

VOICE OF INTEGRITY

Winter/Spring 2002



Integrity Around the World



Integrity's mission is to be a witness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the Episcopal Church and to the world.

Did you know that...

- more than a third of Integrity members are not affiliated with a local chapter?
- half the dioceses in the Episcopal Church have no organized Integrity presence?
- a General Convention 2000 resolution to develop a rite for blessing same-sex relationships was defeated by only 10 deputies?

Since change begins at the local level, Integrity recently created a new way for Integrity members to work together at the grassroots—diocesan networks.

As described in the last issue of the Voice of Integrity, a network is composed of all Integrity members in a diocese. The primary missions of a network are to monitor local issues of concern and organize responses. This includes helping elect General Convention deputies who are GLBT-friendly. Each network has a volunteer coordinator, who is appointed by the Integrity regional vice president. Regional vice presidents are the primary liaison between nation Integrity and diocesan networks. Unlike chapters, networks do not meet on a regular basis. However, they are encouraged to sponsor three gatherings a year: a presence at diocesan convention, an educational activity for local congregations, and an outreach activity to the local GLBT community (e.g., presence at pride festivals). Network members communicate primarily through e-mail lists, supplemented by postcards for those without e-mail access. Networks do not have bank accounts. However, coordinators are given a small budget and are reimbursed by Integrity for allowable out-of-pocket expenses [such as postage and long distance telephone calls].

Integrity's goal is to have a network coordinator in every diocese currently without a local chapter by the fall of 2002. The following dioceses currently do not have a chapter or network coordinator:

Integrity Needs YOU

to be a Network Coordinator!

California
Churches in Europe
Colombia
Delaware
Dominican Republic
East Carolina
Eastern Michigan
Eastern Oregon
Eau Claire
Ecuador
Fond du Lac
Fort Worth
Haiti
Honduras
Indianapolis
Iowa
Kentucky
Litoral (Ecuador)
Los Angeles
Maine

Massachusetts
Michigan
Montana
Navajoland
Nebraska
Nevada
Newark
North Dakota
Northern Indiana
Northern Michigan
Northwest Texas
Northwestern Pennsylvania
Quincy
San Joaquin
South Carolina
South Dakota
Spokane
Springfield
Taiwan
Vermont

Virgin Islands
West Missouri
West Texas
West Virginia
Western Kansas
Western Louisiana
Western Michigan

Western New York
Western North Carolina
Wyoming

If you are willing to serve as a network coordinator, please e-mail networks@integrityusa.org. Kindly indicate your diocese. Network coordinators will be listed on <http://www.integrityusa.org/networks/networks.htm> and added to an e-mail list exclusively for them. [Coordinators must have e-mail.] Coordinator will also be provided with the contact information of Integrity members in their diocese.

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Integrity’s mission is to be a witness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the Episcopal Church and to the world.

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FROM THE EDITOR

by Doug Ball



This edition of the *Voice* has a little bit of everything—updates on our brothers and sisters in Uganda, stories of our own Integrity members responding to academic courses and preachers who believe that we GLBT people can be “transformed” (if we only try hard enough), progress in human sexuality in Brazil, and feature articles on GLBT participation in the Episcopal Church’s 2020 Vision and the main strategic focus of GLBT folk at the upcoming General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Minneapolis in 2003. Besides all that, I wish to draw your attention to the Bulletin Board where I have assembled some stories and announcements of what is happening with various Integrity chapters across the country. I receive many of the newsletters from the chapters across the country (and from Canada), so I see what is going on locally and quite often too quietly in the various chapters. I chose a few events to bring to your attention, to remind you that we are a very far-flung organization doing God’s work in very significant albeit unsung ways. I hope that you will be informed, amused, and pleased about what takes place.

One final note: I wish to single out one newsletter, not because it is necessarily the best one I receive (although right on up there) but

because of the creative idea that has brought it about. I am talking about Integrity/Metro NY. This informative newsletter has combined the forces of Integrity/Staten Island, Integrity/Westchester, Dignity-Integrity/Mid-Hudson, Integrity/Brooklyn, and of course Integrity/New York. Clever idea, it is to have one newsletter covering one huge metropolitan area thus removing the financial burden of each chapter for doing its own communication and advertising. I commend to all the Integrity chapters that put out regular newsletters and bulletins; it is a labor-intensive task, which takes some chapter money as well. And I thank those chapters who keep me regularly informed by e-mail. I challenge those chapters who are not communicating with their members or dioceses to start up a newsletter or an e-mail bulletin to better communicate and inform our members and church of GLBT doings. And remember to send me a copy of your newsletter, bulletins, e-mail announcements, whatever to the national Integrity address in Washington, DC. (*Please do not use my old personal address in Washington since I no longer live in our nation’s capital.*)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by the Rev. Michael W. Hopkins

Dear Fellow Integrity Members,



Since the last issue of *the Voice of Integrity*, a significant number of things have happened on several fronts, all of which are shared in this issue. They are, for the most part, signs of great hope for our future as a Church and as GLBT people within it.

Many of our chapters have been doing extraordinary work enhancing the presence of GLBT persons in the Church. New “networks” are springing up in many places where Integrity has never had an official presence. Integrity members—including myself—were among those invited to a major summit of persons assembled to advance the 2020 Evangelism and Mission initiative in the Church.

The missionary work I called for in the last issue has also begun with an exciting conference in Brazil. I myself will travel to Uganda to meet with our hardworking brothers and sisters there in June.

By the time you receive this issue it will be Eastertide. Let us give thanks for the new life God continues to give us in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faithfully,

Michael

The Church's Consultation on Human Sexuality in Brazil

Santos, 25th of February 2002

Dear Friends

The Brazilian Province of the Anglican Communion held from 14th to 16th of February, in Rio de Janeiro City, the First National Consultation on Human Sexuality. This event was organised as an opportunity for the Church to listen to its Gays and Lesbian members, and find the way forward to better deal pastorally with this community. In total forty people, representing 5 out of seven dioceses of the Brazilian Church, including four bishops and fourteen priests and deacons, gathered for studies, prayer, and to hold dialogue on the issue of homosexuality. The starting point was recognising that the issue of homosexuality is much part of our daily life as a church, as it is in other parts of our Communion. There were time for lectures on Bible and sexuality (by the Revd. Ramaces Hartwig), Ethical and Theological issues regarding human sexuality (The Revd. Prof. Carlos Calvani), Pastoral Issues (Most Revd. Glauco S. de Lima, primate), Panorama of the debate on homosexuality within the Anglican Communion (Prof. Louie Crew), Sexuality and Spirituality, "the quest for an inclusive spirituality" (The Revd. Mario Ribas), and other panels with psychoanalysts, and psychologists. Two gays and two lesbians had an opportunity to tell about their journey of faith, and struggles experienced mostly in other conservative churches in Brazil where they were completely excluded, and treated as ill persons, and how they met a refreshing environment within the parishes churches where they are members now. However this issue is still a sensitive point for the Anglican Church in Brazil. If in one hand it is the most tolerant church in the country towards homosexuality, on the other it faces struggle with a mostly conservative society full of ambiguities towards sexuality in general. However the pastoral letter issued by the Bishops Chamber at the General Synod in 1997 represented a big step given on the openly acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in the Church as members. The pastoral letter says:

"We affirm that sexuality is a gift of God, and sexual practises exercised within the context of love and mutual respect must not only be accepted, but also considered as the good things God created. On the other hand, sexual promiscuity, either within heterosexual or homosexual contexts, must be combated because they are against the teaching of the Scripture. However, the Church must receive with love people from any race, cultural background, social class, or sexual orientation. The studies related to homosexual relations will continue; and as bishops, we recommend the dialogue, the good sense and pastoral awareness with people of

homosexual orientation within the community. It is necessary that the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil include in its educational and pastoral programs studies and orientations about human sexuality, taking into account the teaching of the Scripture, the knowledge of human sciences, the experience of Anglican tradition and a contextualized comprehension of this controversial issue."



Louie Crew and his partner, Ernest Clay

Some criticisms were given on the way the Lambeth Conference in 1998 dealt with this issues, showing lack of interest to study seriously all the implications regarding homosexuality as it was recommended by the previous conferences lacking pastoral sensitiveness, not taking into account all the pain and rejection it would cause in many gays and lesbians, members of our church throughout the world. Also, Prof. Calvani, in his lecture argued that gays and lesbian would do themselves a favour if they work to recover the real meaning of the word "sodomite", which biblically means "lack of hospitality", applying it to those who are unable to welcome and embrace those who are different, foreign, or of a different sexual orientation, rather than let these people misuse this word to condemn and exclude people from the Church of God.

The Consultation was a moving experience for everyone who took part on it, either heterosexuals or homosexuals, and apart from

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The Church's Consultation On Human Sexuality In Brazil

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the statement issued, a pastoral guide-line has been established for all members of the Consultation, which will direct our work amongst GLBT people, and help to maintain the dialogue open within the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil. A virtual forum has been set up, and regional consultations should happen, before another national gathering is planned for the next couple of years.

I should thank ALGA, Integrity-USA, Changing Attitude, LGCM, Canon Brian Grieves and other individuals for all your supporting letters and prayers, and specially we all are thankful to Louie Crew for his visit,

and for his lectures, and the overwhelming sermon he preached at the last Mass.

Yours in Christ,

The Revd. M. Ribas and Mrs. C. Winnischoffer
Co-ordinators

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Rio Statement on Human Sexuality

Rio de Janeiro, February, 16th, 2002 ad.

Ist Anglican National Consultation on Sexuality
Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil
Rio de Janeiro, February 2002

We, lay people, two deacons, ten priests and four bishops from five dioceses of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil, gathered in Rio de Janeiro City for the First National Consultation on Sexuality. In an environment of fraternity and mutual comprehension, respect, Christian solidarity and love, we debated, studied, exchanged experiences and listened to testimonies taking into account the biblical-theological, ethical, pastoral, biological, psychological and sociological points of view.

For a better understanding and contextualization of the issue, we began considering the resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences (1979/1988/1998) "Recognising the continuous need of a deeper and dispassionate study of the issue, taking into account the teachings of Scripture as well as the results of scientific and medical researches, and sociocultural elements", and also the Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil (General Synod of 1997) where they recognise and advise the need of including in our educational and pastoral programs, studies and guide-lines on Human Sexuality.

From the biblical and theological point of view, human sexuality is a gift of God for all people. The liberation of all people is the main

theological focus of the process of exodus, and of Jesus' ministry. God loves us unconditionally as we are, with all our differences and imperfections. This love is manifested in Jesus Christ, and it leads us to love and care for all his creation. To love God is to love our neighbour (1 Jo. 4.20-21), therefore, any kind of exclusion contains worms of death. Love is inclusion and life in its fullness (Jo.10.10).

We invite all the lay and clerical leadership to promote debates that would help the communities of faith to understand the complexities and the beauty of human sexual relations. It is necessary to know and share the distress of all those who are excluded in the society. Inclusivity is the essence of the incarnated ministry of Jesus, attracting to himself prostitutes, foreigners, the poor, the sick, the different. It is fundamental that the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil exercise its inclusive vocation letting itself embrace with love and entirely those people rejected and aborted by the society. For this reason, we assume the pastoral ethic of grace and blessing of God, while rejecting the principle of exclusion implicit in the ethic of sin and impurity which causes division amongst human beings.

Bishop Christopher Senyonjo Reports from Uganda

In this communication to you I intend to brief you specifically on what I have been doing since my return to Uganda.



I have gradually started again to give pastoral care and counseling. My services are open to all people; but my church leaders have been trying to discourage people from coming to me as they are still accusing me of promoting homosexuality and being involved with Integrity Uganda. But in spite of all hostility a number of interested groups have invited me for some interviews.

The first interview, which I had, was at the end of last year when I was invited by WBS TV station. The interview was about human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. It was in Luganda language. The second interview was on January 25, 2002 when I was invited by Radio One station. The topic was about sex education and homosexuality. This was in English. The third interview was on February 6, 2002 when I was invited by Radio Two station. The interview was also on sex education and homosexuality. It was in Luganda language. It should be noted that the government recently declared that sex education should start being taught in schools.

The fourth interview was on February 13, 2002 when I and two other people, namely a veteran parliamentarian and a young educationist lady discussed the significance of Valentine's Day. In the discussion we tried to explore the importance of love and how we can practice it in all its different manifestations. Such discussions lead to understanding human sexuality. We had this discussion on WBS TV station.

I am convinced that sex education will be appreciated by applying the advice of our Lord in Matthew 10:16, i.e., being tactful and wise enables me to withstand the attacks of the adversaries. Truth is powerful and can never be smothered for good. There is a great deal that needs to be done so as to sensitize, comfort, and educate the people so that they realize the complexity of human love and human sexuality.

My church leaders are continuing to stop me from doing any church service. The services that I could render according to my status in society have been curtailed by the stigma the church leaders have put on me for offering counseling services to all, including the so-called outcasts. I am thus still in need of the regular support of Integrity and other kind souls.

Things are not yet normal with my fellow Bishops. For instance on January 24, 2002 I was summoned by the Archbishop to be interrogated by the House of Bishops. I was accused of deviating from the decision of the 1998 Lambeth Conference concerning homosexuality. I was caught unawares. I told the House that I could not answer them impromptu, as I had not been told why they wanted to see me. I however told them that I would be able to say something to a small committee. They agreed to set up a committee of three Bishops that I am going to meet on a date yet to be fixed. One thing that is certain is that, I have nothing to recant as far as receiving all people without discrimination. During the short encounter with them I however intimated to them that they should carefully be aware of what the early church suffered because of Donatism.

[Contributions toward Bishop Christopher's ongoing support are still being received by Integrity. Checks can be sent to our Bayonne, New Jersey address, clearly marked for Integrity Uganda. Donations via credit card are also welcome (see back cover).]

by the Rev. Erich Kasirye

Sex Education and Integrity in Uganda

Howard Carter may be forgiven for opening the tomb of Tutankhamen and saying he had discovered the key to lost civilizations. In an era of sexual pluralism and increased globalization, Uganda has discovered that introducing sex education in all Primary and Secondary schools effective January 2002 will be a key to modern civilization.

Thus, on Saturday, 2 February 2002, the President of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni while officiating at a Mbarara University function, directed that the Ministry of Education immediately integrate sex education at all levels of its learning process.

The tentative curriculum for sex education shows that the subject will be explored in strict adherence to human development. Therefore at Primary levels, issues of basic hygiene and health will take center stage, slowly progressing to complex issues of sexuality and reproduction.

“At advanced stages of the subject, students will proceed to examine issues of sexual plurality and tolerance in the light of recent scientific research and global reality,” said Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, on a popular TV show, *Tula Twogere*. He is the Chairman of Integrity Uganda and holds a Doctorate Degree in Human Sexuality and Development.

This is partly the product of a rigorous media campaign by leaders of Integrity Uganda and of course some back-door lobbying of both government and civic authorities in the country. Repeated talks shows and radio interviews were also very helpful to calm down tempers of the Ugandan peoples who were incited by Anglican Bishops, to regulate all manifestations of sexual minorities. The people are now eager to open up to the homosexual reality than ever before.

Finding themselves again unable to keep pace with Integrity Uganda, Anglican Bishops were again embittered. When their meeting with Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, at Lweza Training and Conference Center, ending up in a deadlock, the infuriated Bishops proceeded to issue a strongly worded statement to the government to halt implementation of the sex education in schools until they “have been consulted as stake holders”. Three days later, Wednesday 30th January 2002, the Joint Christian Council (Roman Catholic Church, Anglican and orthodox), citing certain homosexual interests into the syllabi, issued another stern warning to the government to comply with the Anglican Bishop’s word or else face a boycott of the subject in all Church-founded schools.

The President of Uganda, H.E. Yoweri Museveni, who is himself an Anglican, instead chose to meet Roman Catholic Bishops on

Thursday 7th February 2002 at the Presidential State House. Since they represent over 75% of Uganda’s Church founded schools (compared with Anglicans with only 25%), the President was able to consult and secure their firm commitment to his Education reforms.

“There is little chance that the Anglican Church can hold an effective boycott to the subject,” said Mr. Yusuf Nsubuga, the Commissioner for Education in Uganda, “... all their schools have depended on the Government for Head teacher appointments, payment of teacher’s salaries and the provision of textbooks and other resources to pupils,” he added.



President Museveni Welcomes Uganda Catholic Bishops At State House, Nakasero For The Education Reform Forum

During an interview on Radio One station, Rev. Erich Kasirye, one of the founders of Integrity Uganda, said, “Sexuality as an aspect of life, goes to the very heart of human identity.” “If the Church cannot help the public explore the subject in the light of Holy Scriptures and available scientific research, then society will proceed to explore the issue on their own. Care will be taken to integrate African perspective to the subject.”

While the Anglican Church cries foul at the implementation of yet another important innovation in the Country, one wishes that our Episcopal fathers would pay heed to some of their Lambeth themes. Perhaps time has come when they may want to adopt Bernard Lewis’s self-critical approach, asking, “what did we do wrong?” and “how do we put it right?” Unfortunately, they still provide discouragingly little evidence of this change of heart.

FEATURE ARTICLE

by S. Dylan Breuer

LGBTs Visible in 2020 Vision

I hadn't been in a room with so many GenX lesbians my age since my college days in Lambda Delta Lambda, the lesbian-founded sorority. I'd never had the experience of having so many bishops and luminaries of the church gathered at least as much to listen as to speak with people like me. As I heard more than once that week, this was not business as usual for an Episcopal Church gathering.

The gathering was the meeting of 2020 Program Teams at Camp Allen, the retreat and conference center of the Diocese of Texas, and it didn't resemble much that I'd expected going into it. We were there to work together toward a plan to implement the 2020 Vision, passed at the General Convention in 2000. That resolution affirmed outreach as a priority of the church, with the goal that by the year 2020 the Episcopal Church will be a vital body that reflects the full diversity of our society and has twice the active church membership it had in 2000.

It goes without saying among *Voice of Integrity* readers that "reflecting the full diversity of our society" would mean full recognition of LGBT members of the Body of Christ. One of the many wonderful surprises for me at Camp Allen was seeing how many members of the Program Teams there feel strongly that the 2020 Vision necessitates not just tolerating LGBT Christians as pew-warmers and pledging units, but actively and enthusiastically empowering and equipping LGBT people to be and spread the Good News in all of their communities, and making sure that in the full breadth of congregational life there is Good News for LGBT folk. It means recognizing all implications of the truth that we are church, with our baptism as the sign that God has already chosen us as ministers and adopted us as God's children. Part of that recognition has already happened, in the expansion of identified LGBT leadership of the movement – from 6.3% on the Standing Commission on Domestic Missions and Evangelism initially charged with supervising 2020 efforts to 16.3% representation on the Program Teams at Camp Allen, according to data gathered by Louie Crew.

There's a great deal of good news for Integrity members and LGBT folk in the 2020 movement. Perhaps chief among these are the ways in which 2020 potentially represents a desire to move with the Spirit overpowering resistance to change. Adopting the 2020 vision has come, I think, with a realization for many that, as the recovery maxim goes, insanity is doing the same things and expecting different results, and that the Episcopal Church must be ready to think and act radically if we want to see the kind of unprecedented growth advocated in the 2020. Put simply, if the Episcopal Church becomes a church that fully reflects the diversity

of our society and a church with twice its current active membership, that will be a huge change from our current situation. In adopting the 2020 vision, some of ECUSA's most conservative members have signaled openness to rapid and profound change.

Efforts to prevent anyone's full inclusion in the life of the church is antithetical to 2020's stated goals, both in numeric terms and with respect to diversity, and I don't think that the extent to which full inclusion of LGBT folk and empowerment of LGBT church leaders will be necessary to implement the 2020 vision is entirely lost on conservatives in the 2020 movement. Indeed, my experience at Camp Allen suggests that this is being taken for granted by many. I'll admit that I'd gone to Camp Allen with some serious reservations, and some were based on prejudice. I'd never met most of the people I'd be working with there, but I assumed based solely on reputation and previous stances taken on LGBT inclusion that I would be facing unrelenting hostility from at least some of my colleagues. I tried to remain open-minded and openhearted; I did deep breathing exercises and prayed for those whom I assumed were my enemies. But the entire time I was at Camp Allen and in the entire time since, I have encountered not a single suggestion, implicit or explicit, that I as a partnered lesbian should not be involved, and indeed enthusiastically supported, in 2020 leadership. I sensed no grudging acceptance that my appointment to my Program Team could be undone; indeed, deeply conservative members of the Camp Allen teams have been profoundly generous with their encouragement, even in shaping proposals to encourage particular initiatives empowering marginalized communities in the Episcopal Church.

As a lesbian GenX layperson, I was surprised to be asked to preach at the closing Eucharist at Camp Allen, but I was even more surprised when my reflection on the gospel, which argued

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LGBTs Visible in 2020 Vision

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that evangelism does not so much call others to become like us as it challenges us to be transformed by loving and receiving the love of those we think of as least respectable, was received with such generous grace. As grateful as I am for the ways in which conservatives, LGBT leaders, and LGBT allies alike have encouraged me in the 2020 movement, I'm gladder still for the ways in which I think my own experience signals increased openness to LGBT leadership in nearly all sectors of the church. And I also have cause to rejoice in the ways my experience at Camp Allen working alongside those toward whom I've harbored prejudice forced me to grow in love and reminded me of how powerfully the Spirit can move when we choose to receive the gifts of all to whom the Spirit gives them.

I think 2020 is also good news for LGBT folk in the ways in which it represents greater orientation of church power structures toward the grass roots. Accepting that thinking in the same ways will generate much the same results has led to realizing that new ways of thinking are far more likely to arise in discussion with people who have not before now been included in policy discussions. Over and over at Camp Allen, I heard longtime attendees of committee meetings remark with surprise at how many of the people there were "not the usual suspects," and I think that even the most optimistic of these 'longtimers' was surprised at how vibrant and productive the Camp Allen meeting was, in part as a result of the diversity of the community gathered. "Where have you all been hiding?" I was frequently asked. Of course, we hadn't been hiding; we'd been at work in our communities. Politics as usual left us invisible to many; the 2020 meetings rendered us visible to all there.

If this increased visibility and empowerment were only about those of us at Camp Allen, I doubt my report would be news, let alone particularly good news, for LGBT folk who remain marginalized in far more profound ways. However, as the 2020 movement is growing, opportunities for LGBT people to participate visibly in charting the church's course for the 21st century are multiplying. One major venue for that is the 2020 Brainstorm list (the address for its website is below), which absolutely anyone can join to post a proposal for empowering outreach to marginalized communities and implementing the 2020 vision. Any LGBT or other poster can submit a proposal that will be fully considered for General Convention legislation and 2020 implementation. If you or anyone you know has an idea which might help the church become as diverse as our society and inclusive of far more populations, please

consider reading the 2020 Brainstorm materials on the web and joining the discussion. And let's not let the 'digital divide' or the dynamics particular to online conversation limit LGBT visibility in the 2020 vision. Please consider hosting a discussion in non-virtual space of how the national church might empower via 2020 the outreach in which you are engaged, and let me or any of the LGBT and allied folk involved in 2020 know how we can encourage you in those discussions.

If the 2020 vision is realized, profound changes are on the horizon for the Episcopal Church, which will become truly and deeply multicultural and inclusive. There is no room in the 2020 vision for excluding those whom God calls, and the realization is spreading that God is calling all people to God's self and to community which is as active in reconciliation as is the Spirit. Thanks be to God!

Web links:

Episcopal Church 2020 homepage:

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev/2020home.html>

2020 Brainstorm homepage:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/2020brainstorm>

Text of the 2020 GC resolution:

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/resolutions/a033fin.html>

List of 2020 Program Team members:

<http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/ens/2002-027s.html>

Louie Crew's statistics on the composition of 2020 Program Teams:

<http://newark.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/natter/msg00128.html>

Report of the 2020 Task Force:

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/2020TF/index1.html>

FEATURE ARTICLE

by the Rev. Michael W. Hopkins

“Claiming the Blessing”: Coalition for GC 2003

Leaders of Integrity, Beyond Inclusion, the Oasis (Newark), Oasis California, and other interested persons have met together twice in the last year to form a working coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to the passage of legislation enabling the blessing of same sex unions at General Convention 2003. At a meeting in January 2002, the group settled upon a name for the coalition: “Claiming the Blessing.”

The Mission Statement of Claiming the Blessing is as follows:

“Claiming the Blessing” is a partnership of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Straight people and organizations who are working to abolish prejudice and oppression, to promote wholeness in human relationships and to heal the rift between sexuality and spirituality in the Church.

To that end we commit ourselves to obtaining approval, at General Convention 2003, of a liturgical blessing of the faithful, monogamous relationship between two adults.

The Steering Committee of this new coalition has set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$375,000 in order to do the essential groundwork for this effort and to execute our presence at General Convention. Integrity has pledged to raise \$50,000 among its members as a share of this goal. The budget includes an Executive Director for the coalition. An announcement of the new Executive Director will be made by June 2002.

For Integrity this means that our efforts at broadening the grassroots support for the full inclusion of GLBT persons in the life

of the Church is paying off. At the last two General Conventions we have worked alongside Beyond Inclusion, Oasis, and other organizations and individuals for GLBT concerns. At the next General Convention we will function as a true team. Much about our presence, however, will remain the same. We will, for instance, continue to be responsible for our excellent nerve center to support the efforts of Claiming the Blessing. Integrity’s President will continue to be a major player and spokesperson. Hardworking Integrity volunteers will incarnate the significant presence of GLBT people in the Church. We will work hard with our Consultation partners supporting their justice concerns.

Liturgical blessings will not be our only concern at GC 2003, but it will be our primary one. Secondly we will work to ensure that GLBT people are a fundamental part of the 2020 initiative. We will also be supportive of GLBT initiatives that come up from the diocesan level.

It was in Minneapolis that the 1976 General Convention first stated that “homosexual persons” were full members of the Church. Returning to Minneapolis in 2003, it is time for the Church to complete a major portion of that work, and allow for the full celebration and support of lesbian and gay relationships.

Congratulations to Board Members

Four Integrity Board Members have recently been honored with new positions in the Church:

Western Regional Vice-president Bruce Mason has been appointed a member of the Search Committee for a new Bishop of Oregon.

Director of Development Jack Finlaw has been appointed a member of the Search Committee for a new Bishop of Colorado.

Director of Program the Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton became the Rector of St. Paul’s Church, Chatham, New Jersey (Diocese of Newark) on March 1. She had been Canon Missioner for Oasis in the Diocese of Newark.

President the Rev. Michael W. Hopkins became the Rector of St. George’s Church, Glenn Dale, Maryland, when the congregation of which he had been the Vicar for 12 years became a parish of the Diocese of Washington.

Also, congratulations go to Integrity members the Very Rev. John Chane, Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, San Diego, and his wife, Karen. Dean Chane was elected the new Bishop of Washington in January. His consecration is set for June 1, 2002.

Healing the Homosexual in Pittsburgh: Two Experiences

Two summers ago, in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry offered a course entitled, “Healing the Homosexual”, which was taught by Mr. Richard Cohen of the Baltimore-based International Healing Foundation.

In the preceding year, under the auspices of Diocesan Council’s “Committee on Difficult Subjects”, a subcommittee on Human Sexuality had been meeting monthly to bring together people of differing viewpoints and feelings with regard to homosexuality. At the request of a member of Diocesan Council, this subcommittee was asked to investigate this “healing” aspect of dealing with homosexuality. Four members of the subcommittee, two of whom were also on Council, signed up and took the four-session course.

What follows is a report of two of those members’ experience with the course and with Mr. Richard Cohen.

Susan J. Boulden (Member of Diocesan Council, Integrity, Episcopal Women’s Caucus and NOEL, Diocese of Pittsburgh)

Recently, in the Episcopal Church and other denominations, much has been made of homosexuality as “sinful” and a “disease” from which gay people can be healed. Because of my position on Diocesan Council, and with a desire to be open minded, I decided it would be helpful to hear all points of view on the subject. Despite my misgivings, possibly, I thought, I could be wrong and healing from homosexuality could be achieved. That is why I signed up for Mr. Cohen’s course.

However, the result of taking this course only confirmed for me my original belief that attempts to “heal” homosexuals are, while perhaps very sincere, also terribly misguided and capable of causing deep emotional harm. Mr. Cohen and his course left me intensely concerned, for the following reasons:

- His claim that absolutely no one is born homosexual and that all homosexuals can be cured. He clung to this idea almost like a drowning man clings to a piece of wood. Not only was he trying to convince us of this, I believe he was trying to convince himself. When questioned on this “absolute”, he consistently refused to allow that there could be exceptions.
- Mr. Cohen’s “plan” to heal homosexuals seemed to be that he could teach *anyone* a specific set of step-by-step guidelines by which a homosexual can be “healed”. His simplistic plan was very superficial and not advisable. I think it is quite dangerous.

There are many individuals who have sought to be healed of homosexuality and the “healing” turned out to be a psychological disaster for them. Mr. Cohen claimed that his own such “healing” makes him an expert, but I feel he is playing with fire. Although I came away from the course believing him to be a very caring individual, I also found him to be very immature, insecure and probably a danger to himself as well as others.

- It was quite obvious to me and, I think, to others taking the course that this man was actually using the course and his “ministry” to work out his own problems around homosexuality. His need to behave like a child and indulge in all kinds of childish behavior included sudden violent outbursts of emotion and a constant need to hug and be hugged (especially with one certain male student) which was most alarming and, I thought, totally inappropriate in this setting.
- Mr. Cohen has an attractive personality, reminding me greatly of some of the more appealing seven and eight-year-old boys I used to teach in elementary school. I was really concerned over how taken up (or taken in?) most of the seminary students were with him. I wondered if their seminary training failed to encourage them to think and question. The few of us who did raise questions and/or criticisms drew quite paranoid responses from Mr. Cohen (such as, “Are you plotting against me?” or “Are you a lesbian?”) But that didn’t seem to bother the seminary students. Some of them seemed very indignant that we should presume to question this man’s teachings.
- It was most distressing to realize that there were at least two young gay men in this class who, while not stating they were gay, asked very transparent questions which made it clear that they were trying to deal with their own sexuality. One seemed almost desperate in his desire to believe homosexuals can be healed. I was quite worried about those young men.

After completing the course, I wrote a two-page letter to the Dean of the Seminary, expressing my concerns, and copied the letter to my Bishop. If this course is in any manner an example of the many such "healing ministries" which have sprung up, then I wonder if there is a lot of malpractice being conducted by the "Christian Counselors" involved. Dean Moore responded with a letter thanking me for my "candid opinions" and while he is more positive about the possibility of homosexuals being "healed", he said the seminary in the future will be "most careful in the selection of teachers for this emotionally-laden subject".

It seems to me that with this approach to homosexuality on the part of some Episcopal schools, clergy and counselors need to be thoroughly investigated and reported on by some kind of committee or task force coming from General Convention or the Leadership of the Episcopal Church. I'm sorry that Trinity School chose to bring Mr. Cohen here and that TESM is so invested in a field which has been thoroughly dismissed by hundreds of thousands of psychiatrists and psychologists as a mistake and an ill advised field of practice. I realize that many well-meaning Christians truly believe that homosexuality is something that can be changed, but I have yet to be convinced. The happiest, most self-confident homosexual people I know are those who have come to accept themselves as they are, as they believe God made them. This course only reinforced my belief in that view.

Walter Szymanski D.Min. Marriage and Family Psychotherapist (AAMFT clinical member) retired priest and member-at-large Integrity. Member of Diocesan Council's "Committee on Difficult Subjects", Diocese of Pittsburgh.

My impressions of the experience of taking a course entitled "Healing the Homosexual" taught by Mr. Richard Cohen essentially concurs with the report of Susan Boulden, member of Diocesan Council, Diocese of Pittsburgh. The following is some additional commentary of my own.

My greatest concern was for a few individuals who took Mr. Cohen's course seeking "a way out of their homosexual status." Mr. Cohen's affect and intensity around the subject matter seemed inappropriate and quite alarming given the fact that he was presenting himself as a qualified therapist. I am an approved supervisor in the field of marriage and family therapy and am called upon to credential qualified clinicians in this field. Coming away from this course, I would not consider Mr. Cohen qualified for clinical certification; in fact, I would strongly suspect him to be a target for malpractice litigation.

I shared my concern in a letter to the seminary's dean, Peter Moore, who responded to me without delay. He seemed to share my concerns and assured me that Mr. Cohen would not be invited back to the seminary as a lecturer in such course work. This was in concurrence with another seminary professor who shared with me the same concerns along with a few other faculty members of the seminary. This professor was alarmed by Mr. Cohen's sermon during one of the seminary's Eucharistic liturgies. He found Mr. Cohen to be overly intense {hypermanic} and quite inappropriate for the student body attending the liturgy.

I can only tell you that from a clinical perspective, great caution must be exercised by anyone who seeks aversion therapeutic results from people or institutions who make claim to the potential of changing the characterological orientation of being homosexual to becoming heterosexual ("healed" or otherwise).

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Martyn Minns Comes Preaching: Two Different Responses

Living transformed lives

At Integrity/Virginia we usually invite priests to lead our worship who are supportive of the reality of our Christian lives. When Dr. Louie Crew visited us in July 1999 he challenged us to undertake a ministry with a congregation such as Truro Church, Fairfax, Virginia—a nationally prominent charismatic Episcopal Church that supports ex-gay organizations and conservative political agendas. This concept bounced around us for a long while, never quite leaving the room but not exactly landing directly on our hearts, either. In the fall of 2000, though, while on retreat, our chapter's leaders heard and accepted what we believe was a call to invite Truro's rector to challenge us with something we could do together in the name of Christ. And so it was that in November 2000, on behalf of our chapter, I invited the Rev. Martyn Minns to celebrate the Eucharist and lead an Integrity/Virginia worship service (a story I may share someday) and he accepted (a story he may share someday).

The service, at which Martyn ended up being the preacher, was held November 2, 2001. The members of Integrity/Virginia have been reflecting—individually and collectively—since our November 2 service on how to faithfully articulate its reality. We have found this articulation challenging because a universal perspective must capture the dichotomy that is our lives: gay or lesbian and a Christian witness. From my perspective the essential ingredients of the story are: hospitality in the name of Christ, dialogue, and transformed lives.

The factual approach

The Rev. Martyn Minns preached at Integrity/Virginia's November 2 service. Although it was to have been our All Souls' service, the sermon text he selected was the appointed Gospel reading for Sunday, November 4: the story of Zacchaeus. (The Old Testament reading for November 4 was the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, so Zacchaeus was a good thing!) We invited Martyn to challenge us with something we could do together in the name of Christ. He responded by artfully inviting us all to allow God to transform all aspects of our lives. One of us put it this way: "Like views on abortion and slavery, views on homosexuality are a black and white issue—there is no middle ground."

About hospitality

Hospitality—welcoming the other—is easy when the Other is like ourselves. Yet we are called to welcome all people in the name of Christ. To welcome with an expectation of the Other becoming more like ourselves is the norm. Our All Saints' sermon in November 1999 put it this way: "We haven't really worshiped at all until we worship with someone who totally disagrees with us." We have met the Other and he is us.

About dialogue

I once had a dialogue with another well-known conservative Episcopalian rector who explained why dialogue on homosexuality was futile: Dialogue is essentially fellowship, he said, which is an act of Grace. Yet no amount of Grace can be "slathered on" to cover over the "crack in Truth" presented by the oxymoron of homosexual Christians. My own experience, though, is that acts of Grace open us up to perceiving Truth in new ways. With sufficient Grace we might even discover that we each use our perception of Truth in self-serving ways. Placing ourselves in each others' company and engaging in Grace-filled endeavors testifies to transformed lives.

More about transformed lives

At Integrity/Virginia we worship in witness to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia and the GLBT community. The witness is not about our homosexuality, but about God in our lives. Our sexuality, like other attributes given to us by God, are who we are. As we heard once again on November 2 that God indeed loves absolutely everybody. So how has God changed our lives? Our theophany sermon in January 2000 put it this way: "OK, so we're gay—How are we going to live our lives?" Our preacher then—and the

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Gospel imperative—is to live authentic, Christ-filled lives. So we ask: How has God transformed you? How would God transform us?

— Jo Belser

Martyn Was Courageous

I really enjoyed Friday's service with John Hortum as celebrant and Martyn Minns as preacher. Martyn was truly courageous to preach before an openly GLBT group, such as Integrity, and to bring his wife and lovely daughter, Rachael, too! I wish that more of the gay and lesbian clergy and those who support us had half the backbone that Martyn has. It is easy to say, of course, that Martyn has nothing to lose by reaching out, whereas gay and lesbian clergy do, but I disagree.

As for Martyn's sermon, I found it to be a brilliant, tightrope walk. I can't honestly say there was anything in the sermon that I could strongly disagree with, because Martyn deliberately stayed away from anything that would be provocative. He did not stray to the left or right—he stayed on his rope and didn't fall off once!

Where Martyn and I (and I suspect many others from Integrity) disagree is, of course, theologically. I interpret the Word of God quite differently. Specifically with regard to his sermon, I place a very different emphasis on sin and on what is sinful. One of my almost-daily prayers is to ask God to remove all of the sins, evils, and cares of the world from my heart, soul, and mind and replace them with His loving grace and with the Holy Spirit. As a sinner, I know that I sin, but I believe that not only are my sins forgiven, but I believe that as a child of God, I should concentrate on the OPPOSITE of sin (God's loving grace and the Holy Spirit), NOT ON THE SIN. I think of it like practicing for a public speech or a play. If you visualize giving the speech correctly or playing your part to perfection, it will help you to do so. On the other hand, if you visualize yourself stumbling and stammering, you probably will. Likewise, if you concentrate on sin, what are you most likely to do?

I am sure that the religious right and I do not agree on the specifics of sin, either. Here are some things that I consider to be sinful wherein the religious right might disagree:

- the Mormon Church spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to defend marriage in Hawaii. How many children could that money have saved from starvation?
- being gay or lesbian and not accepting it as God's gift
- using the Bible to persecute any of God's children
- singling out gays and lesbians as some kind of "special" sinners, because there is more money in singling out gays and lesbians than in singling out divorcees or spouse or child abusers
- packing the pews by preaching fear of gays and lesbians
- blaming the "special" sins of gays and lesbians for the evils of the world (ala Jerry Falwell)

- believing that loving relationships outside marriage are evil and that those people will not receive God's grace

I could go on and on, of course, and I do not mean in any way to put words in Martyn's mouth. THESE ARE MY WORDS. I have never debated with him, so I do not honestly know his opinion on any of the items listed above. However, I do know enough about what many conservative Christians think about such matters.

I can honestly say that the service was good for me. It was a step in the right direction. It gave me new-found respect for Martyn Minns and Truro Church. I have long known that Truro Church is to be admired for its outreach and mission work within the diocese and around the world. Now I know Martyn as a human being, as a child of God, as a "sinner" in his own words. Small steps were taken, but I believe that someday we will see eye to eye, instead of through a glass darkly.

— Sam Chalfant

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Following is a list of all Integrity partners, sorted by state/province. During the summer holiday approaching, we encourage you to visit these congregations and congregations when you are away from home...

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info@saintanselm.org | <http://www.saintanselm.org/>

The Church of St. Paul in the Desert

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Palm Springs, CA 92263-0139
760-320-7488
FrAndrew@stpaulinthedesert.com |
<http://www.stpaulinthedesert.com/>

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd

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Salinas, CA 93908
831-484-2153
ecogs@juno.com | <http://www.goodshepherdsalinas.org/>

Episcopal Church of St. John the Evangelist

1661 Fifteenth St.
San Francisco, CA 94103-3511
415-861-1436
stjohnsf@pacbell.net | <http://home.pacbell.net/stjohnsf/>

Oasis/California

1661 Fifteenth St.
San Francisco, CA 94103-3511
415-552-0222
admin@oasiscalifornia.org | <http://www.oasiscalifornia.org/>

St. Augustine by-the-Sea Episcopal Church

1227 4th St.
Santa Monica, CA 90401
310-395-0977
church@saint-augustine.org | <http://www.saint-augustine.org/>

Bishop's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Ministry (Diocese of Los Angeles)

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Washington, DC 20003
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motherjude@aol.com
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stjames@tidalwave.net
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st.john@erols.com
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stmpa@erols.com

St. Thomas' Parish
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stmrctor@erols.com
<http://www.stmarks.net/>

Illinois

St. James' Cathedral
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At the corner of Wabash Avenue and Huron Street
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kpearson@saintjamescathedral.org
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rector@stgeo.org
<http://www.stgeo.org/>

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<http://www.transfig.org/>

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StBarnabasTHills@aol.com

The Gathering: A Family of Faith Episcopal Church
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301-845-2901
frb7240@aol.com
<http://thegatheringchurch.com/>
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Minnesota

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2fleetwood@stpetersmorristown.org

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New York, NY 10011
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info@ascensionnyc.org
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falagna@aol.com

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Church of Our Saviour

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330-535-9174
oursaviour@brightdsl.net

Trinity Cathedral

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Cleveland, OH 44115
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tlind@dohio.org

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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OSU Campus)
Columbus, OH 43210
614-294-3749
george_glazier@ststephens-
columbus.org
<http://www.ststephens-columbus.org/>

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

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Toledo, OH 43620
419-244-3707
stmarkstol@aol.com
<http://www.stmarkstol.org/>

Texas

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

906 George Bush Dr.
College Station, TX 77840
979-696-1726
baurand@tca.net
<http://www.episcopalcollegeministry.org/stthomas/>

St. Thomas the Apostle

6525 Inwood Road
Dallas, TX 75209
214-352-0410
DoubterTom@aol.com
<http://www.thedoubter.org/>

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

1805 West Alabama St.
Houston, TX 77098
713-528-6665
hnhavens@neosoft.com
<http://www.ststephenshouston.org/>

Quebec

Integrity/Montreal

P.O. Box 282
Westmount, Montreal
Quebec, Canada H3Z-2T2
514-932-3706

I/D Adopts ID in Wisconsin



On a chilly morning in early December, 2001, pieces of discarded trash in hand, Ken, Jim, Joe, Al and Bill posed next to a sign post along a local highway. Brian snapped our picture as a memento of the proud occasion. We appeared to be having such a good time that a couple of men who had driven past in a large

red pickup truck made a u-turn. "Curiosity got the best of us," the intrigued driver admitted. Bill explained to the pair the reason for our unusual outing.

We were there to scope out our county trunk highway ID, just west of Mount Horeb. On October 15, 2001, Integrity/Dignity-Madison became the proud parent of the section of highway ID between highways E and JG. I/D "adopted" highway ID as part of the Dane County Adopt-A-Highway Program. This program works with community organizations to rid roadsides of unsightly litter.

In agreeing to adopt highway ID, our organization has made a commitment to pick up trash along the roadside at least three times during the year, between April and October. Joe will coordinate the coming year's clean-up events, planned for April, June and September.

In a prayer from the Episcopal BCP, we ask God to "give us a reverence for the earth as your own creation...." Cleaning up highway ID will foster such a reverence, and it will provide a great opportunity for participation in I/D events by individuals who may otherwise feel a little shy about getting involved in the group's activities. The work will be simple, fun and very rewarding.

In early spring, Joe will begin to contact folks. Prior to the clean-ups, participants are required to view a safety training video. Then, donned in very fashionable blaze orange vests, we will proceed to make highway ID look fabulous. No doubt many travelers along this highway will stop to admire the fruits of our labor.

Printed with permission from the Newsletter of Integrity/Dignity of Madison

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Integrity/South Central Kansas and Integrity/Fort Lauderdale both of whom were one year old in November of 2001.

Congratulations To Integrity/Dignity Of Madison For 25 Years Of Service To GLBT People 1977-2002

On April 27, 2001, at 6pm, Louie Crew and Tom Woodward, founders of Integrity and I/D-Madison, will make a presentation on "I/D Then & Now"

Congratulations to Michael and John on their tenth anniversary, April 3, 2002.

In a note from David Gary of Integrity/Alabama which was reported on Lightspeed, he asks us to keep the chapter in our prayers as they move through troubling times in Alabama. In nationally reported news articles, it was reported that the Chief Justice of the State of Alabama, Roy Moore, stated in a court document that "the common law designates homosexuality as an inherent evil. It (homosexuality) is abhorrent, detestable, a crime against nature, a violation of the laws of nature and of nature's God upon which this nation and our laws are predicated. It is destructive to a building block of society." On February 22, 2002, a number of Episcopal clergy, representing the largest contingency of "mainline" denominational clergy, participated in "The Faith Community Speak Out," a press conference in response to the remarks of Justice Moore. Standing on the steps of the Judicial Building in Montgomery on a cold, windy day with some 18 other Alabama faith leaders, these priests came to the forefront of this severe "pastoral crisis" for Alabama GLBT people. Dr. Pam Lecchesi of Integrity/Alabama read a statement prepared by the chapter denouncing Moore's words.

David says that the bishops have been most supportive in making a statement that was read at the press conference by a member of the clergy. Also, Bishop Mark Andrus, the new suffragan bishop, met with the chapter for a lengthy discussion of the church's role in responding to Justice Moore's remarks. Episcopal clergy attending the press conference were the Rev. Tim Holder, the Rev. Ruth Lamonte, the Rev. James A. Creasy, the Rev. Peter Horn, the Rev. Louis Skipper, and the Rev. Margaret Shepard. Some organizations attending this event were Human Rights Campaign, Soulforce, Faith Partners, and the Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"Injustice Anywhere Is a Threat to Justice Everywhere"

— Martin Luther King

Integrity/New York held their February meeting at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Harlem. The Rev. Bill Savoy, Vicar, invited the chapter to honor the gay right's movement's roots in the Black Civil Rights Movement by meeting at this historic black parish during Black History Month. As quoted from their newsletter, Integrity/Metro NY, "...Like relatives in every time and place, a relationship between black and gay civil rights has not always been acknowledge or harmonious. Homophobia in the black community and racism in the gay community, turf battles for social support and legal rights, and the decline of HIV/AIDS in the gay community while it increases among blacks and Latinos at times have tended to divide rather than unite the movements in common cause. Black History Month offers an opportunity to examine some of these issues and the benefits of building coalitions rather than walls."

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