, was as people came forward to receive the bread and wine. People from all walks of life: lesbian, gay, straight, people of color and many ethnic persuasions. Many of these folks in tears of joy at the opportunity to meet this man of vision who had proclaimed there would be "no outcasts" in this church of ours. If I may be so bold, my friend, as to borrow some words you used a few nights ago, many of us "came home that night." Here he was sharing with them and living the statement he had made.

My dear friend, on behalf of all the members and friends of Integrity I thank you. We rejoice in the ministry you have provided, we look forward to your continued ministry and presence among us, and we wish you and Patti God's speed as you begin this next step in your life.

protests...

we are your brothers and you are our brother, I need to say to you, 'Ouch. It hurts,'" Fairfield said.

Bishop Alden Hathaway of Pittsburgh asked Browning whether his descriptions of biblical literalists contradicted his frequent message of inclusivity.

Bishop Bill Frey pointed out that evangelical Anglicans, such as William Wilberforce, led the abolitionist movement in Great Britain. "I'm not a biblical literalist, I'm not an extremist and I'm not motivated by hatred," said Bishop David Ball of Albany.

Bishop FitzSimons Allison asked Browning to correct the impression that "anyone who disagrees with you on sexuality is a literalist and motivated by hate."

"I did not say that, sir," Browning said. "I think you need to read my paper again."

Some bishops praised Browning.

Bishop Robert Ilhoff of Maryland said he considered it Browning's finest speech ever. "I commend you for what I perceive as a prophetic word, and I know prophetic words sometimes sting. Sometimes they have stung me."

Bishop Douglas Theuner of New Hampshire thanked both Browning and Fairfield for what they said. "I think this very discussion is remarkable and a gift from God."

"I just want to stand to bless your heart and to say thank you for wishing to speak in love rather than in hate," said Bishop Catharine S. Roskam, suffragan of New York.

Browning thanked Bishop Fairfield for his response, but offered no further qualification or apology for his remarks.



sex on the floor

by Ann Carlson

My friend Mark leaned over and asked, "Are we going to have more sex on the floor today?"

"I hope so," I replied. "The Social and Urban committee expects several of the Human Sexuality resolutions to be on today's legislative calendar."

Human sexuality was a hot topic at this year's General Convention as it has been and will be for decades. I had the opportunity to sit as a visitor in the Social and Urban legislative committee, the committee assigned most of the resolutions concerning Human Sexuality, during the whole of Convention. I experienced the entire process of reviewing legislation, receiving testimony on the resolutions, making amendments or substitutions, and deciding on recommendations to the legislative houses. I also sat as an alternate in the House of Deputies and heard all the debate on the floor.

The experience was instructive. I learned a great deal about the legislative process of our Church. I learned a lot about the remarkable people in the House of Deputies, especially those who serve on the legislative committees, and about the phenomenal amount of work they do with amazing cheerfulness and forbearance. But my most interesting discovery was the astonishingly different impressions people can have of the same discussion or event. I sat in hearing after hearing, listening to a variety of people testify before the committee about the sexuality resolutions, particularly about resolutions dealing with developing and approving rites for the blessing of same-sex unions. I read articles in the press the following days about the same hearings. I would have never recognized that the reporters and I sat in the same sessions. I think that many of us might quite legitimately be classified as "hearing challenged." Nevertheless, let me try to describe some of the things I heard and thought.

I heard a total of three hours of testimony on the subject of same-sex unions, approximately 50 people, about equally divided for and against. Where others claimed they heard the people speaking for the unions simply seeking to justify their lifestyle, and people speaking in opposition trying to "defend the faith," I heard an incredibly complex discussion. I heard several "ex-gays" seeking to justify their lifestyle as they spoke against allowing these rites. If this is a criticism of the pro- side, it seems to me that it can equally apply to the con- side. But the discussion I heard on both sides included much more. I was particularly

impressed with the number of priests seeking to understand their pastoral responsibility. How does the faith community acknowledge the realities of the lives of its members? How do we offer support to families and the individuals within them? To whom do we offer this support and who is left out? Other questions were raised. What does the sacrament of marriage signify and how does this relate to the civil institution? What does it mean when we bless a couple, a person, an animal, a boat? What does it mean to withhold a blessing? How do we interpret scripture, and what is an Anglican approach to looking at scripture in this case?

As I listened, one rather startling pattern became clear. Although we argue passionately about whether we can bring ourselves to permit same sex unions in our churches, it is clear that recognizing the couples' anniversaries has been commonplace for some time, particularly the 10th anniversary. Perhaps after 10 years, the people who believe that gay or lesbian couples never stay together take another look at their assumptions. Couple after couple told of anniversary ceremonies in their parish, special parties and formal recognition. One couple spoke of adopting twin sons on their 10th anniversary, and the wonderful support of their parish family in that event. On one couple's 25th anniversary, their bishop *asked* them if he might bless their union! But, the formal recognitions of anniversaries were not all positive. We also heard about a 10th anniversary marked by the priest refusing the couple communion from that point forward, because of their relationship.

The testimony, as I have said, was about equally divided on this issue. The House of Deputies reflected this division when voting on a resolution which would have permitted the development of rites to be used for same-sex unions, and presentation of those rites to the next General Convention. This resolution failed by just one vote in each order. Another resolution, one which calls for the study of the rites currently in use and a report to the next General Convention, passed in both houses. We hear conservatives claim that the large majority of the "people in the pews" are against this progress towards inclusivity which gains more support in each triennium. I can't see where they think these people are. They are not in the pews of my parish, and seemingly are not much involved with sending deputies of like thinking to General Convention.

Sometimes I am a person who looks for God to send signs and wonders to help us decide our path. I was thinking of signs as I watched a pigeon land at

neac healing service

by Nick Downen

Everyone had the opportunity to see present and future Episcopal Church leaders in action at the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition (NEAC) Service of Prayer and Healing held in Philadelphia on Tuesday evening, July 22, 1997. The Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, which five years ago received the first NEAC award for outstanding service to persons living with HIV/AIDS, provided the impressive setting for this service. This imposing Classical Revival church, conveniently located in a gay neighborhood of Philadelphia, had hosted just the week before the jam-packed and joyous, but also hot and sweaty, Integrity General Convention Eucharist. This church isn't air conditioned, but cooler weather, both inside and out, prevailed for NEAC's service. The Rev. Roger C. Broadley, Rector, deserves our thanks and appreciation for his hospitality.

The Rev. David F. Funkhouser, a member of the Diocese of Pennsylvania's AIDS Task Force, welcomed the congregation to a service "built around silence." He and the Rev. Susan M. Richards, a fellow Task Force member, officiated. Three bishops of our church, Frank T. Griswold III, Richard L. Shimpfky, and Herbert Thompson Jr., blessed the oil together and administered the apostolic rite of prayer, anointing, and the laying on of hands. Many persons came forward to receive it. Only the day before, Bishop Griswold had been elected the Episcopal Church's 25th Presiding Bishop. Significantly, this service was probably his first public sacramental act as Presiding Bishop-elect. Bishops Shimpfky and Thompson, who had also run for the office of Presiding Bishop, were invited by Bishop Griswold to take part.

on the floor...

the feet of Randy Dales, the chair of Social and Urban, while he presented the resolution asking the church to study and report on the blessing of same-sex unions. Had the pigeon been a dove, and landed on his head or shoulder instead of at his feet, I would have been a lot more impressed. But any bird landing there in the middle of an enclosed auditorium seemed significant. I expect there were others in the room hoping that the bird might deposit a much different type of sign on the Rev. Mr. Dales, and who believe that God is leading in the opposite direction. But for me the direction seems clear. I even have hopes that we will get there while some of us in this fight are still around to see it.

Ann Carlson is the Convener of Integrity/Tidewater. She writes regularly for The Voice of Integrity.

In the laying on of hands the bishops stood at three of five stations in company with other clergy and laity. Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis, newly re-elected President of the House of Deputies, who had read a Bible lesson, stood with Bishop Griswold. Throughout the anointing a Latin Taizé chant, "Veni, Sancte Spiritus" or "Come, Holy Spirit," was sung over and over again by the congregation, led by a choir of parishioners from St. Luke and the Epiphany. The anguish of all present seemed the more forceful and memorable by the quiet restraint of its expression, yet tears were seen on many faces, heard in many voices.

The Episcopal Church has AIDS. Despite new drug treatments people are still dying of AIDS, even in this country, whose popular religious tradition emphasizes good health and some of whose elected officials' favorite hot-air propaganda includes praising "the best health care system in the world." During this service's prayers the numbers of the dead were made powerfully, crushingly evident by the many names mentioned. I heard the names of persons from the Diocese of Pennsylvania, and many others, who died several years ago and whom I had almost forgotten. In the packed but hushed church – the Scripture readings, prayers, chants and hymns were interspersed with periods of contemplative silence – it was comforting and appropriate to remember the dead, to think of everyone living with HIV/AIDS, and to give thanks for NEAC and other Episcopal Church HIV/AIDS ministries.

Several panels of the AIDS quilt were hanging from the church's balconies. For Bishop Griswold the service took an unexpectedly personal and poignant turn when he was asked to bless new AIDS quilt panels for a clergy couple, the Rev. Wayne R. Hanson II (1953-1994) and the Rev. Donald A. Melvin (1954-1995), both of whom he knew well and had ordained. Father Hanson served as Rector of All Saints' Church, Indianapolis, from 1990 to 1994, and Father Melvin was a Priest Associate there. Bishop Griswold had known of Hanson's death but not of Melvin's until this evening. The quilt panels were designed, made, and presented by Irma Reinumagi (her surname is Estonian), who attends All Saints, Indianapolis, and who was a friend and caregiver to the couple. She said they were together 14 years. "I came primarily because I wanted to bring Wayne and Don to General Convention," she said. "I worked to get the panels done in time for this. I brought them tonight not realizing it would be Bishop Griswold."

This unforgettable evening concluded at another Philadelphia Episcopal church, St. Stephen's, with a NEAC fund-raising concert by the Miserable Offenders, Ana Hernández and Deborah Griffin Bly, a singing duo who have become quite well known through their personal appearances and recordings.

Nick Downen is a member of Integrity/New York



stats
gc

resolutions of importance to integrity

All graphs/text by John Clinton Bradley

During General Convention, Integrity closely monitored 26 resolutions related to homosexuality, women's ordination, and HIV/AIDS. Only two of these resolutions had an outcome unfavorable to Integrity's position—**that's a 92 percent success rate!** The table below summarizes these resolutions.

The possible outcomes for these resolutions were:

- **Adopted**—Both Houses voted in favor, so the resolution becomes an Act of Convention
- **Rejected**—the first House to consider the matter voted against it; so the resolution died for this convention
- **Non-Concurrence**—the first House voted for it, but the second House voted against it, so it died for this convention
- **Discharged**—the subject matter was dealt with in a related resolution
- **Referred**—one or both Houses voted to refer the matter to an interim body for study and report back
- **Expired**—assigned committee, House of Deputies, or House of Bishops failed to consider before the end of convention, so the resolution died

The outcome data in this table is unofficial; it is based on preliminary reports from Integrity volunteers and the General Convention Web site. For more information on these resolutions and their outcomes, visit the General Convention Web site [<http://www.dfms.org/gc97/>].

Resolution Number	Resolution Name	Integrity Position	Outcome
A013	Add Definition to Canon IV.15: Discipline	FOR	Adopted
A014	Add Definition to Canon IV.15: Doctrine	FOR	Adopted
A032	Common Beliefs on Relationships	NEUTRAL	Expired
A045	Continuation of the Commission on HIV/AIDS	FOR	Adopted
A046	Program for the National Church: AIDS and Racism	FOR	Adopted
A047	Program for the National Church: Prevention	FOR	Adopted with amendment(s)
A048	Continuing Witness to God's Love	FOR	Adopted with amendment(s)
A052	Amend Canon III.8.1, Canon III.16 and 17: On Ordination Qualifications	FOR	Adopted with amendment(s)
A053	Rights of Those Opposing Women's Ordination	FOR	Adopted with amendment(s)
A071	Promote Voluntary Dialogue on Human Sexuality	FOR	Adopted
B002	Amend Canon III.14: Prohibit clergy sex outside marriage	AGAINST	Expired
B004	Define 'Immorality' to include Extramarital Sex	AGAINST	Discharged
B032	Endorsement of Kuala Lumpur	AGAINST	Referred

C002	Committed Relationships between Persons of the Same Sex (identical to C044)	FOR	Rejected
C003	Enable Discussion on Committed Same-Sex Relationships	FOR	Adopted
C005	Urge Pension Fund to Extend Benefits to Domestic Partners	FOR	Rejected
C022	Pension Fund Benefits for Life Partners of Gay/Lesbian Clergy	FOR	Discharged
C024	Health Insurance for Domestic Partners	FOR	Adopted
C026	Diocesan Responsibility for Ordination Standards	AGAINST (Rendered moot by Righter trial)	Discharged
C042	Committed Relationships Between Persons of Same Sex	FOR	Discharged
C044	Committed Relationships Between Persons of the Same Sex (identical to C002)	FOR	Discharged
D011	Apology to Gays and Lesbians	FOR	Adopted
D020	Moratorium on Church's Teaching Regarding Homosexuality/Private Conscience	AGAINST	Expired
D032	Teach Youth Abstinence	AGAINST (changed to FOR with amendments)	Adopted with amendment(s)
D052	Allow Rites of Commitment	NEUTRAL	Discharged
D099	Commendation of the National AIDS Memorial	FOR	Adopted

how did your deputies vote?

gc stats

Most votes in the House of Deputies are taken by a show of cards—green for “yes”; red for “no”—and a simple majority is needed to approve a resolution. On some resolutions, a “vote by orders” is called, which requires the clergy and lay deputies from each diocese divide into orders and cast a block vote. If the majority (3 out of 4 deputies) of a clergy or lay deputation favor a resolution, a “yes” vote is reported. If the majority oppose a resolution, a “no” vote is reported. If a lay or clergy deputation is split, a “divided” vote is reported. A divided vote is counted as a no vote. In order for a resolution to pass, a majority of both the lay and clergy deputations must report a yes vote. Accordingly, it is much more difficult for a resolution to survive a vote by orders.

During General Convention 1997, three resolutions related to homosexuality were subjected to votes by orders and narrowly defeated. However, these votes provided import information about where each deputation stood on gay and lesbian issues.

In the table on the following pages, a no vote is indicated with a -1, a divided vote with a 0, and a yes vote with a 1. Blanks indicate absence or not voting. (It should be noted that no lay deputies from the Ecuadorian Diocese of Litoral were able to attend.) In the case of these

three resolutions, a -1 can be interpreted as an anti-gay/lesbian vote and a 1 can be interpreted as a pro-gay/lesbian vote.

The Total Lay Score is the sum of the lay votes on the three resolutions—ranging from -3 (least favorable) to 3 (most favorable). Similarly, the Total Clergy Score is the sum of the clergy votes on the three resolutions—ranging from -3 (least favorable) to 3 (most favorable). The Total Deputation Score is the sum of the Total Lay Score and the Total Clergy Score—ranging from -6 (least favorable) to 6 (most favorable). The Difference Between Lay & Clergy Scores shows the amount of agreement between the lay and clergy deputies from each diocese—ranging from 0 (complete agreement) to 6 (complete disagreement).

If your deputies voted against gay and lesbian people, consider educating them more intensely or seeking to replace them with more supportive deputies during the next three years.

This table is adapted with permission from statistics compiled by Dr. Louie Crew from official General Convention records. Visit Dr. Crew's Web site [http://newark.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/votes_a.html] to see how your deputies voted on women's ordination and other issues.

	C002—To authorize the Standing Liturgical Commission to develop a rite for blessing same-sex relationships—for eventual inclusion in the Book of Occasional Services		C005—To urge the Church Pension Fund to extend spousal benefits to domestic partners		C024--To authorize the Church Medical Trust to extend health coverage to domestic partners for those diocese that wish it		Total Lay Score	Total Clergy Score	Total Deputation Score	Difference Between Lay & Clergy Scores
	Lay Vote	Clergy Vote	Lay Vote	Clergy Vote	Lay Vote	Clergy Vote				
New York	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Newark	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Nicaragua	0	-1	0	-1	1	-1	1	-3	-2	4
North Carolina	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0
North Dakota	-1	1	-1	1	-1	1	-3	3	0	6
Northern California	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	-2	-1	-3	1
Northern Indiana	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	-3	-1	-4	2
Northern Michigan	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Northwest Texas	0	0	0	-1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Northwestern Pa	0	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	0	-3	-3	3
Ohio	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Oklahoma	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1	-2	-2	-4	0
Olympia	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Oregon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Panama	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	0	-1	-2	-3	1
Pennsylvania	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Pittsburgh	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	-2	-3	-5	1
Quincy	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
Rhode Island	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Rio Grande	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
Rochester	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
San Diego	0	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-2	0
San Joaquin	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
South Carolina	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
South Dakota	-1	0	0	0	0	1	-1	1	0	2
Southeast Florida	0	1	0	1	-1	0	-1	2	1	3
Southern Ohio	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Southern Virginia	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	2	5	1
Southwest Florida	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
Southwestern Virginia	1	1	-1	0	1	1	1	2	3	1
Spokane	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	5	1
Springfield	-1	1	-1	0	-1	0	-3	1	-2	4
Taiwan	1	1			1	1	2	2	4	0
Tennessee	-1	0	-1	0	-1	0	-3	0	-3	3
Texas	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
Upper South Carolina	0	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1	-2	-3	1
Utah	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Vermont	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Virgin Islands	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	-3	-1	-4	2
Virginia	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	3	3
Washington	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
West Missouri	1	1	-1	-1	1	1	1	1	2	0
West Tennessee	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	-3	-1	-4	2
West Texas	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-4	2
West Virginia	0	-1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Western Kansas	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
Western Louisiana	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-3	-3	-6	0
Western Massachusetts	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	5	1
Western Michigan	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Western New York	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0
Western North Carolina	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6	0
Wyoming	1	1	0	-1	1	-1	2	-1	1	3

deputies' vote on same-sex blessings: an analysis

by Michael Hopkins

An examination of the House of Deputies vote on the Blessing of Same-sex Unions reveals an interesting and hopeful picture. It certainly shows that the intuition is correct that the resolution would have easily won on a direct vote (i.e., "one deputy, one vote").

Of the 113 dioceses voting 45 (40%) voted yes in both orders, as opposed to only 28 (25%) voting both no. The other 40 dioceses (35%) were split.

When one begins to analyze the split dioceses, interesting things begin to happen:

Dioceses voting without a "No": 61
 Dioceses voting at least one "No": 52

or, slightly better,

Dioceses voting at least one "Yes": 62
 Dioceses voting without a "Yes": 51

or, slightly better still,

Dioceses voting at least one "Yes" or two "Divided": 66

Dioceses voting two "No" or "No"/"Divided": 47

or, finally, better still,

Dioceses with at least one "Yes" or "Divided": 85

Dioceses with two "No": 28.

The statistics by Province (below) prove interesting as well. Generally speaking, they are about what one would expect, although Province 4 (the Southeast) is more divided than might be anticipated (a good thing). In addition the resolution did well in the Plains, and made a respectable showing even in the Southwest.

It is clear that a majority of deputies wanted, at the very least, to see what the Standing Liturgical Commission would come up with for a rite. Support for seeking a way to celebrate gay and lesbian relationships has been shown to be strong in the Church, guaranteeing that this vote will take place again.

	Laity			Clergy		
	Y	N	D	Y	N	D
Province 1 (New Eng.)	6	0	1	7	0	0
Province 2 (NY/NJ/Car.)	6	4	1	6	3	2
Province 3 (Mid-Atl.)	8	2	2	7	3	2
Province 4 (Southeast)	6	10	5	6	10	5
Province 5 (Midwest)	10	5	0	11	2	2
Province 6 (Plains)	5	4	0	3	1	5
Province 7 (Southwest)	3	7	2	2	8	2
Province 8 (West)	10	4	3	11	3	3
Province 9 (C&S Am.)	2	5	1	3	6	0

deputy, not 'delegate'

by Louie Crew

I'd be most happy to tell any inquirer how I voted, even on those issues not tabulated by others. Deputation tallies on all bellwether issues at the last 3 General Conventions were put into *The Voice of Integrity*, and I have had those summaries on the web since the earliest days of the web. I expect to have on my website very soon all tallies on all votes by orders and on all Bishops' roll call votes — as soon as I can check my unofficial tallies with official ones.

But I seriously doubt that anyone has used, or will use this information to influence voters in bids for re-election.

General Convention deputies are not now elected in procedures that encourage plebiscites or referenda. Elections by canon have to be at least a year ahead of the General Convention, and many run closer to two years ahead. The Diocese of Newark elections for 1997, e.g., occurred as the Ellen Cook scandal was breaking, and that was rarely even mentioned by the time we got to General Convention.

I can't speak for other dioceses, but in my own, the diocese elects the diocesan work-horses, people respected for their service to a wide range of diocesan ministries. Every deputy this year is now serving or has recently served on the Standing Committee or Diocesan Council. Most have also served on other bodies, such as the Commission on Ministry, the Task Force to Dismantle Racism... Many of the 'near winners' and alternates also fit that pattern. Because of those roles, most have also been quite conspicuous at diocesan convention. Delegates to convention have few other ways to get a sense of who is who. And if their rectors or others in their parish are active at the diocesan level, they report to the deputations their impressions about the quality of the service of the various people they know on the slate.

Those patterns of service at the diocesan level do not necessarily correlate with views about issues of national concern. Who, for example, would have predicted that our diocesan chancellor, from one of the most conservative Anglo-catholic parishes in the world, would have so vigorously and aggressively defended Walter Righter in the church trial of the

century: those of us who had worked with him in various diocesan venues might have known how consistent that is with his highly orthodox theology. (Admittedly, in most dioceses a bishop would never appoint someone as chancellor with a theological position as radically different from his own, but my bishop does not try to control how we think.)

As one who tried to influence GC from the lobby for years before I had a seat in the House, one of the features I rejoiced in is how marvelously GC lends itself to influences from non-deputies. Many, many deputies have changed their views about race, about women, about lesbigays, about *{fill in any current controversy}* at GC precisely because at GC they have encountered as fellow pilgrims people who vastly differ from them by race, gender, sexual orientation... Imagine telling the folks at Pentecost that they simply must record all those testimonies but not affirm them till they got their orders from the folks back home! GC deputies are that, deputies, not delegates, and we are folks trusted to vote our own consciences informed by the communal experience of General Convention itself.

This process cuts across all barriers. One of the commitments that I brought home with me from Philadelphia is to work much, much harder in ministry with Conservatives to whom I have grown closer in the community of GC. It seemed that no matter how early I arrived for the Social and Urban Issues Committee, Martyn Minns was already there ahead of me, with his computer. We frequently shared notes, helped identify witnesses for each other. I was the secretary, he was a visitor—a visitor who kindness and intelligence I rejoiced in having access to. I hope he and I can find some common grounds to work together on. I don't give a flip about whether he shares my theology about lesbigays; as rector of Truro Church, he undoubtedly does not. But why should that bar our working on issues together, most of which have nothing to do with issues of human sexuality. I'm impressed by the work his parish is doing among the poor and the needy. I am impressed with their generosity towards evangelism. ...

Conservatives were frequently at the Newark tables (Kendall Harmon, Ed Little, John Guernsey, just to name a few), and I was often at their tables, trying to see how we could re-word items about

Imagine telling the folks at Pentecost that they simply must record all those testimonies but not affirm them till they got their orders from the folks back home!

on the church's

by Jennifer M. Phillips

I am dismayed by how little attention the discussions about sexuality in the Church to focus on the *koinonia*, the community, of the local parish. If covenanted relationships, gay or straight, exist simply for the couples involved and their well-being in life together, then clandestine blessings among small groups of like-minded friends might be sufficient, but I am convinced that our theology of Baptism and Eucharist begins in and leads back to *koinonia*. None of our Sacraments are private matters. Even so-called "private confession," now properly termed "reconciliation" connects the penitent back into the *koinonia* from which the individual has become distanced by sin.

The centrality of community context was incarnated in my experience as rector of a parish which had, for several generations, included gay and lesbian members whose relationships were visible and whose lives were thoroughly woven into the lives of their straight fellow congregants. Anecdotal history

reported that certain of the clergy associated with the parish, then mission, in the era around the turn of the century through the 1960's, would bless lesbian and gay couples quietly from time to time after services. The congregation became known as a place that welcomed all who came through its theatre district doors: alcoholics and prostitutes, vaudeville performers, slaves and servants of the wealthy households over the hill, artists, even a few of the eccentric wealthy themselves, Anglo-Catholics of every stripe. *Because* they were Anglo-Catholics, this matter of blessing held much importance. Proper prayer required the full sensorium: touch, fragrance, light, color, word and song, gesture, water and bread. That which was experienced as hollowed and which was to be offered to God for continued hallowing must have connection to the corporate prayer of the community.

In the 1970's to early 1980's, the widening public conversation about sexuality was mirrored in equally lively dialog within the congregation. In July of 1969, homosexuality as God-given was a topic addressed from the pulpit and the parish newsletter. In 1987, the fairly newly-incorporated parish placed a resolution before diocesan convention urging the diocese to ask the national Church to find an appropriate form for the blessings of relationships.

When I arrived as rector to the parish in 1988, the previous incumbent in consultation with the retiring bishop had just declined to bless a gay couple, and there was deep consternation and a congregational certainty that if the parish were to survive and flourish, the pastoral need of its gay and lesbian members must be tended. My co-rector and I entered into conversation with the newly elected bishop at once upon our arrival. The gay couple had turned to a Unitarian church and pastor for their blessing, but a lesbian couple who had been together over fifteen years were ready and asking for a liturgical celebration of their love. Though sympathetic to the pain of the congregation, the bishop was unwilling to permit us to act to bless gay and lesbian covenants of union until the wider Church might come to consensus.

We began an intensive year of conversation with the bishop. Both rectors, both wardens and some members of the parish met on various occasions to exchange theological rationales with him. At one

deputy, not delegate...

which we might to support across our differences. Journalists may have wanted to see us as enemies, but I did not live in the mind-set, nor did I sense that these friends did either.

And I cannot begin to describe adequately the vast changes of simple affirmation (not ratification; why should one even want or expect that) that I experienced at this General Convention, hundreds of little acts of personal kindness. Many dropped off little mementos of affection, a mouse pad, all kinds of goodies to eat, gentle notes... So hospitable was the convention that I took to walking in the heat outside just so that I could get my secretarial errands done; it took me easily 45 minutes minimum to walk the air-conditioned route and speak with all who wanted to greet me by name. (What a delightful problem to have, especially for one whose parish once asked him to leave a quarter of a century ago!) Many, many of these would say something like "I can probably never vote with you, but I want to thank you for..."

Folks, General Convention is not the world. It is a very special place. It is a place that allows God to change us all. It is a place that allows us to argue fiercely across our differences and still to understand that we all see at best through a very dark glass, knowing for sure, however, that when we know as even now we are known, God loves absolutely every one of us beyond our wildest capacity to imagine.



Dr. Crew is a member of the House of Deputies from the diocese of Newark. He founded Integrity in 1974.

need to bless

point, all three bishops of the diocese came to a meeting in which dozens of members of the congregation - gay, straight, bi, coupled, single, divorced, newcomers, old-timers - spoke of the way in which they perceived God at work in themselves and in the lives of their sisters and brothers in the parish. All three bishops and most of us wept at the poignant and powerful testimony. It is my impression that our Ordinary revised his theological understanding of sexuality, Baptism and Eucharist based on the person-to-person contacts he had with all of us through that year. But he remained unwilling to allow us to move forward.

Over a period of months in this parish which had waited with such patience and hope, there were signs that the Eucharistic fabric was unraveling. This became clear one winter night when, in the context of a fast-day liturgy, a married couple came forward for prayer and a reiteration of their wedding covenant on their twenty-fifth anniversary. One partner of the lesbian couple broke down in tears, realizing that their anniversary of over a decade and a half of love was also approaching but without likelihood of being honored in corporate worship. Two or three members of the congregation felt so sick at heart that they left before Communion, and of those who remained, many gay and straight came to the rail in or near tears. The married couple saw and felt their own grief at the pain of their friends, and their awareness of privilege spoiled the joy proper to their anniversary. A couple in premarital preparation came to me and said that they had decided they would not celebrate their wedding in the church until their gay and lesbian neighbors could also ask a liturgical blessing in the congregation.

When a loving congregation can no longer take joy in one another's lives, when members are so broken-hearted they no longer respond to God's invitation to the sacraments, and when it is manifest to all that there is not justice (in Hebrew, *mishpat*) - that characteristic of God and God's people which is founded in family (*mishpacha*), and the right relationships that constitute it - then *koinonia* comes apart and *eucharist, thanksgiving*, ceases. The body is broken.

It became clear to us all that we could not in good faith continue in this way. We laid plans for a liturgical blessing of the couple who had been wait-

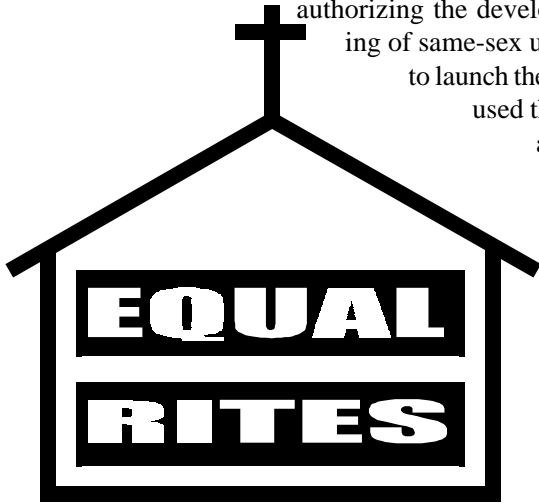
ing. We returned to our bishop and kept him apprised at every point. It was unclear up until the last minute whether he would inhibit or bring a presentment against us clergy. At last, a peculiar theological loophole emerged for him, based on his conception that only the congregational celebration of the Eucharist was the prayer of the whole people of God in which priests presided in place of their bishop, and that therefore, if the blessing of the relationship happened outside the strict rubrical confines of the Eucharistic liturgy, he would not consider we had violated the discipline and order of the Church. So, on Candlemas 1990, after the joyful procession of the feast and before the opening acclamation of the Eucharist, the couple exchanged their vows at the altar and the priests and whole congregation joined in the prayer of blessing as hands were laid on them. An immense crowd of congregants and friends attended, and several new members joined the parish because of the overflow of joy and blessing they experienced that night.

There continued to be struggles to work out mutual theology with our bishop over the months that followed. He publicly disavowed the clergy and parish's actions as "not the accepted position or teaching of the Episcopal Church," but did not take action against us, and over ensuing months became increasingly a voice for change in the wider Church. The parish continued to care pastorally for all its members as needed, and grew in strength and numbers, in ministry and joy.

The lesson of that congregation, and the similar one I now serve in another city and diocese, is that where gay and lesbian lives are open and known just as other lives are open and known in a Eucharistic *koinonia*, it becomes not only right but necessary that the congregation return thanks to God for the ways in which God blesses the whole people through these lives and shows forth Godself in them. Because we are baptized into a *koinonia* of thanksgiving, we cannot *not* thank and praise God. It is our fundamental duty and calling to "always and everywhere give God thanks and praise" for being present to us and active among us. Because gay and lesbian loves enrich the *koinonia* with their joy, faithfulness, loving kindness, mercy, justice, peace, and hospitality - those hallmark qualities of God and the people of God from Abraham until now - we bless God for

by John Clinton Bradley

In the May 1997 issue of *Episcopal Life*, Episcopalians United published a quarter page ad that attacked upcoming General Convention resolutions authorizing the development of rites for the blessing of same-sex unions. In response, I decided to launch the Equal Rites campaign, which used the Internet to widely circulate an open letter to General Convention expressing support for the resolution.



During Phase I of the campaign, over 150 signatures and \$3000 in contributions were received. Integrity/Washington graciously agreed to serve as the fiscal agent although the campaign was not officially sponsored by national Integrity or Integrity/Washington.

These funds enabled us to purchase a 9" x 10" ad that appeared in the July issue of *Episcopal Life*.

In Phase II of the campaign, the total number of signatures rose to 455, representing 67 dioceses. Signatories were straight and gay, coupled and singled, members and nonmembers of Integrity.

Since a few contributions arrived after the ad had been submitted for publication, I used those monies to produce 500 square, purple buttons with the Equal Rites logo and 500 copies of the open letter. These were distributed at the Integrity and Beyond Inclusion booths during General Convention.

church's need...

them. That is the definition of *blessing*, after all: to return to God thanks and praise and to ask God's continued presence and assistance in some thing or event in which the community has experienced God as blessing them.

Gay and lesbian people may, at times, urgently desire the public celebration of their lives together, but it is the eucharistic community which most *needs* such occasions of corporate prayer in order to live out its calling toward God.



The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phillips, an At-Large member of Integrity, is Rector of Trinity Parish, St. Louis, and an Associate of SSJE.

During a hearing on July 16, I was able to present the letter and its signatories to the members of the Social & Urban Issues Committee. [Below is a text of the final letter. You can read the list of all those who signed it by visiting my Web site [<http://members.aol.com/johnclint/equalrites/>].

Although General Convention came short this year of authorizing development of a rite for blessing same-sex couples, I am confident that it *will* in 2000! Thanks to everyone who supported this project.

AN OPEN LETTER TO GENERAL CONVENTION

Dear Members of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies:

As Episcopalians who rejoice in the diversity of our church, we wish to express our support for resolution C002, "Committed Relationships between Persons of the Same Sex," which has been presented to 72nd General Convention by the Diocese of Pennsylvania. This resolution directs "the Standing Liturgical Commission to develop, after critical study of pertinent rites already in use by faith communities, a rite or rites for the blessing of committed relationships between persons of the same sex, and to present such forms to the 73rd General Convention for inclusion in the Book of Occasional Services." The diocesan conventions of Massachusetts, Newark, and Rochester have also expressed their support for this resolution. The diocesan conventions of Michigan and California have expressed support for similar resolutions (C042 and C044, respectively).

Passage of this resolution will not redefine traditional, heterosexual marriage nor will it supplant the marriage rite in the Book of Common Prayer. Rather, it will be the first step in providing an additional, optional liturgy that parishes and clergy could use to recognize and support faithful, monogamous, committed, life-giving, and holy same-sex relationships. We believe this to be the path of compassion and justice. We urge you to vote in favor of this resolution.

ruminations and rebuttals

On Stephen Noll's *Two Sexes One Flesh: Why the Church Cannot Bless Same-Sex Marriages*

by Eleanor McLaughlin

The Author's goals, explicit and implicit

Episcopalian United circulated this book to all Bishops and Deputies about a month before General Convention, 1997. Given the cost of this effort, I thought the least I could do was to read the work carefully. Though the book is by the author's own account a rush job, Stephen Noll has gotten a number of things right about the Church's agonized sex-wars. He also, perhaps unconsciously, reveals the underlying strata of assumptions and fears which all too often go un-addressed in our discussions. I am grateful for his work and offer the following commentary and critique as a continuation of the conversation. This is not in the ordinary sense, a "book review", but rather thoughts ignited by Noll's argument. On the surface, this is a book about the current discussion of the status of gay and lesbian people in the Church and whether their relationships can be sacramentalized. The subtext is far broader. It is that implicit argument which most interests me, for at stake is a Paradigm Shift, a "Changing of the Gods". I too am making a case, but to invite discussion; it is not yet time for "last words" in this battle of the Paradigm Shift.

What Noll has usefully emphasized is that discussions of same sex unions are ultimately not so much a matter for gays and lesbians alone, but are all about Christian Marriage as celebrated in the Book of Common Prayer and honored by the culture as a cornerstone of society. A second major point that Noll signals is the corrosive effects of individualism; however, he and I would differ as to its principal source of destructive energy. While Noll deplores the "ethic of intimacy", I would nail market capitalism and the "consumer ethic". A surfeit of intimacy is less likely to kill a marriage than a plastic-founded faith that "toys make the man." Nonetheless, Noll and I would agree upon the emptiness of Rights-based theological anthropology which all too often finds no place for the bonds of community or even family, in the personal "pursuit

of happiness". Like Noll, I am aware of the limitations of Liberalism; that assertion of individual rights does not build community, much less, the Kingdom of God in our midst. As Christians, whatever revisions of sexual ethics and family constellations we achieve must be based upon a model which integrates corporate with individual wholeness/holiness and, ultimately, embodies the God known to us in Jesus Christ, a God of Love, Just and Inclusive.

It is when Noll moves from the general social critique to the particulars of scriptural interpretation, sacramentality (i.e. what *is* marriage?), sex, and gender understandings that I must raise serious questions.

Hermeneutics: how we interpret the bible

Noll's approach to the interpretation of biblical texts is pre-critical; that is, he pays no mind to the accomplishments of biblical scholarship in making sense of old texts for modern people. His repeated reference is to the "plain sense" of the text, implying that it can be read without interpretation, ignoring the context of the writers of "early Bible land" as well as the situation and world views of contemporary hearers. His literalism is also selective, as he winnows out passages which condemn homosexual acts from their environment of gendered taboos and overarching purity codes. For example, he fails to explore the implication for understanding taboos against same sex love of the fact that in "early bible times", *women* are a far more ubiquitous and feared source of impurity than those who lie with members of the same sex. Contrast the number of verses attributed to St. Paul which aim at keeping Christian women in their place with the NT texts on homosexuality. The violation of the poor and weak, inhospitality to strangers and the arrogance of the rich are of much greater moral concern than sexual violation throughout Hebrew Scripture and the Gospels. By what principles of interpretation does Noll read the Sodom and Gomorrah story as a cautionary tale against homosexual acts rather than an instance of the extraordinary cultural misogyny of a father's offer of his daughters to rape so that his male visitors, protected by the rules of hospitality, might be spared the threat of buggery?

Noll attacks contemporary scholars Frederick Borsch and William Countryman for their use of "the spirit of the age" as a lens through which "the clear

teaching of the Bible” is relativized but Noll does not acknowledge that the text records Jesus Himself reinterpreting Hebrew Scripture in the interest of the law of Love (“...the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath”). Surely Noll’s unrelenting focus on sex acts as *the* touchstone of Christian ethical behavior is “spirit of the age” exegesis, at least in the United States today!

Noll’s “single vision” of the “plain sense” of scripture as hermeneutical guide is further buttressed by a non-theological *essentialism*. Essentialism is an ahistorical philosophical position which presumes disembodied essences, as for example, of “the Feminine” and “the Masculine” giving shape to the reality of self and of institutions such as marriage, or Church. The essentialist position presumes maleness or femaleness to be timeless, unchanging givens, divinely created, stamped into Nature and nature’s law. Essentialism is in the social and literary sciences the analog of creationism in the biological sciences. Looking for the timeless in the texts, Noll, finds the scriptures to be a source of “exceptionless moral norms” (97), as unchanging as the institutions which embody them. Monarchy, polygamy, the Deuteronomic permission of father daughter incest, slavery...what do we do with these biblical norms? Using Noll’s hermeneutic, the Bible becomes an unreviseable Rule-Book rather than an occasion of encounter with the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Where is our God who became flesh, and hallows the Times, and who does a New Thing?

Christian Marriage, “the same, yesterday, today, and always”?

Christian Marriage, which Noll understands to have been given by God and Nature, unchanging for all time, is defined by its essential purpose, the procreation of children. The relational aspect of marriage, therefore secondary and derivative, is constructed after the manner of the act of coitus, in accord with God’s “one design” of male initiative and female receptivity. In Noll’s view the structure of marriage and the family is characterized by gendered roles of *complementarity* and *difference*, which reflect, typologically, as stated in the Marriage Service, the relation of Christ and His Church, Lord and Bride, necessarily male and female. Male headship is the mark of true Marriage. Noll elaborates, “The bond between wife and husband becomes at best a benevolent monarchy...” *Relationality in marriage cannot exist without headship*. Even in

same-sex couples, Noll observes, one of the partners takes the role of instrumentality, the other of expressiveness. Gender roles, whether of husbandly authority and wifely submissiveness or played out in gay couples as ‘Butch’ and ‘Femme’ are in Noll’s account rooted in divine will and nature! What is at stake here, and throughout Noll’s book, is not ‘Marriage as we have received it’, but a particular hierarchical construction of marriage. The anxiety and the program throughout this book is to maintain, through the demonization of homosexuality, the institution of patriarchal marriage and the buttressing of traditional gender roles, white, male, middle class, dominant culture and its privileges.

Nature and Nurture

In this battle for Order, Noll is especially hostile to the understanding of sex and gender and their institutionalization in marriage as *socially constructed*. As any historian, even an old one like me knows, masculinity and femininity are not biological givens, nor changeless artifacts of Creation, but, evolving socially learned behaviors, shifting in expression and meaning over time and place. Sex as well as gender are playful polymorphous changes, rung out on the bells of body parts. St. Paul and the Fathers and Mothers of the Early Church presumed this malleability of human sexual expression, in their preaching against the ‘double standard’, challenging the culture’s acceptance of male sexual rapaciousness as “natural”, or as some claim today, “hard-wired”. For fifteen hundred years Christianity held virginity to be “the better way” for men as well as women. Contemporary discourses, whether from conservatives or advocates of sexual freedom, that enshrine heterosexuality or the inevitability of male sexual aggression as “natural” and therefore normative are radical violations of the Gospel imperative to question what the world calls “natural”. Noll’s hope to find “exceptionless moral norms” in scripture and in selected institutions--in this case North American structures of serial monogamy--flies in the face of our experience of profound shifts in our religious understandings of what is ‘good’ and ‘natural’, as for example the institution of monarchy. In another day, Noll would have been defending the ‘Divine Right of Kings.’ Surely Democracy has been more disruptive of the Old Order than homosexualities!

The forms of human intimacy are constantly evolving; it is a Christian duty to reflect morally and

spiritually upon those changes that we and our children may live in accordance with the Gospel, that we love God, our selves made in God's image, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Relationship and Hierarchy

Noll's suggestion that right relationship cannot exist apart from hierarchy and difference is simple nonsense, especially to old married couples, Queer or straight, for whom the 'sex' roles have long since dissolved in the fluidity of love taking the needed part. Our children, creating and reflecting popular culture, fortunately understand this now at the beginning of their lived relationships in which traditional male and female roles have been widely and healthily discarded. Galatians 3:28 has at last met a culture where it has a chance of being lived out! What Noll is frightened to contemplate is non-hierarchical intimacy, generativity not limited to procreation, men who weep and women who lead. Intimate relationship modeled after our Triune God, Persons in union, bound by love, equilibrated and self-giving, is Good News, at least for women and the men who yearn to be free of the prison of cultural *machismo*.

Sex and Spirituality

One of the most surprising aspects of Noll's argument is his insistence, using the words of a Jewish scholar of the Hebrew scripture, that "Biblical thought does not see sexuality as a gift of God. To the bible, the sexual and divine realms have nothing to do with each other." Noll goes on to argue that part of the biblical taboo against homosexual acts lies in "...the biblical refusal to mix sexuality and spirituality." Noll is unhappy with some very well regarded Anglican theologians such as Rowan Williams, whom he accuses of creating a "Baal"-like spirituality which presumes a God who *desires* us as we desire God. Here Noll is in direct conflict with the Tradition of Johannine spirituality, with its heart in God's love and call to be friends and lovers of God. He ignores the long tradition of affective spirituality, which does not limit the *erotic* to the *phallic*, from St. Anselm to St. Aelred, St. Bernard, Richard Hilton, St. John of the Cross, whose God invites us into the wedding chamber of his Heart, to nurse at the "care-banishing breasts of God the Father..." (St. Clement of Alexandria) or of Julian of Norwich, "...our tender Mother Jesus simply leads us into his blessed breast...". If there is anything truly deplor-

able about Noll's book in my view, it is this desacralization of human sexuality and erotic intimacy. Noll abandons incarnational theology in his profanation of the erotic. His position is pornographic, in its disconnection of human desires from God's desire.

Gender and Order

The hidden agenda of Noll's work, indeed of much of the sex-discourses of our times, is hinted at in his attack on liberationist movements. At first I was tempted to see this agenda as focussed upon the control of women, as in his claim, "...one of these absolutes is the nature of the male-female sexual union and the moral norms and legal statutes that flow from it." But despite his insistence that unlike slavery and race distinctions, gender is truly rooted in divine will and the natural biological order, there is an undergirding sensibility that *Otherness* of all kinds is the issue.

The argument begins with the attack on homosexuality as undermining the normativity of heterosexual marriage. Homosexuality is an icon of fluid and transgressive gender roles; anathema to the patriarchy. Though his espoused goal is the preservation of heterosexual marriage, it is a particular kind of marriage, structured by male headship and female submissiveness which is his fuel for his passion.

The next level of opposition, read between the lines, is a fundamental distress at all the liberation movements which challenge status quo power arrangements. Egalitarian social arrangements challenge a theology and a political theory grounded in *difference* and *hierarchy*. *Public* expressions of transgressions of the androcentric power structures are what Noll opposes. A woman may insist upon equality as long as she doesn't *divorce*, a public sign of autonomy; and with characteristically Anglican hypocrisy, Noll declares that he has no difficulty with gays or lesbians living in quiet secrecy. The 'marked' categories women and Queers, who call *openly* into question traditional gender role and identity, and especially Queers, have become a socially acceptable Code for pushing back on the aspirations of all those whom society designates 'the Other': women, people of color, immigrants, the poor, the marginalized of all sorts. Order is what Noll wants, Order on earth and in heaven, symbolized by a particular order of sexes, defined in traditional fashion...the man from Mars, the woman from Venus, "Head" and "Body", Spirit and Flesh. The ho-

continued on page thirty two

by Katie Sherrod

Why was the General Convention vote on the ordination canon important? Why, more than 25 years after the vote to ordain women, was this even necessary, much less such a big deal? Even a few female priests saw no need for this action - accusing those of us who lobbied ceaselessly for it of the "sin of impatience."

Well, I plead guilty to this "sin." What's more, I plan to continue to "sin" boldly. The spiritual lives of countless women, men and children are at stake here.

I take to heart what poet Muriel Rukeyser wrote: "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open."

For a few in our Church, the world finally split open this summer in Philadelphia. But there was a singular lack of triumphalism among those of us from Fort Worth and the other three dioceses where female priests are not allowed to function, because we know the battle is far from over. Things will, in fact, get much worse. Some of us have been working on this for nearly 30 years now, others for nearly 50. We have few illusions left.

The awareness of this struggle began for me in the mid-1970s. Carter Heyward had been invited to speak at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. I had been following the story of the struggle for women's ordination in the Episcopal Church both as a reporter for the local paper and as a woman hungry for a spiritual home. I had been raised Roman Catholic, but left because rage was not the spiritual experience I was seeking. I was enthralled by courage of the women in the Episcopal Church and prayed for success in their quest. Carter's visit brought home in a powerful way just how big a stake I had in that success.

As part of her visit, Carter met with several local Episcopal clergy. I sat in on the meeting, flabbergasted by the arguments some of those men raised against the ordination of women:

* Women menstruate. A bleeding woman would defile the altar.

* A Eucharist is a sexual act between the priest and the Church. A female priest would make it a lesbian act.

* The ordination of women is not "of God."

* Women are not "proper matter" for ordination, no more than is a dog.

* A woman cannot image Christ. Only a male can.

I was amazed at the misogyny, the almost primordial fear of women and the fixation on sexuality displayed in that room by many of these priests. In my naivete I assumed it was an aberration, a manifestation of Texas Bubbaism in clerics. (I was naive — only two weeks ago, I was lectured by yet another Fort Worth cleric - one of our many refugees from an out-of-state "liberal" diocese — who used almost those same words.)

Before the day was out, several women whispered to me that Carter would be doing a Eucharist in an apartment near

TCU. That evening, I joined about 30 people gathered in the small living room. It reminded me of the stories of early Christians defying the authorities to worship.

I was fully in my reporter mode, the Observer, uninvolved. This lasted until the Consecration. When Carter said, "This is my Body . . ." my world split apart.

I was unprepared for the truth that flooded through every cell of my being at hearing those ancient words said by a woman. *This is my Body.*

I had heard those words countless times growing up - daily while I was at Catholic boarding school. But always they were spoken by a man. When Carter's voice rang out in that small room, I was physically shaken by a violent upsurge of joy, rage, grief, exultation! Joy because for the first time in my life, I felt fully included in the Body of Christ. Rage that I had been denied this wholeness for so long.

splitting

**ordination of women
becomes mandatory, but
law protects rights of
those who disagree**

by David Skidmore, *Episcopal News Service*

Twenty-one years after the church allowed women to become priests, women now have the assurance that this right will be recognized by all dioceses in the Episcopal Church.

By a substantial majority, the bishops ... approved two resolutions mandating that women will be given access to the ordination process and acceptance as priests in all dioceses of the church, at the same time protecting the rights of those who disagree. The resolutions (A052 and A053) were adopted by deputies changing the church's canons governing the ordination process. ...

In a press conference following the vote, Bishop Jack Iker of the Diocese of Fort Worth (Texas) said that while he was willing to follow the directives of General Convention,

worlds open

Grief at the waste of so many women's gifts. Exultation that God had not forgotten me, no matter what the world tried to make me believe. *This is my Body* **DID** include me. When I looked around the room, everyone - men and women alike - was in tears, but everyone was smiling. And I knew Truth resided in that room — truth, and grace.

That's why I have been working to make it possible for women and men to experience the truth and grace that resides in the priestly ministry of women on a regular basis in Fort Worth. As of yet, even in the wake of this last General Convention, that does not happen here. And if our bishop has his way, it will never happen here. Bishop Jack Iker has announced his intention of defying the Church on this issue. General Convention has given him and the other three non-complying bishops three years to find ways to comply. Clearly, Bishop Iker has no plans

he "will not comply with that which calls on me to violate my conscience." He said he would engage in "active resistance."

...

Both resolutions change the church's canons, or laws, governing the ordination process.

The first resolution (A052) prohibits anyone from being denied access to the ordination process on the basis of gender, or of women priests from being denied licensing or serving in a diocese.

The second resolution (A053) rules that canons on women's ordination and licensing are mandatory throughout the church, but it prohibits anyone from being barred against participating in the life and governance of the church because of gender or theological views on the ordination of women.

It also calls on dioceses which don't recognize female priests to develop processes for ensuring women full access to ordination and service as priests. Those dioceses are instructed to report back to the House of Bishops and Executive Council in 1999 and the General Convention in 2000.

David Skidmore is communications director for the Diocese of Chicago.

that will ever integrate female priests equally into the full life and worship of this diocese.

Why should the rest of the Church care?

It's only four dioceses. If that's what they want, let them have it.

But it's not that simple. Set aside the fact that **many** in those dioceses desire the ministry of female priests. Once our eyes have been opened to the fullness of Christianity, it is too late for such solutions. Because once we see how things are meant to **be**, the way things **really are** can be almost unbearably painful. Once our eyes **are** opened to the sexism, the patriarchy, the racism, the heterosexism of the Church, nearly all of us eventually come up hard against this question: *How can I stay in the Church?* That question immediately becomes a larger one — even, I dare to say — the eternal one for women: *Do I speak, or do I remain silent?*

For centuries the Church has told us — and our bishop and many of our clergy still tell us in a thousand different ways — that a good woman is a silent woman. Our diocesan culture tells us for women to speak **IS** disobedience. Women trying to lead fulfilling, **ethical** lives and also remain in the Church constantly have to work to distinguish between the designs of God, and "the destructiveness of evil operating in the name of God."

What we learn too frequently is that underneath all the talk about tradition and orthodoxy is an evil misogyny — a dislike, and in some cases, a hatred, and a deep distrust of women. This nearly always spills over into a hatred of gay men and lesbian women.

This idea that uppity women are dangerous is ancient. Just look at Eve - her questioning defiance got us all thrown out of Paradise. This is the message that is flung at women in a thousand subtle and not-to-subtle ways every day, every week, even in many church services. Worse, it is absorbed by us and our daughters and sons the way the pores in our skin absorb the toxins in polluted air.

The underlying message always is that women are less worthy. It is a denial of women's full humanity that seems rooted in the same fear I saw in the room in Fort Worth all those years ago — an almost primordial fear of women, an ancient fear of women's mysterious ability to bleed and not die.

How can we change this? That brings us back to the question: Do I speak, or remain silent? For most of us, the answer is painfully clear: silence = death. Perhaps not physical death, but certainly a very real spiritual and ethical death. If we remain silent, we betray our very selves. But if we speak, the risk is terrible, for the Church is not yet a safe place for women.

In the Episcopal Church it is, to quote theologian Thomas Berry, "as if we are between stories." The old story about who we are and how we are to live doesn't work anymore, and we don't know what the new story is yet. But women know — in our hearts, in our minds, in our very beings — that if the story is

splitting worlds open...

to survive at all, it must have balance. Men keep trying to tell the story without women. But without women, there is no Judeo-Christian story. Without Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter, there would have been no Moses. Without Elizabeth, there would have been no John. Without Mary of Nazareth, there would have been no infant Jesus. Without Mary Magdalene, Jesus would have had no one to spread the great news of the Resurrection.

The story doesn't work without women. Without women, the story is incomplete, unfinished, out of balance, devoid of harmony.

And so I come at last to what Christian feminists both gay and straight seek in a Church that is a safe place for women — we seek balance and harmony. We seek acknowledgment that, as Origen said in the Second Century, *All created things are God-sourced, God-rooted, finding their origin and fulfillment in God. Creation is not an event in the past, but a relationship in the present.*

ruminations...

continued from page twenty nine

homosexualities do put into question this dualism of the sexes, hierarchy of sex roles...and therefore, *all hierarchies.*

To maintain the hierarchies, what is at stake is our understanding of God, and Noll intuits this. Not ever-changing human experience, but the top/down universe of Biblical revelation is Noll's authority for our imaging of God. He explicitly rejects history and human experience beyond the canonical texts as sources of divine Revelation. But it is precisely history and human experience of Self and the Holy which are putting the old order in question. I read Noll's book, aimed ostensibly at homosexuality, to be in fact another chapter in the on-going opposition to the most recent challenges to the received order of things, the autonomous woman, the openly gay and lesbian Christian, the woman priest as transgressive God-Symbol. Noll cites the events of the early 70's, revision of the Divorce canon and the Ordinal, as the parlous beginnings of the Church's slide into moral chaos. The Conservatives of that decade decried that "A woman priest at the altar calls into question the authority of every husband in the congregation". Between the lines, I read Noll's acknowledgement of this accurate judgment, that the woman priest disrupts the patriarchal system. So also, the Queer priest, as Representative Person, dis-orders traditional gender roles, identities and the power arrangements, familial and institutional, and therefore opens new vistas on God. However, all too many readers of his book will miss this fundamental challenge, hidden under the fog of Noll's moralism. It is not because homosexuality is perverse, unnatural or contrary to God's will that Noll is upset, but because the entire cultural order of *white, male* dominance sanctified by a "White" and "Male" God is under siege.

When Woman or Queer are understood to stand in the image and likeness of God, or as priests, *in persona Christi*, the

We seek acknowledgment that, after all, human beings are deeply connected one to another. James Baldwin said it well: *The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.*

It will not be easy. It will be hard, and painful, and many of us will be wounded badly — perhaps scarred for life.

But if we can make the Church a safe place for women, I believe it also will become a safe place for children, for the disabled, for the elderly, for lesbians, for gay men, for all of us who have been marginalized. We **will** tell the truth about our lives. And out of this split-open world will arise a New Creation.



Katie Sherrod is the vice president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus. She lives in Fort Worth, TX.

ultimate cornerstone of the patriarchy is transformed. God, the Holy, imaged by a Black woman or by an *openly* Gay man, is new to post-Reformation Christianity, even perhaps to the Apostle Paul (man images God, the woman her husband I Cor. 11:7), but not new to the Tradition. The same mystics who found their identity in and named God as Friend and Mother, as Lord and Brother, Lover and Nurse, as Child and Judge were the same spiritual teachers who experienced their own humanity polymorphously, in a range of gender-bending expressions of the human Self. The Christian tradition is rife with male clerics pregnant with the Divine Child (Sermons of Meister Eckhart), female saints praised for their virility (Letters of St. Jerome), the Black Madonna, icon of Holy Power. Homoerotic and transvestic sensibilities pervade the spiritualities of the pre-modern Church, faithfully expressing Christianity's on-going struggle against the *idolatry* of male power. In its opposition to the Roman *Paterfamilias*, medieval *feudal* hostility to the church's non-hereditary sacramental powers, or Victorian capitalist *paternalism*, Christianity has ever been in its heart, radical. At least the monastics turned repeatedly from accommodation to a single hearted rejection of the traditional family values of joining "field to field", constructing masculinity as phallic, reducing women to the procreative means of assured inheritance and children to fodder for factory or army. Feminists like Mary Daly ("When God is Father [only], all fathers are gods.") as well as gay and lesbian Christians point prophetically to the ultimate liberation which Noll and his sympathizers so fear, the *Liberation of God* from a univocal white Western maleness, and an idolatrous domestication. It is this recovery of the dynamic, polymorphous Godhead of the Tradition--for post-Enlightenment religion, truly a Paradigm Shift--from which our own liberation and wholeness/holiness will finally flow.



The Rev. Dr. Eleanor McLaughlin, is Vicar at Christ Church, S. Barre and is a member of Integrity/Western Massachusetts.

go stand in the temple and tell

by Nick Downen

Go *Stand in the Temple and Tell...* is the title of a wonderful new VHS video produced by the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC). Written, produced, and narrated by the incomparable Katie Sherrod, a professional journalist who lives in Fort Worth and currently serves as EWC's Vice President, it relates the history of the Episcopal Women's Caucus through skillfully chosen and edited footage of most of the leading figures in the women's ordination movement in our church. Much of the material emanates from EWC's 25th anniversary observance, which occurred last fall at the place of its founding, Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria.

The Episcopal Women's Caucus began in October 1971 when a group of friends of Suzanne Hiatt (now ordained and a professor at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass.) met following the General Convention of 1970, which was the first one to seat women deputies officially. They were devastated that the 1973 General Convention refused to allow the ordination of women priests and bishops. This profound setback caused them to become better organized politically and led to the uncanonical ordinations in 1974 of the Philadelphia 11 and in 1975 of the Washington 4. The Philadelphia 11 ordinations especially were a nationwide news story, even a media event, that no doubt introduced many readers and TV viewers to the Episcopal Church. The very next General Convention, that of 1976, changed the canons so that women are now ordained to all three orders of ministry: deacon, priest, and bishop. It also regularized the Philadelphia and Washington ordinations.

Many people might assume that there is now no need for the Episcopal Women's Caucus. But the truth is that the struggle for the acceptance of women clergy in our church is not over – it still goes on. With the 1997 General Convention's recognition of the ordination canons as mandatory, each diocese must now develop a plan for ordaining and deploying women clergy. At least one diocesan bishop, Bishop Iker of Fort Worth, has promised "active re-

sistance." More subtle and seemingly intractable problems are those of prejudice and discrimination experienced by women clergy in many places, almost everywhere, even in so-called "liberal" dioceses like New York.

Also, the Episcopal Church is part of a worldwide faith community, the Anglican Communion. The Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops is coming up next year and the presence of women bishops there for the first time has become an issue. Some bishops have even asked that women bishops not be seated at Lambeth at all. An American woman diocesan bishop is said to have received unfriendly letters from a Southern Tier bishop who refers to the "experiment" of women's ordination. What the American church has done in its 1997 General Convention is extremely important. Not only have we stood by our women clergy, but we have made it clear that their ordination is not an "experiment," but a fundamental change and a permanent reality in the life and work of our church.

Go Stand in the Temple and Tell... (the title is from the Acts of the Apostles) is highly recommended. It lasts 29:43 minutes. Parish discussion groups will gratefully receive it. It will make a wonderful gift. Everyone who cares about the recent history of our church ought to see it. Order from: Carlin Rankin, 2520 44th Street, Washington, D.C. 20007-1105.

The price is \$32.95, including shipping and handling. **Make your check payable to the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC).**

Nick Downen is a member of Integrity/New York and says, "Integrity no doubt has some talented videographers. I hope that someone will produce a video about lesbian ordination in the Episcopal Church while most of the leading figures are still with us. Open lesbian ordinations are not only new stories, but old – and ongoing – stories that deserve to be told. How about it?" Anyone who is interested in accepting Nick's challenge should contact Integrity, PO Box 5255, New York, NY 10185-5255.

FRED H. ELLIS, III

Dear Friends,

I wanted to take this opportunity to recognize and THANK the fine group of volunteers who gave up two weeks of their time for Integrity's efforts at General Convention. They are a wonderful group of people, and it was a pleasure and privilege to work with them. Most days started at 7 AM and ended around 11 PM. Not only did they give of their time, except for their lodging, they paid all of their own expenses.

We all owe them a debt of gratitude, and our heartfelt thanks.

Here are their names, committee assignments, and chapter affiliation (those lacking chapter identification are "at-large" members):

Delegates to Triennial:

Corrine Vincellette - Washington; Bonnie Larson - Pittsburgh

Logistics:

Rick Effinger - Central Florida

Legislative:

Ted Blumenstein - Midwest Regional VP (Co-Chair); Carolyn Feinglass - Washington (Co-Chair); Brooke Bushong - New York; J. Mark Crouse; Teri Foster - Knoxville; Gil Grady - El Camino Real; Fred Guyott; Laurie Labarth; Connie Millett; Nancy Mott - Knoxville; Phil Nicholson - Northeast Regional VP/Mid-Hudson; Bonita Palmer; Ben Scott - Central Florida; Pat Waddell - El Camino Real; Dixie White - Bethlehem

Nerve Center:

Mark Kozielec - New Jersey (Chair); John Clinton Bradley - Washington; Warren Carlson - Southeast Regional VP/ Central Florida; James Dotson; Neil Houghton - Rochester; James Langston - San Diego; Robert Melucci - Philadelphia

Press:

Michael Hopkins - Washington (Chair); Patti Ackeman; Barry Bates; Nick Downen - New York; Tonda Rush - Washington

Booth:

Patti O'Kane - New York (Chair); Hans Franzen - Mid-Hudson; Barbara Hunt; Scott King - Tidewater; Margo McMahon - Western Massachusetts

I also want to express my thanks to Kim Byham, GC Committee Co-Chair, for his tireless efforts as our floor leader in the House of Deputies; and to the over 25 gay and lesbian deputies and alternates. Their efforts and presence were truly remarkable.

Yours for Integrity in Christ,

The following letter was written in response to an article, "Gay March Plans Upset Pastors," that appeared in the August 23rd Asheville Citizens-Times (fax: 704-251-0585; email: editor@citizen-times.com). Written by that paper's "Religious [sic] Editor", Henry Robinson, the article featured several homophobic quotes by two "pastors", the Rev. Ralph Sexton Jr., of Asheville's Trinity Baptist Church and The Rev. Chuck Waldrup, of the Candler House of Prayer.

The two are concerned over plans announced for a gay pride parade to be held in Asheville in 1998.

Sexton, who led a "family values" march in Asheville in response to a gay pride parade in 1992 was quoted as saying, "I do not think it is good for our city or our community to have a parade for any type of bad behaviour. We would not want a parade for thieves or people who rob banks or a parade for adulterers, homosexuals or lesbian lifestyles. It is wrong I believe to parade sin."

The article closed with a request for readers to respond to the editor by September 8, 1997.

The response is written by Tom Myers, founder of We Are Family, an organization that uses "direct mail to put a benign message, an 'us' message, into the hands of people who deal with kids. The market we have defined includes clergy from the generally more liberal denominations, middle and high school guidance counselors and art/drama teachers and mental health professionals. We recently mailed *Plain Talk*, our direct mail piece to 3100 middle and high school guidance counselors and art/drama teachers in NC and GA. The responses encourage us to hope that the next gay kid in Stoneville may be treated a little differently or that a teacher from Hope Mills will have a little more courage because she will feel supported for the first time in acting the way she wants to act.

Our objective is to do two mailings a year to this group in an expanding number of states. We have developed a web site (www.pridemail.com/wearefam) which is accumulating good, healthy and balanced information in usable and accessible form."

Myers started We Are Family in response to the ignorance and homophobia he encountered when his son came out as a gay teenager.

WeAreFamily

August 26, 1997

Mr Henry Robinson, Religious Editor
Asheville Citizen-Times
Box 2090
Asheville NC 28801

Dear Mr Robinson:

Asheville's Churches should react with joy that some more of God's children will have the opportunity to express themselves in a positive, wholesome manner. They should join in a celebration of freedom for people who have been oppressed for generations. They should open their doors wide and say, "Hey, I'm sorry that I have used the Bible to justify my fear and prejudice, that I have fallen into the same trap that the religious leaders did in the time of Jesus."

Some will do this and they will be better for it. They will find their worship enriched and their lives better for having acted on Jesus' demand that we love without judging. They will act out of love and trust the Biblical passages that say men ought to leave judgment to God.

Sadly, many of Asheville's Churches won't celebrate this event. These will be many of the same churches which justify a secondary position for women by a misreading of the passage from Ephesians 5:21-33, "Wives be subject to your husbands". These will be many of the same churches which have chosen Jews as their focus for evangelism, implying that Jews are second class people unless they convert to a narrow interpretation of religious correctness. These will be many of the same churches which kept their doors to blacks in the sixties and later because of "sound Biblical analysis and interpretation."

Many of these churches will use chapter 20 of Leviticus to condemn homosexuality an "abomination" worthy of death but will ignore the mandates of death for cursing your parents (Leviticus 20:9) and for committing adultery (Leviticus 20:10). Why aren't those who quote Biblical passages as literal law rushing to obey those injunctions? Why aren't their churches empty of cheating spouses and spoiled brats, or of men with long hair (1 Corinthinans 11:14) and women who speak out in church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) ?

Rev. Ralph Sexton Jr., Pastor of Asheville's Trinity Baptist Church, and The Rev. Chuck Waldrup, pastor of the Candler House of Prayer, will claim there's nothing personal in their persecution of gays. It's just following God's law, ... or the part of God's law that can be read as supporting their fears and prejudices and those of so many other people.

Let them throw their stones. Those stones can only hurt us if we allow fear to keep us from acting the way we should.

Sincerely yours,
Thomas E. Myers Jr.

marty davis murdered

by Alice Clayton, *Episcopal News Service*

[As word came that Marty Davis had been shot to death at his home, a pall of shock and mourning fell over the volunteers who were gathered in the Integrity Nerve Center at General Convention. Many of the volunteers had known Marty; we were all deeply saddened by this violent and senseless tragedy.]

A 35-year old priest from the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee was murdered July 16 in his home in Chattanooga, Tenn. The Rev. C. Martin Davis was found dead by a neighbor at about 10 a.m. The neighbor reported seeing a suspicious male entering the house and leaving about 30 minutes later. The neighbor went to check on Davis and found him dead, shot several times in the head.

The police said a motive for the murder has not yet been determined, but they are seeking the identity of a man Davis had begun counseling. The police have also released a composite sketch of the man seen leaving Davis' home.

Davis was to have begun his second decade of involvement with Camp Billy Johnson, a diocesan-sponsored camp for underprivileged children in Monteagle, Tennessee. The priest was the director of the camp, which will open next week as sched-

uled. Grief counselors were called in to help the youth counselors deal with the tragedy.

Bishop Robert Tharp of the Diocese of East Tennessee left the Episcopal Church's General Convention in Philadelphia to return home immediately after receiving the news of Davis' death. He officiated July 19 at the funeral service at Grace Episcopal Church in Chattanooga.

"We are shocked and saddened by this tragedy," Tharp said. "Father Davis was a gifted priest who served his church well. He will be greatly missed by many in our diocese."

Davis had served as priest-in-charge of St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church in Chattanooga. He helped guide the mostly African-American congregation through a merger with Thankful Memorial Episcopal Church, where he served as assistant until recently.

He was a founder and convener of the Chattanooga chapter of Integrity, an organization of gay and lesbian Episcopalians, and was a longtime board member of Chattanooga CARES, an agency that provides case management for people with AIDS and HIV.



Alice Clayton is communications officer for the Diocese of East Tennessee.

bishop tharp remembers marty

The following excerpts are from the eulogy given by The Rt. Rev. Robert Tharp, Bishop of East Tennessee, at the Requiem Mass Celebrating the Life and Ministry of The Rev. Charles Martin Davis, Grace Episcopal Church, Chattanooga, July 19, 1997.

Charles Martin Davis, priest in the church of God, nearly was not ordained. When he appeared before the commission on ministry, one of the members with the acquiescence of another objected to the baby blue socks which showed brightly against his dark shoes and trousers. Fortunately, this member had never seen his colorful sneakers! We come this day to celebrate his three and one half decades of life and his six years of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. It is difficult to believe only six years when you compare that with the number of ministries in which he served during that time. It is more than difficult to believe that Marty is no longer living. I with his family and you

mourn his cruel and violent departure from us. We come to celebrate this requiem mass for the repose of his soul and the comfort of us all.

On Wednesday morning at the time of Marty's death, those of us who were in Philadelphia attending the General Convention were listening to a sermon by the archbishop of Ireland, the Most Rev. Robin Eames. His subject was peace. For me it has become a prophetic statement. Listen!

'Everywhere we look the quality of life is under threat. Violence of the word, violence of action, violence of the tongue, violence of the policy statement, violence against nature, denial of human rights - all are helping to threaten and destroy a world which yearns for peace.' ...

It would be easy for us to lose heart, to be angry about this heinous act, and to grow weary of trying to find the world in which the words of Jesus really do come true, 'See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are... Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.' (*1 Jn iii 4*)

norman pittenger dies at 91

by Jack Bowles, *London Times*

The Rev Norman Pittenger, theologian, died on June 19 aged 91. He was born on July 23, 1905.

Norman Pittenger was perhaps better known as a theologian in the United States than in Britain. He was active in the ecumenical movement and had been chairman of the North American Theological Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches as well as being chairman of the American Theological Society.

Born in a small town in New Jersey, William Norman Pittenger was the son of Charles Henry and Clara Louisa Pittenger. After graduating at the General Theological Seminary, New York, he became a member of the staff of that institution and was Professor of Christian Apologetics there, 1951-66.

From the early 1930s he was a frequent visitor to England and spent several vacations at Oxford, where he became friendly with W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. ...

He was also a prolific author of articles and books on religious and ethical subjects.

His most substantial work, *The Word Incarnate* (1959), was a restatement of Christological doctrine. He was a liberal Anglo-Catholic who often expressed his indebtedness to the writings of the Roman Catholic modernists, especially Baron Hugel.

When Pittenger retired from his professorship in 1966, he first went to live in Rome but he soon decided to settle in Cambridge, where he became a member of the divinity faculty in the university and a senior member of King's College.

He continued to undertake lecture tours in the United States and elsewhere, and became a leading exponent of what is known as "process theology", a philosophical system which, instead of using static concepts such as "being" and "substance", emphasises the evolutionary nature of man and the world. ...

So far as Pittenger himself was concerned, it found its most controversial statement in his book *Time for Consent* (1969). Written at a time when homosexual acts between consenting adults had just been legalised in Britain, it consisted basically of a plea for the Church to understand the homosexual condition. Its theme was considered so shocking that the *Church Times* refused review it.

But if this was Pittenger's most famous book (it sold some 10,000 copies), he never allowed himself to rest on his laurels. He continued writing into old age, producing 90 books in all. An indication of his own wry sense of humour lay in his claim that he was "the Barbara Cartland of theology". ...

He never married and became increasingly open in old age about his homosexuality.



The atheist, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote: 'Hope for mankind in modern times must begin on the other side of despair.' If the Christian would translate this into good theology, we would say that hope lies on the other side of Calvary and is seen in the shining examples of courage and conviction of those who have taken a stand against injustice and bigotry. Marty Davis was this kind of Christian. He came through immense adversity in his own life to become a shining example to the poor, the homeless, the marginalized, the outcast, and shared in community with them. Marty was about community and bringing people into a new community in which they knew that God loved them, and that they too could be called children of God.

In the March issue of *The East Tennessee Episcopalian* there was an anonymous letter, again prophetic in its content. In part the letter said this:

'People are not statistics, or invisible. As one person in the diocese who lives and breathes, and who can potentially shed blood like everyone else please don't reduce my humanity, so that others may think they have permission to do the same... To my neighbors, I am not a statistic, or a faceless member of a group we often describe as, "them." I am simply their next door

neighbor. Thank God they took the time to get to know me as I am. Please remember that what we say about other people has real consequences. People can be hurt because of what we say and do, and by what we do not say and do.'

These words could easily have been written by Charles Martin Davis. I would guess they were. They sound like him. They portray the way in which he looked at his companions along the way -the men and women with whom he came into contact.

... My grief is deep. My sorrow burdens me. In the midst of it I am angry for the violent act which took the life of my friend, my son in Christ. Perhaps, many of you feel the same way. It is all right to shed tears. Jesus did. It is all right to mourn, because when the new day breaks, it will bring joy once more with the rising sun. Dwell not on the past, except to smile, laugh and enjoy a memory. Look into the future and find how you can relieve the world's distress; recover the riches of creation through wise conservation; and commit yourselves to random acts of human kindness. You will be remembering Father Marty in those ways as well.



priest comes out

by Mark Kozielec

[The following article is based on extensive interviews with Robert Stiefel. However, local reports by Erika Mantz, Foster's Daily Democrat (Dover, NH) and Steve Varnum, Sunday Monitor, (Concord, NH) were reviewed.]

In late-May of this year, the Rev. Robert Stiefel, Rector of Christ Church in Portsmouth, NH, and his wife of 27 years, the Rev. Deacon Jennifer Stiefel, disclosed Robert's intention to live as an openly gay man.

The couple did not arrive at this decision easily or quickly. Both Stiefels have been struggling with Robert's sexual orientation for many years.

In a letter to Christ Church parishioners discussing his coming out, Robert wrote, "I had been trying since early childhood to be the best straight little boy in the world. In my twenties I underwent a lengthy, experimental program offered by Harvard Medical School for men who sought to be 'cured' of their homosexuality. For three years this meant weekly sessions of individual and group therapy. For one winter, week after week, five days a week, I underwent electric shock, behavioral conditioning treatments."

Their lack of a physical relationship often lead to feelings of shame which would lead to new rounds of therapy and 'healing.'

"We were coached by sex therapists. I was prayed over, hands laid on me, and was anointed by some of the leading conservative and charismatic healers in the Episcopal Church," Robert wrote. All to no avail.

In 1991, accepting a call as rector to Christ Church, an inclusive and welcoming parish in Portsmouth, a town with an active lesbian and gay community, helped to facilitate Robert's coming out process. After counseling lesbians and gays to be honest with themselves about their orientation, Robert felt that he had reached the point where he needed to be honest with himself. However, this was not to be the sole catalyst.

The death of a dear friend, Michael Lynch, from complications from AIDS five years ago, also challenged Robert to confront his true self. Michael, too, had denied his homosexuality and like Robert, had

married. However, later in life, Michael had come out as a gay man and became a leader in the gay rights movement in Canada. Following his death, Robert was able to access Michael's archives, and there discovered that Michael had the same feelings for Robert that Robert had concealed from Michael.

Although Robert and Jennifer have been through the coming out process together, Robert points out that there is less of a support structure in place for Jennifer than exists for him.

"In some ways, it is proving easier for me than for Jennifer. As a gay man I have multiple support groups working on my behalf in the gay community. As a straight woman, Jennifer finds herself without such support. She has to create her own support systems, which is difficult under any circumstances. We intend to be there for one another as best we can, even after we have separated households. But each of us anticipates some lonesome times ahead as we attempt to get 'resocialized'."

Robert notes that, because of church requirements and their need to live the balance of their lives openly, they understand that they will have to divorce, but "we deeply believe that nothing can separate us or stop us from loving and caring for each other, including separation and remarriage, because our separation is based on a gift of love, not on anger or abandonment."

"The public nature of ordination presses us towards separation and divorce more quickly than we are willing to consider either," he continued. "Even with the mismatch of orientation, we have been effective and loving partners for going on 28 years. Yet each of us also yearns to be free to seek out a sexually compatible partner for the remaining years of her or his life. We deeply wish we could do this without losing the good things about our relationship over the years. But society and the church draw sharp lines and color the situation black and white. This makes a loving transition difficult, to say the least."

Their parish has been very supportive of their coming out process. In a letter to members, the vestry stated, "Nothing has changed or will change at Christ Church because of this decision other than the fact we now have a priest who is relieved of fear and freer to love and serve his congregation."

In her sermon on the Sunday that the Stiefels announced their coming out, Margaret Faulk, Senior

Even with the mismatch of orientation, we have been effective and loving partners for 28 years.

with wife at side

Warden, preached, "When I confront the institutional history of the Church, I believe that the events that have led to the Stiefels' announcement are an outward and visible sign of God's action in the world. ...I have shared with you many times before the transformational power I felt the first time I heard the Presiding Bishop's call to us that 'this church is open to all, there will be no outcasts!' Now I call upon you to make this a reality at Christ Church. *This Church is open to all! Including our Rector who happens to be gay and his lovely wife, our Deacon!*"

They both have appreciated this support. Robert noted, however, "that some of my parishioners and colleagues are inclined to cope with my homosexuality by believing and acting as if it makes no difference, as if orientation doesn't matter. But I know that my perspective on life, the universe, and God has been in part conditioned by the fact that since earliest childhood I have always been gay. I would like to offer that perspective as a gift to others, but there are those who cannot see that the gift exists, much less accept it."

In discussing gifts, Robert recalled some that he has received in the coming out process. "The greatest psychological and spiritual gifts granted to me are the inner sense of liberation from the last vestiges of my own internalized homophobia and the acceptance of my whole self as God made me. I feel that I have been both obedient to God and faithful to my many gay brothers and lesbian sisters."

This sense of inner peace and wholeness continues in the midst of anxieties about his personal and professional future.

"Making major changes after age fifty and having been heterosexually married for nearly 28 years is both exhilarating and frightening," he said.

Jennifer is herself no stranger to personal and professional anxieties. In addition to dealing with the response to Robert's coming out, and the impending separation that has guaranteed, she is currently working on her doctoral dissertation, and will soon begin the daunting process of looking for a suitable teaching assignment.

Local response has been mostly supportive. A group of ten local clergy issued a statement voicing their support for Robert that said, in part, "Robert will be a more whole and healthy human being who

Being Called/Coming Out

Over the last two decades, "coming out" has taken on a rather specific meaning. It is used to describe the process whereby a lesbian or gay male accepts (to varying degrees) and announces (to various people/institutions) his or her sexual orientation. It is usually spoken of in momentous terms. Often, those close to the person coming out experience a coming out of their own, e.g., coming out as the mother of a gay child. (I should note that, more recently it has also become a catch-all phrase employed by just about anyone to bring notice to any type of personal revelation, no matter how insignificant. Hence, we have Republicans "coming out" as supporting a woman's right to choose; and Democrats "coming out" as fiscal conservatives. However, this psychological need to bring importance to rather trivial personality idiosyncrasies will not be our focus here.)

Many may think that coming out is a relatively recent phenomenon. But, anyone with a smattering of familiarity with Hebrew or Christian Scripture might question just how "recent" it is. Within these writings are several instances of being "called out" of static existence into new (and often anxious) identities. Hebrew tribes are "called out" from Egypt to wander the desert in search of their one God. Disciples are "called out" from their families and livelihoods to follow Jesus and become the initial witnesses to the fulfillment of God's word. I am not well versed enough in other traditions to cite specific examples of being called into identity transformation, but I assume that they exist. The point is that coming out has been a part of individual and social development for many centuries .

Although coming out has been with us for quite some time, the action of coming out hasn't become one of those processes imperceptibly imbedded in our collective psche as have courtship or grieving. Rather, being called/coming out retains such a high level of angst and challenge that it is never shrugged-off as "oh, he's just head-over-heels" or "it's just a matter of time until she's able to move on with her life." Societies (and here I mean "Society" with a capital "S", as well as the small communities in which we spend our daily lives) still tend to take great notice of those who come out.

Of course, some callings are easier than others. Often, we think that we've come out, only to be slapped in the face by a realization that we weren't as out as we thought. My own coming out as a gay man was a bit of both: seemingly easy, but, to some, not too clear.

I thought that, because of my nature, and the comments from my parents about my lifestyle, and the fact that I brought all my boyfriends home for family gatherings, there just wasn't any need for a formal "let's sit down and chat about my gayness" talk. Imagine my surprise several years ago, when, after

Being Called/Coming Out...

sending out invitations to my commitment ceremony, my father approached me and said that he would "have to be careful and pick the 'right time' to share the invitation" with my mother! As it turned out, she was so upset about it that she made herself sick as an "acceptable" excuse not to attend. Thankfully, it took less than a year to work out a suitable rapprochement with her. Sadly, some never share common ground again. This is often the downside to being called out to something different: old relationships, likes and desires fall away.

After being out as a gay man for several years, I found it *much* more difficult to come out as a Christian. Many friends, and some family, removed themselves from my society because they were uncomfortable with my focus on God. Although new friends have become part of my life, at times, I still grow melancholy over those I've lost. And ten years later, I find myself engaged in conversations in which I continue to edit-out the fact that Christ is the most important influence in my life.

All of these somewhat disjointed thoughts came to mind when I was recently made aware of a priest coming out as a gay man to his parish in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Gay priests in the church are certainly not an oddity, although many feel compelled by their societies (and sadly, sometimes, impelled by their own homophobia) to remain in hiding. Happily, more are coming out to live their lives in the light of truth and honesty, so it is not an unheard of phenomenon. What struck me about the Portsmouth coming out was that the priest, Robert Stiefel, had his wife Jennifer, herself an ordained deacon, steadfastly by his side throughout. Indeed, they both spoke movingly of it as a process that they moved

through together.

Too often, we hear that the gay husband or lesbian wife coming out to their heterosexual spouse leads to severe repercussions. We cannot discount the feelings of betrayal, dishonesty and distrust that often accompany a partner's coming out as lesbian or gay in long-lived relationships. Strikingly, for the Stiefel's, this acrimony doesn't exist.

For 27 years, Jennifer and Robert have been working through their coming out process together. They have been through the disillusionment and failure of "reparative therapies;" they have been through their respective callings to ordained ministry and the challenges and dysfunction in the ordination process; they have been through separation and rejoining; and through all of this they have grown and have been transformed. They have been called to be their true and honest selves.

As the fear and uncertainty that surrounds each coming out abate, new fears and uncertainties arise. And we, along with the Stiefel's, are called out to face and challenge these fears and uncertainties. New anxieties and new doubts test our very being as we answer our call to become as God intended us. This is a never ending process, though we often choose to disengage and rest for a while (some, sadly, forever).

In a process that is defined by its difficult nature, I don't know which is "easier": coming out as Christian, then coming out as lesbian or gay; or vice versa. I'm not sure whether that musing deserves much focus or time. I don't know why fear and doubt are such an integral part of the process of coming out. Neither am I sure why, after using our gift of free will to turn away from God, we are each, through Christ, continually called into the presence of God. I *do* know that in answering that call, we never come out to stasis. --- Mark Kozielec

priest comes out...

will be even more deeply committed to speaking the truth in love and continuing the struggle for healing, peace and justice in our community than he was before his announcement."

While Portsmouth is an enclave of inclusivity, much of the balance of New Hampshire is noted for its conservatism. Editorials, letters to the editors of local papers, and op-ed pieces have been filled with the usual calls for Biblical literalism and proscriptions against the 'sin' of homosexuality.

"The local newspapers," Robert remarked, "have been printing letter after letter, guest editorial one after the other, from late May into early September, this one attacking gay and lesbian people on biblical grounds, that one affirming them on biblical grounds. Jennifer and I had decided in advance to refrain from that debate, trusting others to take up our cause. And they have done so, invariably writing lucid replies to those who call my integrity -and the integrity of gay and lesbian people everywhere- into question. I thought it had finally run its course by the beginning of September, but even in the midst of the reportage of Diana's funeral was yet another Bible-thumping guest editorial maintaining that the only reason the Beloved Disciple had rested

on the breast of Jesus was because the upper room was so crowded that evening of the Last Supper."

In the midst of the uproar surrounding his coming out, Robert attended General Convention. "Being out as a deputy at General Convention in Philadelphia was a real treat," he said.

"For the first time," he continued, "I could speak and witness as a free man, one truly liberated in Christ Jesus. I was no longer afraid of those who cannot accept the likes of me, and I was deeply touched by the encouragement and affirmation that I received from so many other delegates, both friends and strangers. It was sad, though, that a few who had been close friends in earlier years did their best to avoid me. But I was moved by a long-time colleague who is attached to the Episcopal Synod and who came up to me and hugged me and said he still cherished our relationship even though we find ourselves in profound disagreement on so many theological and ecclesial matters."

Following the Associated Press' nationwide release of the story, responses were received from every corner of the United States.

"I have been deeply touched by supportive and affirming cards, letters, and telephone calls from around the country, from

solidarity sunday

[Although Solidarity Sunday will be celebrated prior to the receipt of this issue of The Voice of Integrity, we include this notice so that chapters and individuals can plan for 1998. Integrity chapters that are interested in acquiring rainbow ribbon cards should contact Mark Kozielec, Executive Secretary, at PO Box 5255, NY, NY, 10185-5255 or via email: markk8@interserv.com]

In 1995, the board of Dignity (the organization of lesbian and gay Roman Catholics and their supporters) recognized that 70-80% of American Catholics supported civil rights protection for gays and lesbians - when they knew anyone gay or lesbian. The board wondered how we could devise a method to tap into that support and grow it.

That method was Solidarity Sunday, which we observe the Sunday before National Coming Out Day. Solidarity Sunday will be October 5 this year. As the idea evolved, it rapidly became apparent to the board that we needed to invite everyone to work in this way, and not only that we should invite them to show their solidarity with us by wearing the rainbow ribbon, but also that we should invite them to help end verbal and physical abuse of anyone, in-

cluding lesbians, gays, bisexuals and the transgendered.

friends, former parishioners and colleagues in Colorado and New Jersey, and total strangers. A very sweet chap calls me regularly from South Carolina just to make sure I am okay," Robert said.

He has also been contacted by several heterosexually married gay men who use him as a sounding board in discussing their situations.

Surprisingly, according to Robert, the hate mail has been very limited, "I have received only one obscene letter, unsigned, from the nearby town of Dover, NH. And three well-meaning but misled folk in Massachusetts have sent me brochures about the discredited ministries to 'heal' homosexuals, such as Exodus and Transformation."

When asked what the future may hold for him, Robert mused, "Where would I like to be in five years? Probably living in an urban area with a gay partner, perhaps working for the church, or teaching or doing college administration, or working for a social services agency. My experience so far suggests that it may be easier to meet the right partner than to find the right job! But I am blessed to be in a diocese that affirms out gay and lesbian clergy and to be in contact with several others that are equally supportive. And who knows? I may just remain where I am, at Christ Church in Portsmouth."

A card was put together with rainbow ribbon attached. The face of the card contains this prayer: "God, you are the Creator and Lover of all. You wish us to live in solidarity with each other and to rejoice in our diversity. We pray that all your lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and straight children may experience justice, enjoy peace and spread Your love through the world. We pray in the name of Jesus, who welcomed all to His circle of friends. Amen"

The reverse of the card contains a four point pledge to work to end verbal and physical abuse.

Last year, over 100,000 cards and ribbons were distributed. It is expected that we may double that amount this year. We have strong support from President Clinton and a powerful letter of endorsement from Vice-president Gore.

Our hope is that all of the gay and lesbian religious groups will endorse and share in spreading this effort. Many churches, Catholic, Episcopalian, Unitarian, Methodist, etc. have participated during the past two years.

Dignity does make cards with ribbons available at our cost. But we also have templates of the cards so that other organizations can make their own cards should they so desire.



Bruce S. Jarstfer, MD, is the National Coordinator of Solidarity Sunday and may be reached via email at: BruceSJ@aol.com

The Integrity Membership Survey Report has been delayed — look for it in the Winter issue of The Voice of Integrity...

lutherans reject concordat

by James Solheim, *Episcopal News Service*

Facing ecumenical decisions of historic significance, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted "full communion" with three Reformed churches—but voted down a similar proposal with the Episcopal Church by only six votes.

After days of presentations, open hearings and floor debate, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly vote in Philadelphia on August 18 approved the new relationship with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ by over 81 percent. The vote on the Concordat of Agreement with the Episcopal Church was 66.1 percent, just shy of the required two-thirds, 684 in favor and 351 opposed.

While the implications of the split decision sank in, the assembly participants sang a listless version of "The Church's One Foundation," some embraced each other in tears of joy or frustration.

"The ecumenical opportunity of the century has been lost," said Prof. J. Robert Wright of New York's General Seminary, a principal author of the Concordat. "This was a chance to bridge the great divide in Christianity between the Reform and Catholic traditions."

In his statement, Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning pointed out that the Episcopal Church had "overwhelmingly" approved the Concordat at its General Convention in the same convention center a month earlier.

"An opportunity was created—and I regret that we have missed it." Although he will encourage that the present relationship continue, he admitted that "a certain diminishment of enthusiasm will be inevitable as we pray that God will show each of us the way forward."

Bishop Ted Jones of Indianapolis, co-chair of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee, said during a press conference that "those close to the talks will be disappointed" but that "life will go on in the local churches." He warned against viewing the vote as "an ecumenical dead end."

Throughout the discussion and debate one provision of the Concordat drew the strongest opposition—a changed role for Lutheran bishops and their incorporation into historic episcopate. Lutherans re-

gard their ordained ministry as a single order which includes both pastors and bishops.

Bishops are elected for six-year terms of oversight and then may return to the parish. Under the Concordat, they would be elected for life, even though they may continue to serve terms, and they would be "installed" by three bishops from each of the churches.

Speaker after speaker pointed out that the Augsburg Confession, the authoritative 16th century document of the Lutheran Reformation, says that agreement in Word and Sacrament is the only condition for unity.

"The requirement of the Concordat is that we adopt the hierarchical system of episcopal structure as an additional condition for full communion, thus adding a condition for unity which we have never had before," argued Prof. Michael Rogness of the Luther Seminary in St. Paul.

While admitting that "Lutherans don't think the historic episcopate is necessary for ordained ministry," Prof. Walter Bouman of Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus argued that "the Lutheran confessions state that Lutherans have no objection to the historic episcopate."

For the sake of unity and mission, therefore, Lutherans would agree to share the historic episcopate with Episcopalians who would, in turn, suspend temporarily the requirement that only clergy ordained by bishops in the historic episcopate could preside at the Eucharist.

"The episcopate is not a limitation but an expression of our freedom," he said.

Dozens of Lutherans swarmed to microphones to passionately argue for and against the Concordat. Some were absolutely convinced that bishops in the historic episcopate would create a gulf between them and the rest of the church by moving toward a more hierarchical style by adopting the three-fold ministry of the Episcopal Church.

"Every fiber of my being shouts out and cries no to the historic episcopate," said Connie McAllister of St. Paul. But John Stendahl of Massachusetts said that he liked the "subversive potential" of the Concordat and saw in the agreement possibilities for "mutual critique and admonition."

Others openly warned that the issue was too divisive, asking if it was worth dividing the church

by their fruits you

On January 14 of this year, my partner, Pastor Steve Sabin of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Ames, Iowa, met with his bishop, Phil Hougen, who, after a lengthy discussion on ecumenical matters, said, apropos of nothing, "I have heard that you are gay and in a relationship. Is this true?" Steve said yes, and the bishop said, "Then I have to ask you to resign." Steve called me after the meeting for an intense 40-minute phone conversation; we discussed our options and how much we loved each other. In a formal written response to the bishop, Steve refused to resign, stating that his relationship with me is "biblically informed and consistent with the teachings of this church."

Steve told the congregation council about it the following night and formally introduced me as his partner. All 12 council members reacted positively; there were tears of humility and joy. Of course Steve ought to tell the congregation, they said.

That Sunday, after worship, Steve told the congregation about it (having taken on a life of its own, the reference is always capital I-t) and introduced me. Again, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Two exceptions: a couple, long-time members of Steve's church (Mr. couldn't talk to Steve after the service, but Mrs. offered a few words of support); the other, a 14-year-old boy who put his head

in his hands and cried (a strong reaction for a young man, and not necessarily negative).

Let's have a show of hands to see if any of the above sounds familiar — did anyone think St. Francis Lutheran or First United Lutheran in San Francisco? It's not quite the same deal, though it's close. Those congregations were expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) after they had ordained and called people who were not on the ELCA's clergy roster — a bureaucratic no-no — nor had their pastors been approved for ordination — because they're openly queer. Steve was already ordained when his bishop popped the question; in fact, at the time of his ordination, it wasn't customary to inquire as to an ordinand's sexual orientation. At the time of his ordination, Steve was married, and his self-understanding was not that he was gay.

The week after I was formally introduced, the congregation council president invited the bishop to visit Lord of Life, which he did the following Sunday. If you're getting the impression all this happened very quickly, congratulate yourself on your perception. Hougen preached; Steve presided. After the service, there was a question-and-answer period, during which Hougen read from "Guidelines and Definitions for Discipline," an official church document that specifies what constitutes clergy misconduct, but does not provide a scriptural basis for that

lutherans reject...

over the issue. Several speakers pointed out that the whole Christian world was watching whether the Lutherans would see the importance of healing divisions that have persisted since the 16th century.

The Reformed observers expressed mixed emotions at a press conference following the vote. The Rev. John Thomas of the UCC said that he felt a "deep sense of disappointment" that it was not possible for both proposals to move forward. He said that his gratitude was mixed with grief and that he shared the hurt and pain among his Episcopal colleagues.

The ELCA had hoped to "move in multiple directions at the same time," said the Rev. Dan Martenson, ecumenical officer for the ELCA in the news conference following the vote. He worried that the decision in favor of the Reformed churches would now be perceived as moving in one direction. Yet he said that the ELCA is deeply resolved to continue its relationships with other churches both here and abroad.

"The ecumenical agenda is very much alive," added the Rev. David Perry, the Episcopal Church's ecumenical officer, because

the votes demonstrated "broad-based support in both churches." The enthusiasm demonstrated for the Concordat at the General Convention is a clear sign that "the energy will continue."

And he was particularly encouraged by the "solid core of younger people committed to ecumenism." July's meeting of almost 30,000 Lutheran youth strongly endorsed the ecumenical proposals.

While the vote may be "an honest and accurate reflection of where the Lutheran church is," Anderson agreed that it is clear that the majority of Lutherans want a close relationship with the Episcopalians. "With some additional work, we can complete the task."

As some of the gloom dissipated, a few Episcopalians expressed a cautious hope that the Lutherans would take the initiative and shape a fresh proposal at their Churchwide Assembly in 1999 and put it on the agenda of the Episcopal Church's General Convention agenda in 2000.



James Solheim is director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.

shall know them

misconduct. Hougen repeated most often a quote from that document: "Practicing homosexual persons are precluded from the ordained ministry of this church."

Upon hearing that quote, one parishioner stood and told Hougen how angry and hurt she was that the bishop would deem Steve unfit for pastoral duty, and told him of the great affection the congregation has for him. Hougen said he was very concerned for Lord of Life and for Steve and he wants a resolution to the situation.

I asked, in reference to the quote, "Is there any scriptural basis for that statement? I mean, the Lutheran church has a long-standing tradition of basing all its actions on scrupulous theological reasoning; are there any exegeses upon which that proscription is based?" Hougen said there is sound exegesis which supports the scriptural proscriptions of homosexuality (or homosexual behavior, as he was wont to say) and sound exegesis which says such interpretations of scripture are incorrect, misleading and mistranslated. However, he said, the statement remains. Scholarship notwithstanding, obviously, but don't tell Martin Luther.

As the dialog continued, Hougen repeatedly pointed to the proscription: "Practicing homosexual persons are precluded from the ordained ministry of this church." Hougen spoke of his own feelings, how he feels the church should welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Yet he acknowledged the church's position, stating that as bishop, he must support that position, even if it is contradictory of him to do so (saying to the effect that there is a 2,000 year history of church teachings on homosexuality; who was he to question it?).

I asked another question: "The church seems to define homosexuality in terms of acts. Could you tell me what a homosexual act is?" Hougen said, "Well, you seem to know something about it." I replied, "This is gleaned from what you read to us; all I know is what you said. Is it a homosexual act when I put my arm around Steve? When I hold his hand?" Hougen replied, "Yes, and others." I asked, "Is it a homosexual act when I tell him I love him?" Hougen replied, "Yes." "Yet there seems to be a different understanding of heterosexuality," I continued. "No, there isn't," he said, pointing out that heterosexuality, too, is defined by acts, though he never referred

to anyone as "practicing heterosexuals." "Well," I said, "I am a gay man and as such I think I can speak with a fair amount of authority. It is not sex that makes me gay, it is love." He didn't respond.

Parishioners spoke of how scripture was used to keep women from the ministry, to enforce slavery and a host of other injustices. Hougen spoke again of a long history of scriptural teaching proscribing homosexuality. One suggested that since Lord of Life is part of the larger church, perhaps its voice should be heard and others ought to reconsider their position. Hougen replied, "Do you want to take a synod vote?" I said, "A little more sarcasm, please." Hougen apologized immediately and profusely, saying he did not mean to appear sarcastic and that such was not his intent.

The last speaker said this matter is not about the ELCA or its ministry; it's about love. How can the church have a problem with love, she asked. Hougen didn't reply.

Before I left for home, I went up to Phil Hougen. I said I wanted to let him know I'm a writer, that I have a regular column and that I'll be discussing this in my column. In contrast to his previous comments about how he thought it best if the press wasn't contacted, he told me the public has a right to know how the ELCA handles such matters. He asked for a copy of the column; I said I'd be happy to provide him one. He apologized again for his earlier remark which I thought sarcastic. I said, "Well, I think it's more or less a cultural misunderstanding. You see, where I come from, we don't use history as an excuse for perpetrating an injustice, and I, for my part, apologize." Hougen tried to turn a grimace into a grin, and waved as I walked away.

Friends, I hesitate to say it, but Caiaphas and Annas are far from dead. Indeed, they are running the Lutheran Church.

Now, sexuality and relational issues are hardly new to the ELCA; in fact, in the early 1990s, national presiding bishops Herb Chilstrom and H. George Anderson wrote in an open letter that they "call for ongoing dialogue regarding homosexuality in a number of arenas throughout our church". Well, nothing's happened. There was a sexuality statement issued in 1993; three mentions were made of homosexuality (all of which were in a positive, rational light), while the rest of the document dealt with a

There must be a better reason other than 'the rules are the rules because they are the rules' to exclude gay and lesbian people

fruits...

host of assorted relational issues. The statement was scrapped because, to paraphrase the powers that be, "We can't agree on anything," the implication being that until agreement can be reached, no discussion will occur. Obviously, it's gonna take more than simply saying "Look at me; I called for an examination!" and believing it sufficient.

By late February, Steve's case was achieving some notoriety. Lord of Life was visited by Doug Mose of Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries, a organization that provides support for embattled clergy and their congregations. In early March, we were invited to the second annual Knutson Conference in Ann Arbor, a weekend conference concerning the vocation and ministry of gay and lesbian persons in church and society.

At the conference, the most fun happened on Saturday — for me, anyway. There was a series of workshops, one of which featured Steve (The Church's Loss: When the ELCA Says NO to An Individual), and one which featured former ELCA national presiding bishop Herb Chilstrom (Why Can't We Talk? Leadership in the Midst of Conflict).

In his opening remarks, Chilstrom parroted the speech of his previous presentation to the plenary. He stressed appropriateness of time and place when it comes to change; he detailed how he came to his current understanding of gay people. After being fed this twice in one day, one woman spoke up, and got a little angry. I can understand, cuz I let loose shortly after her.

"I'm impressed by how often people at this conference have said there is a time and place. Well, the time is now and the place is everywhere. That's all there is to it," I said.

Chilstrom's response was a pretty standard dialectic. "Let's turn the tables. Let's say you're the bishop; what do you do?"

"In reference to what?" I asked. "Give me something to react to."

"What about the issue of ordination of gays and lesbians?"

"Okay, I'm the bishop, here's the deal and let's be done with it."

Chilstrom said, "And how would the synod vote turn out?"

"That's sarcasm!" I was getting pretty heated by this time.

"Not, it isn't."

"Yes, it is, because you know damn well how the vote would turn out. I am insulted!" I shouted. "There must be a better reason other than 'the rules are the rules because they are the rules' to exclude gay and lesbian people. The church behaves as though it must follow its parishioners instead of leading them!"

Changing subject, Chilstrom changed his tone and asked, "Uh, I'm sorry, I can't see your name," pointing to my tag. Maybe he wanted to appear chummy and personal.

"Karl von Uhl," I said, slowly, distinctly, and loud enough to be heard down the hall. Even though he asked my name, he never used it for the rest of the workshop.

Chilstrom started to reiterate the administrative aspects of the church. I headed him off, saying, "It is untenable that the church be more involved with rules than gospel. What church do you want: rules from God or rules from people?"

A man broke into the fray. "You've got to wait for the Holy Spirit to do its work," he said, "and God works on His own time."

"The Holy Spirit is working here and now while others fret about rules," I said.

Another man spoke up, calling the current policy "bullshit".

About time we got some good Lutheran profanity going, I thought.

Chilstrom stayed calm, though he did start swaying in place a little. He made a few more comments about how church leadership must work in order to be effective. "You're suggesting the church follow instead of lead? Get thee behind me!" I said.

Another man spoke up, saying how he comes to the Lutheran church from a fundamentalist background and we don't know how good we have it. "This is wonderful, this is accepting," he said. There was the gnashing of teeth.

"Think of the bishops," said Chilstrom, "having to balance their pastoral and prophetic duties with the practical, day-to-day..."

"Oh, yes, pity the poor bishops," I said. A man turned around and gave me the frowning of a lifetime. Guess I earned that one, but shee-it — I come by my sarcasm honestly. When the workshop was over, I beat a hasty retreat to Steve next door.

Okay, okay — a note about sarcasm. Like I said, I come by mine honestly. It is a classic weapon of

the oppressed, along with humor, ridicule, and shame. Those in power have the power to get their own way; minorities often have only words. If someone in power uses sarcasm — say, a bishop — it results in cruelty.

At supper, I shared my thoughts on my experience. “Look, I decided to do the ecumenical thang and (nodding to Steve), taking a page from Luther’s exegesis of the 8th commandment (“Thou shalt not bear false witness”), after much contemplation, I have realized how to put the best possible spin on Herb Chilstrom and what he sez: he is tall, he is pale, and he is addle-brained.”

Why did Chilstrom mention a synod vote? I don’t know. “All power in the Church,” according to the ELCA constitution, “belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this church are to be carried out under his rule and authority.” But there’s no process that guarantees the above statement; no one is charged with the discernment of whether a particular action of the church is indeed under Christ’s rule and authority.

The ELCA’s constitution also calls all ordained ministers, as a basic definition of their office and function, to “speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world.” Bishop Hougen recognizes no obligation to consider the possible complicity of the church in society’s oppression of gay folks, and he acknowledges no obligation to justify the church’s policy in relation to the church’s profession of faith. The result is that without even saying it, the Lutheran church believes in infallibility. Further, it’s a self-reflexive system wherein no one can be held accountable.

In simplest terms, it’s like having a government where there’s no judicial branch, only a legislative and an executive. The ELCA (the executive) assumes whatever pronouncements the biannual Church-Wide Assembly (the legislative; comparable to General Convention) passes are faithful.

A few weeks after returning from Ann Arbor, there was a synod meeting at which Hougen spoke to Steve about attending the National Workshop on Christian Unity; Steve has been the synodical ecumenical representative for seven years. Hougen said that he was unable to go and that he didn’t think there was anyone else who was as well versed in the subject as Steve, and asked if Steve would go. Steve said yes. We surmise that although Steve’s unfit to minister Word and sacrament, it’s just peachy to send him as the bishop’s representative.

The first official step in the disciplinary action, a consultation committee, called by Hougen, met with us on May 22. Happily, I was able to attend; unhappily, I was allowed no voice nor was I allowed to take notes, but that’s okay cuz I have absolutely no problem with the ELCA invading my privacy and making my life a living hell and allowing me no say in the matter. The committee was formed of three clergy and two lay, some of whom served on Steve’s candidacy committee.

The meeting lasted four hours. More or less, we worked through each of the assertions Steve made in his letter to the bishop. We (they, actually) talked about how one is in conformity with church policy, with the way gay and lesbian people experience life in the church, about how the church ought to go about making changes in its approach to the issue of gay people in the church (is it legislative? is it judicial? is there something else?).

On the whole, it was very positive. We came away with the feeling that the committee was searching for a means to explore this issue without resorting to the juridical process; taking up the mantle of discernment was a distinct possibility. However, the recommendation this committee makes is non-binding.

A few months after that meeting, Hougen met with me and Steve. It was an (ahem) interesting meeting. I told Phil point-blank that this was the first instance of Christianity he’s shown me in six months; he never expressed any pastoral concern for me at all, though he was lavish with it for Steve’s former spouse. When asked why, he said, “I didn’t know how to relate to you.” Which begs the question — what’s a member of the clergy, let alone a bishop, doing not knowing how to “relate” to another human being?

We three talked about various things — how Steve’s ministry was going, how my private life was being invaded for no good reason (Hougen had no response to that, he simply nodded and said yup, that’s what we’re doin’), and how, if one does not wish to base the church on discernment, specifically on one man saying, ‘I think you have this point wrong and we ought to discuss it’, then what does the church do with Martin Luther? Hougen had no response to that. He also said that

The ELCA, in its ongoing timidity, has decided that the best it can do is refer for further study the cry of gay and lesbian persons for justice

his feelings are unchanged from what they were in January — that he supports the rule (even though he sez this in no way reflects his personal feelings; in fact, he maintains he has no personal feelings on the matter, even though when pressed he said he personally believes gay folks have no place in the clergy when he appeared at Lord of Life).

Limbo continued for a while. Steve busied himself at the church, trying to maintain some semblance of order, and, in general, ministering to his flock. The limbo stopped August 25.

Hougen called a meeting with the local clergy to let them know what had been going on in relation to Steve's disciplinary proceeding as well as report on the recent Church-Wide Assembly. When Steve arrived, Hougen took him aside and outlined his general ideas for the meeting's agenda and told him that he was going to bring formal charges and convene a disciplinary hearing in the near future.

After Hougen opened the meeting with brief devotions, he shared a brief chronology of his and Steve's actions to date. Then he shared the assembly materials relating to three memorials for a change in the ELCA's policies toward gay and lesbian clergy.

Steve told me, "All in all, these were fascinating documents. The memorials from the synods were well thought out and firmly buttressed with arguments from Scripture and the Confessions. The Memorials Committee, responsible for vetting any resolutions sent to Churchwide Assembly by synods, responded with the recommendations that the changes not be made and that the issues be referred to various ELCA divisions for further study.

"As part of their rationale they included a chronology and synopsis of the actions taken by the ELCA with regard to gays and lesbians during its ten-year history. It is a very enlightening tale of aborted initiatives, postponed decisions, disavowed studies, outright cowardice and deception. The ELCA, in its ongoing timidity, has decided that the best it can do is refer for further study the cry of gay and lesbian persons for justice and the primacy of the Gospel.

"The real order of the day was that the Bishop wanted to indicate which way the wind was blowing and give the assembled clergy the signal that they were expected to trim their sails accordingly. "The rules are the rules," was the most popular chant of the day. A few of my colleagues asked if there was not perhaps another way to deal with my situation rather than a formal disciplinary hearing, but no one spoke in my defense."

The big question now: where do we go from here? A discipline hearing committee will be convened, wherein Steve will be accused, we assume, of violating the Definitions and Guidelines document. As for a defense, it's anyone's guess; it doesn't matter. The ELCA is, by its own constitution, obligated to remove Steve from its clergy roster. Eschewing scriptural discernment is mandated, injustice is required. What can you do? Tell everyone you know what I have told you here and pray for our sanity. Pray for the ELCA, that they lose their comfort with this injustice. Pray for the strength to tear the scales from the eyes of those who will not see.



Karl von Uhl lives and writes from his home in rural central Iowa. You may contact him and his partner, Steve, via e-mail at jarheads@netins.net.

apa blasts

'reparative therapy'

The American Psychological Association today passed a resolution that represents a serious setback to proponents of so-called "reparative" or "conversion" therapy, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

"These therapies amount to nothing more than psychological terrorism and are usually performed by practitioners who harbor intense bias against gay people," said David M. Smith, HRC's senior strategist. "These practitioners usually are affiliated with extremist religious groups that promote the illusion that sexual orientation can be changed to further their political aims."

The resolution, which passed overwhelmingly at the APA convention in Chicago, asserts that there is no sound scientific evidence on the efficacy of these therapies. So-called reparative therapy seeks to convert gay people to heterosexuality, which many mental health professionals agree cannot be done. Some have compared these techniques to efforts to make some left-handed people right-handed; they may learn to use their right hands but they still are innately left-handed.

Supporters of reparative therapy demanded that the APA make a statement on these therapies because they have been under intensive debate within the profession and in the larger society.

"This resolution reaffirms the fact that since there is nothing wrong with homosexuality, there is no reason that gay, lesbian or bisexual people should try to change their orientations," said Kim Mills, another HRC spokesperson. "We stand with the APA in calling for an end to discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation."

The resolution strongly reaffirms that homosexuality is not a mental illness and that psychologists must not "participate in or condone discriminatory practices with sexual minority clients."

In addition, the APA resolution calls on psychologists to "respect the rights of individuals, including sexual minority clients, to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy." And it directs psychologists to obtain appropriate informed consent to therapy when working with sexual minority clients, including minors.

--- Human Rights Campaign press release

bc bishops support same-sex legislation

The provincial government in British Columbia has passed legislation to recognise same-sex unions for the purposes of child custody, access and maintenance.

Archbishop David Crawley and the other four Anglican bishops in BC have written an open letter to Premier Glen Clark supporting the proposed changes to the Family Relations Act and the Family Maintenance Enforcement Act.

Anglican bishops have written letters in support of amending civil legislation to give equal treatment for homosexuals on various occasions since 1980.

The legislation has been opposed by other religious leaders in the province, including BC's Roman Catholic bishops. Attorney-General Ujjal Dosanjh welcomed the support from the Anglican church, saying "I think it's important for the religious leaders to reflect on the issue, reflect on past experiences and really get on with doing what needs to be done, bringing our laws into the 21st century."

Here follows the full text of the letter sent to the province's premier, the Hon Glen Clark:

As bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada in British Columbia, we write to express our support for the provincial government's proposed amendments to the Family Relations Act and the Family Maintenance Enforcement Act.

It is a matter of fundamental equality and human rights that homosexual people should have the same obligations and protection under the civil law as other citizens of British Columbia. Our support for the proposed changes in this Province is consistent with positions taken by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada and the national House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada in recent years:

"We affirm that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law with all other Canadian citizens." (Guidelines of the House of Bishops, Mississauga, 1979)

"We condemn... bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation." (General Synod, Ottawa, 1995)

"This House of Bishops supports the proposed amendments in the House of Commons to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation." (House of Bishops, Mississauga, 1996)

Religious organizations have a particular responsibility to safeguard the freedom, dignity and responsibility of every person, and to work for an end to discrimination. While we are aware that many people cannot yet accept homosexual relationships as equal in dignity with heterosexual relationships, nevertheless we have an obligation to safeguard the rights of same-sex partners as a matter of justice.

Equality must be supported in substance, not just by rhetoric. We do not believe the proposed legislation will weaken the family structure, which is central to the well-being of society. On the contrary, by ensuring the same benefits and the same responsibilities for homosexual families as for heterosexual families, it will strengthen all families in their diversity and encourage long-term, stable relationships to the benefit of children, spouses and society as a whole.

Yours sincerely,
Archbishop David Crawley,
Metropolitan of British Columbia and Yukon
Bishop James Cruikshank, Diocese of Cariboo
Bishop Michael Ingham, Diocese of New Westminster
Bishop John Hannen, Diocese of Caledonia
Bishop Barry Jenks, Diocese of British Columbia

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experience

by Ann Carlson

One of my memorable moments at General Convention was listening to a more conservative participant complain that gay and lesbian Christians, in our testimony about the issues, have elevated experience to the same level as scripture, tradition and reason. I returned to thoughts of experience and faith many times during the two weeks of exhaustion, joy, stress, mental and physical acrobatics (Try listening to 50 people all speak on the same issue in an open hearing, each trying to say something different. Try dodging hundreds of wheeled luggage carriers in the press of thousands all trying to get to the same place at the same time!), and communion with my family of faith. I think they are wrong. It's not elevation. It's demotion to think of experience as a "fourth leg" on our "three-legged stool."

Experience is the context in which we understand and live our faith. We come to belief, engage scripture, connect with the future and the past, develop and exercise our reason, learn from the wisdom of others or the lessons of the past, know God, only through experience. There is no other way. Nothing that we think, feel, do, or understand is separate from our processes of thinking, feeling, doing and understanding. The phenomena of experience is the realm of life. It is the plane on which God connects with humankind and we connect, or fail to connect, with each other. Experience is the transformation of that which exists into perceived reality. When we share our stories we share from that most sacred place of our reality, and we carry God into the world only through God real and alive in us. That is what it means when we say that we are incarnational Christians!

With this in mind, I share my sacred stories of General Convention.

Two weeks in Philadelphia. A lifetime it seemed, and was for the community which formed, worked and worshipped, studied, fought, loved, laughed and cried together, and then drew apart, never again to be together in quite the same way. It was such a privilege to celebrate, all within one week, the life and work of three presiding bishops. There was Bishop Hines' death and the special Eucharist celebrating his contributions to the Church, the celebration of Ed Browning's 12 years as Presiding Bishop, and the election of Frank Griswold as our new Presiding Bishop. I was fully a participant, yet part of me looked back from an indeterminate future and wonderingly affirmed, "I was there at that great historic moment."

It was an exciting time. What a wonder to worship with thousands of the church's most committed; to hear the Arch Bishop of Canterbury (The ABC. My initials are ABC, but I guess I'll never be the ABC!); to sit spellbound listening to Bishop Charleston's address at the Peace Forum, so spellbound that I literally forgot to breathe; to rejoice with all those who gave personal tributes to Ed Browning during the special celebration of his ministry. I

It was exciting, too, to meet remarkable and gifted individuals, passionate people committed to the church and their faith. Some I worked with in sympathy and mutual support. Our diocesan deputation was the best and our daily meetings often the high point of the day. Others, on the face of it, I opposed. But though we spoke on different sides of the issues, I often felt that we were together in our concern for the church and our dedication to the gospel of Christ.

After seeing the same faces in all the same places, even though we saw each other because our views were diametrically opposed, I began to notice that they too had red eyes from lack of sleep, were looking worn, were looking very familiar, and were beginning to look dear. Issues and opponents become people and friends, and we begin to engage each other in new ways.

Still, there were those who never made sense to me, some who seemed to care only for their own way, or for making outrageous comments. How do they see the rest of us? Will we ever learn to connect?

I came home from General Convention stretched; hurting a little from the pulling and straining, but larger inside and rejoicing in the wider vision of our church and my place within it. Once, when I needed to be quiet and listen to God, I used the lunch hour to walk the labyrinth at St. Stephen's, just two blocks from the convention center. My feet looked small but felt firm on the path. I felt with my body the sudden turnings, the close approaches to center only to be returned back to the border with a few steps, the delight at reaching the center, and the abrupt end of the path. As with the labyrinth, sometimes the path we take seems to go directly toward the goal, sometimes it seems we reverse ourselves or walk away, sometimes we move around and around without getting any nearer. But we too are on a path that will not fail and own a God who has mapped the course and made treading together, the experience, as sacred as ultimately reaching the goal.



Dr. Ann ("Anno") Carlson is Convenor of Integrity/Tidewater and an Alternate Deputy to General Convention from the Diocese of Southern Virginia.

dixit
Anno

a tale of two chapels

harvard church to allow same-sex ceremonies

After a year of study, the Board of Ministry voted without dissent to recommend that The Memorial Church be made available for the religious ceremonies of commitment between members of the same sex who are members of the University.

Those eligible to hold such services are current students, alumni listed in the Directory, officers of administration and instruction, and employees of the University. Clergy of all denominations who prepare eligible couples for these services will be welcome to officiate.

The recommendation was accepted in behalf of The Memorial Church by its minister, The Rev. Professor Peter J. Gomes, who announced that it would come into effect from July 1.

"I thank the Board of Ministry, and in particular its chair, Thomas Mikelson, and the subcommittee's chair, Victor Kazanjian, for their thoughtful report, and I am pleased to be able to extend the hospitality of this University Church to all members of the University," said Gomes. "Our staff will do all that we can to assist in the development of these services."

The Board noted in its discussion that this action was consistent with the University's long-standing principle of non-discrimination, and an affirmation of the hospitality of The Memorial Church as, in the words of Isaiah, "a house of prayer for all people."

--- Harvard Memorial Church press release

emory president apologizes

by Kim Strosnider, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

Leaders of the United Methodist Church in northern Georgia have criticized Emory University's president, William M. Chace, for apologizing to a gay couple who were denied the use of a university chapel for a commitment ceremony that the men likened to a marriage.

Dr. Chace issued the apology this month to the couple, one of whom is a former Emory employee. The men had planned to use the chapel at Oxford College, a two-year division of Emory, for a commitment ceremony in late May. Dr. Chace called it an "unfortunate misunderstanding" that they were

not allowed to use the chapel by William H. Murdy, dean of Oxford College.

United Methodists meeting in Dalton, Ga., expressed "strong disagreement and extreme displeasure" with Dr. Chace's stance. Neither Georgia law nor the church, with which Emory is closely affiliated, recognizes same-sex marriages.

Delegates to the annual meeting of the North Georgia United Methodists called on Dr. Chace to withdraw his apology. If he does not, they have requested that the university's Board of Trustees "take decisive action to insure that this policy is changed so that the consecrated sacred places on the campuses of Emory University may not be used in ways the United Methodist church has declared to be inappropriate, unsuitable, and unacceptable."

Consequently, the Emory University Board of Trustees met and issued the following statement of policy:

- Regarding Use of Consecrated Spaces on Campus
1. Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church is a consecrated space on the campus of Emory University. Its minister is a member of the North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC). Glenn Memorial Church may not be used in any way contrary to the law and polity of The UMC, as set forth in The Book of Discipline....
 2. Cannon Chapel serves both religious and secular purposes and is thus a multipurpose facility. The use of Cannon Chapel in the future will be left to the judgment and discretion of the University Chaplain...The University Chaplain currently is the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, a UMC minister.
 3. Day Prayer Chapel Day Prayer Chapel, located on the Oxford campus of Emory University, is also a multipurpose facility [thus following the same rules as 2.]...The Oxford College Chaplain currently is the Rev. Sammy Clark, a UMC minister.
 4. Allen Memorial United Methodist Church is a consecrated space on the Oxford campus of Emory University. ...Allen Memorial Church may not be used in any way contrary to the law and polity of The UMC, as set forth in The Book of Discipline. ...
 5. The use of University hospital chapels is under the oversight of the dean of the School of Theology and under the supervision of the executive director of pastoral services of the hospitals....
 6. In accordance with Georgia law, and The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, Emory University does not recognize the legal validity of same sex marriages.



The following sermon was preached by Louie Crew at St. Stephens, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, August 17, 1997

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who are we to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually who are we not to be? You are a Child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Last week I posted the exhortation above to my site on the World Wide Web. I used a Java script to make the words scroll atop the screen slowly as if a ticker tape. I confess to a delicious sense of impish pleasure in imagining the responses of some of the dozens members of the Religious Right who are among the 170+ visitors to that site each day, checking out Satan, some think, just to confirm I’m still around. Who does this queer think he is encouraging absolutely everybody to behave as if a Child of God?! and ever so slowly the tape scrolls...

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.— Marianne Williamson in her book ‘Return to Love.’ I did not even write it. I wish I had though! And Ill be sharing it wherever I can. There’s a similar surprise in todays lessons. Do you want to be wise?

Listen:

Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table. [Dindin to Die for!] She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls from the highest places in the town, “You that are simple, turn in here!” To those without sense she says, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, “You that are simple, turn in here!”

In a couple of weeks, new students will arrive in my classroom, some of them already too willing to dumb down, to assume that intellect and wisdom are not their gifts, that wisdom is available only for the few with highest i.q. Thats not Wisdom’s own invitation! We were born to make manifest the glory of

God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. Wisdom tells us, you and me,

Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

That’s quite an invitation, one which our beloved Episcopal Church is poised to issue to ever more people.

I want everyone to raise a hand who has at one point been a member of another denomination? [*Well over half of those present at each service did so*] The Episcopal Church needs to grow ever more self-consciously into our reputation of being a church where you don’t have to hang your mind on the rack when you come into the church door. In this world, that is Good

News. Here it is perfectly safe to ask questions, to challenge God. Here it is safe to doubt, safe to say, Wait just a minute: let me put my finger into the nail prints.

In our church we make saints out of people willing to be sassy like that. Here we

don’t get judged by our certainty, but by God’s. Here faith is not our gift to God, but God’s gift to us. Here we are saved not by our correctness, but by God’s infinite and unbounded grace.

From the earliest days of Anglicanism, we have never had the luxury of a large body of beliefs about which we can all agree. We are not a church that makes confessional statements. Hear what our Presiding Bishop said in his last address as Presiding Bishop to the General Convention this summer:

I’m a traditionalist. That’s right. I’m a traditionalist because I treasure and believe in the ethos of Anglicanism. As Anglicans, we discern God’s will through Scripture, tradition and reason. However, some have chosen to embrace biblical literalism instead of our Anglican tradition. History tells us that biblical literalism was used to support both the practice of slavery and the denigration of women. We have moved past slavery and we are moving past the oppression of women. It is time to move past using literalistic readings of the Bible to create prejudices against our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. Biblical literalism may be someone’s tradition, but it’s not our tradition and it’s time we came home to our Anglican roots. Again I remind you: I did not choose these issues. Nor did you.

They are the challenge of this generation given to us through the God of history. I believe with all my heart that for the most part, we are responding to them out of the gospel: not some literalist gospel, or a liberal gospel or a conservative gospel, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, whom we know and love.

And because we have persevered to discover what inclusivity and compassion mean for these times, I can offer real thanksgiv-

**who are we to be
fabulous?**

ings today. I give thanks and praise for the women who have enriched the ordained ministry of this church. I give thanks and praise for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters who serve this church so faithfully. I give thanks and praise to all people of color in this church, who make us so much more a reflection of God's creation. We are at our best when we can celebrate our diversity and find joy in our being together, joy and thanksgiving for the whole life of this Church and all its members.

What is the most important commandment? Loving God with your Mind, the forgotten, but first commandment.

We not only have the right to think for ourselves, we have the obligation to do so. God does not stand in fear and trembling if we dare to challenge Her. Our playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around [us]...

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil, St. Paul exhorts.

Grow up! Mature! the writer of Proverbs tells us. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And what does Wisdom teach us about Gods will for our lives? God wills that we have life, and have it abundantly.

Come, O children, listen to me...

Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

What a simple notion—so simple that we might just miss it!

How do you change the world? You change yourself. How do you end unkindness? You manifest kindness. How do you get rid of ignorance? You keep learning yourself, and you share what you learn. Someone has hurt you very unfairly? How do you make hurting stop? You forgive that person and hurt no one.

Both of my parents died in the same year, 1982. I was an only child and we were very, very close. Dad died last, and during the time of the funeral, I stayed with their contemporary, a member of their Baptist church who had always given me books while I was growing up. Mrs. W. B. Moore also taught me Latin in high school and remained a dear, dear friend when I became an adult. Late in evening after the funeral, Mama Moore startled me when she said, "Louie, don't ever forget your parents."

But I cannot possibly forget them! I thought to myself but said nothing, realizing that she still wanted to say something quite precious, and quite vulnerable. "I won't say it down at the Baptist church," she lowered her voice as if Baptist friends might be at the window listening, "but I don't believe in an after life."

Why is she telling me this, and at a time like this? I thought to myself. And I know she loved them as if members of her own family! I kept my eyes fixed on hers the way I had done when years ago she conjugated *amo, amas, amat, amamus, amatis, amant*.

"I'm a bit like the Buddhists, I guess. I don't know for sure, but I believe that the only way that we live on is in the acts that we inspire in others." She paused a long time. "Your parents were good people, Louie. Do not forget them. Let them inspire in you the goodness that they manifested to others."

"I believe," she continued, "that there is only so much good in the world, and the only way to assure that it continues is to keep sharing the goodness that you have received."

Listen also to what Jesus says:

"Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Come, Thomas; come, Mama Moore; come, Louie; come those of you gathered here at St. Stephens; come, absolutely everybody! Reach out and put your fingers into the holes which the nails have made. Eat this bread and live forever!

We ask ourselves, who are we to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually who are we not to be? You are a Child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Amen.



Dr. Crew is a member of the House of Deputies from the diocese of Newark. He founded Integrity in 1974.

gay priests + c of e: perfect together?

by Patricia Reaney, *Reuters*

London archdeacon David Gerrard was quoted as saying he would introduce a private members motion on homosexuality at the Church of England General Synod in York, northern England, on July 14.

Gerrard is not gay, left-wing or a crusader for sexual freedom, but he believes the subject of gay priests is important and should be discussed.

"I simply think it is a very important issue which affects the relationship between Church and society," the balding, bearded father of four told the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper.

"It affects how we treat a group of people who have suffered appallingly prejudicial treatment by society."

The issue threatens to provoke the fiercest controversy in the Church since its 1992 decision to approve the ordination of women. Up to 300 male priests left in protest.

The Church of England, which has some 80 million members worldwide, does not condemn homosexuality but does not completely condone it.

"Homosexuality is no bar to ordination but, because of their position representing the church, gay priests are asked to refrain from physical relations," a spokesman for the Church said.

While the Church is much more tolerant of gay priests than the Roman Catholic Church, which completely forbids hetero- or homosexual relations for priests, there is a strong Evangelical movement

which still considers it a sin and says it should not be tolerated.

The issue has not been discussed at a synod since a debate in 1981, when it was voted that "homosexual acts fall short of (God's) ideal."

The church also issued a discussion document titled "Issues in Sexuality" a decade later but it has shied away from confronting the issue.

Gerrard's motion has been supported by 170 members, guaranteeing it will be on the agenda of the synod, which acts as the Church of England's parliament.

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement welcomed the motion and said it will help to clear the air on a matter that divides many Christians.

"We consider this debate to be long overdue, but nevertheless welcome," said the Reverend Richard Kirker.

"We firmly believe the only ultimate solution for the Church on questions relating to same-sex loving relationships is for an open acknowledgment that, in reality, these relationships already exist at all levels of Church life, and are to be welcomed for the mutual good they bring to the partners concerned."

But Jonathan Lockwood, administrator for Reform, a traditionalist movement within the Church of England made up of ministers and lay people, warned against any moves towards allowing practising gay priests.

"If the Church of England ever passed such a motion, many people would just disassociate themselves with the church," he told *Reuters*.

international notes

Sexual orientation no bar to ordination, says Australian church

The national assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia has agreed that a person's sexual orientation is in itself no bar to ordination and that presbyteries (regional councils) can provide some recognition to same-sex relationships. The assembly, which took place in Perth, from 5 to 12 July, did

so by agreeing to "note" - and not to reject - the decisions on sexual orientation made by the church's national executive committee over the last 15 years.

churches called to 'accept reality' of homosexuality

A South African clergyman has told churches that homosexuality is a reality that they need to acknowledge. Churches should accept the "reality of homosexuality" and promote frankness as it cannot be wished away, according to the chairman of the South African Human Rights Commission, Dr Barney Pitso. --- *Episcopal News International*

president's column

You have already read in this quarterly, and elsewhere, the news from General Convention. Many significant things happened there, and I personally feel that it was a decisive General Convention, especially for issues important to Integrity and our many members and friends.

This convention did not retreat from any previous positions of support for lesbians and gay men to be full participating members of the Episcopal Church. It authorized medical benefits for domestic partners, and the study of blessing same sex unions, with a report required for the 2000 convention in Denver. It took no action on the issue of ordination of lesbians and gay persons to the priesthood. In effect, with the Righter decision, that issue is now settled.

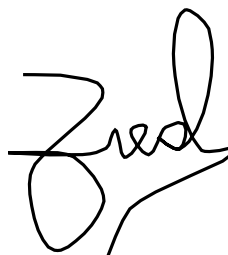
Most importantly, for me and I believe for all of us, was the lack of mean spirited rhetoric around these issues throughout General Convention. There seemed to be a real desire, on the part of many, to work through and beyond these issues that have divided us, as a Church, for too long.

Forces that have long held opposing views on these issues, came together and spoke in favor of the "apology resolution". To be sure, we all recognized there are still differences, but uniformly believe and admit that homophobia is wrong. There was support and understanding from places such as Arkansas and Mississippi for finding a way to affirm and bless committed same sex relationships.

These are but two examples of new places that we are finding ways to work together within this Church of ours. It also shows what the witness of our chapters in these areas can do. We must take hope in that, and continue to build and strengthen those relationships.

Yes, there has been negative and threatening rhetoric from some since General Convention. We must continue to reach out to those who so vigorously oppose the inclusivity of the Gospel. We must speak to them with the love and understanding that we ask from them. If the time comes that our paths part, let us pray that we part with the love and peace of God between us.

Finally, let us rejoice that we continue to live and work together as the Body of Christ in this Church. Let us give thanks that we continue to move forward the mission of the Church, even while recognizing and celebrating our diversity.



INTEGRITY'S MISSION

is to be the witness of the lesbian and gay community in the Episcopal Church and of the Episcopal Church in the lesbian and gay community. We engage in a ministry of worship, education, advocacy, fellowship, and service.

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Curriculum Available

For entirely too long the Bible has been used as a weapon against lesbian and gay people. Now there is a new resource available which disarms holy Scripture as an offensive weapon and helps all Christians -- lesbian, gay and straight -- appreciate the Bible as the life-affirming spiritual wellspring it is meant to be.

Claiming the Promise is an ecumenical, welcoming Bible study curriculum on homosexuality which has been published by the (Methodist) Reconciling Congregations Program in cooperation with several other lesbian/gay Christian groups, including Integrity and The Oasis. Prepared by Mary Jo Osterman, editor of *Open Hands*, and benefiting from the assistance of such noted scholars as William Countryman and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, it has received advance praise for both its usable format and substantive content. The recommended teaching plan outlined in the leader's guide is seven two-hour classes but other schedules are feasible. The program would be of use in both congregations and Integrity chapters. The resource comes in the form of a study book priced at \$5.95 and a leaders guide at \$9.95. Both are available from Integrity's national office. For more information, or to order, please write: Mark Kozielec, Executive Secretary, Integrity, Inc., P.O. Box 5255, New York, NY 10185-5255.