



# Voice of Integrity

VOLUME 14 NO. 2

FALL 2005



Integrity members Mr. Bob Pingpank (left) and the Rev. Canon Dr. Richard T. Nolan (right) celebrated their 50th anniversary on October 8, 2005, in a public service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Dean Jim Kowalski presided and preached.

Integrity president the Rev. Susan Russell with members of Integrity/St. Michael's in Lexington, Kentucky



No good thing will God withhold from those who walk with Integrity. —Psalm 84:11

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INTEGRITY’S MISSION IS TO BE A WITNESS OF GOD’S INCLUSIVE LOVE TO THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND TO THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY.

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## From the Editor

by Doug Ball



I broke my promise to you. In the July Integrity InfoLetter, I said that the summer/fall issue of the Voice of Integrity was in the works. And truly it was. However, something came up that brought a halt to finishing the issue for publica-

tion. That something was LACK OF MONEY! As I have mentioned quite often in the past, the Voice is not cheap to issue, and other more immediate financial obligations nearly emptied the Integrity treasurer's checking account. So the summer/fall issue had to wait for a fresh influx of cash.

That influx of cash came in the form of a bequest to national Integrity which finally arrived in October (more about this in the winter magazine). Hence, the summer/fall issue has now morphed into the fall issue of the *Voice*, and a winter *Voice* will go to press in the first quarter of 2006 as well.

Our president, Susan Russell, has just rushed to me her column for this issue, and Susan has

given us a summary of the fall Integrity board of directors meeting that was held in Washington, DC just prior to the Values, Vision & Via Media conference at the Washington Cathedral in mid-October. Jay Mills has again supplied us with another couple articles for our edification and reflection—don't miss them. And note all the remarks given to Carter Heyward by board member Elizabeth Kaeton and Integrity secretary, Sarah Dylan Breuer upon Carter's receiving of the Louie Crew Award at her retirement from Episcopal Divinity School in Massachusetts.

Have a blessed Advent season and joyous Christmastide.

EDITORS' VOICE

## Notes from the President

by the Rev. Susan Russell



Your Integrity Board met in Washington DC October 12–13 and I wanted to share just a few of the highlights and "action items" we will be focusing on in the weeks and months to come.

Preparations for General Convention in Columbus are well

underway both logistically and strategically. Integrity's General Convention presence will be coordinated by the ever-efficient John Clinton Bradley and the Integrity Eucharist is scheduled for Thursday, October 15th with the Bishop of New Hampshire as our preacher. As is always the case at this point in the triennium cycle legislative strategy is continuing to evolve and Integrity remains committed to its 30-year "agenda" of the full inclusion of LGBT people in the Body of Christ. We are delighted that Integrity Board members currently serve on both the platform writing committee for The Consultation (Elizabeth Kaeton) and the GC Special Commission on Anglican Issues (Dylan Breuer). Information on Convention Volunteer opportunities will be available soon.

We have had commended to us an excellent new book of essays

in response to the Windsor Report—"Gays and the Future of Anglicanism" edited by Andrew Linzey. We are convinced it should be "required reading" prior to GC2006 and are committed to encouraging its widest possible distribution.

We have commissioned a parish study guide as a companion piece to another book, "To Set Our Hope On Christ"—the theological presentation offered by ECUSA to the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham last June. The study guide will be available for congregational use by Advent One and it is our hope that it will facilitate wider distribution, consideration and conversation around the church on the theological and biblical foundations for the position the Episcopal Church has taken on LGBT inclusion.

*Voices of Witness/Voices of Faith* is a video project offering the stories

PRESIDENT'S VOICE

PRESIDENT'S VOICE

gay and lesbian people who have come to faith in the Episcopal Church as well as congregations that have grown and thrived by embracing a theology of inclusion. Scheduled for release in early 2006 and produced by the Claiming the Blessing Collaborative this video witness—intended in part to enable the Anglican Communion to live up to its commitment to listen to the witness of gay and lesbian Christians—is being funded by grants from the Gill Foundation, HRC and a number of generous individual donors—including Integrity USA.

A nominating committee was convened to solicit nominations for the next Integrity Board (2006-2009). Dylan Breuer will chair the committee and nomination information will be included in the next membership mailing. Integrity members are asked to prayerfully consider whether they might be called to offer themselves or encourage others to commit to this important work at this time.

The Board will next meet in Columbus, Ohio during Easter Week to continue our preparations for General Convention. Please

keep the work and witness of your Board in your prayers as we strive to secure the gains 30 years of advocacy have achieved and to push forward to the day when “full and equal claim” becomes not a resolution but a reality.

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TREASURER'S VOICE

## Year-End Giving and The Tax Relief Act – Incentive to Give in 2005

by Frank Dowd



Congress passed the Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005 (KETRA) to augment government action to assist those affected by Hurricane Katrina. While charities engaged in providing relief to victims of natural disasters were most directly affected, the massive

and immediate funding needs of those charities may have also impacted the fundraising of the nation's entire non-profit community. Congress, through KETRA, is offering a temporary incentive for donors to continue supporting non-profit organization organizations that might otherwise suffer funding setbacks due to the shifting of gifts to hurricane relief efforts. These incentives apply for the period of August 28, 2005 to the end of the year.

“What does this mean for me” you ask? As an example if I donated \$100 to Integrity before the change, I could realize a deduction of 30 percent of that contribution against my adjusted gross income. So if I made \$10,000 in a year and donated \$100, my adjusted gross income would conceivably be \$9,970. With this year's change, my adjusted gross income would be \$9,900, as 100 percent of the charitable contribution would be adjustable. If you are in the position to make a cash gift to

Integrity before the end of the year, this is a particularly good time to do so!

There are, of course, conditions, most notably that this change only applies to cash donations, not to stock transactions. There are other provisions for how much can be deducted against total income. For an analysis of the KETRA provisions, talk to your tax professional or visit [www.sharpenet.com/ketra](http://www.sharpenet.com/ketra).

This information comes from [sharpenet.com](http://sharpenet.com), the web site of The Sharpe Group, a provider of planning resources for nonprofits.

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## National Integrity Elections in 2006

by John Clinton Bradley

Election of a new national Board of Directors will take place during May 2006. As part of that process, Integrity's bylaws state, "A Nominating Committee, consisting of one representative of each Region, shall be appointed by the President not later than November 1 proceeding the year of the election...The President shall appoint a Nominating Committee in consultation with the respective Regional Vice President."

Acting on recommendations from the regional vice presidents, President Susan Russell has appointed the following members of the Nominating Committee:

*Southeastern Region*—Sarah Dylan Breuer (chair)

*Northeastern Region*—Michael Hopkins

*Midwestern Region*—Pam Stephens

*South Central Region*—David Tarbet

*Western Region*—Elizabeth Zivanov

None of the members of the committee intend to seek office.

For your information, here are the milestones mandated by the bylaws for the upcoming election:

1 Nov – Nominating committee appointed by President

1 Apr – Nominating committee finalizes slate

30 Apr – Deadline to mail ballots (may be mailed earlier)

1 May – Balloting begins

30 May – Balloting ends

30 Jun – Results announced

15 Aug – Deadline for challenges/recounts

15 Sep – Ballots destroyed (if no challenge or recount)

Additional information about the election process and directions for making nominations will be mailed to all members, and distributed via e-mail, in the near future.



## Pride Day in Rochester, NY

The Rochester Contingent at our Pride Day Parade had a Eucharist preceding the parade, done off the back of a truck while we were in the parade line up. The committee that organized this is the Committee for the Gay & Lesbian Ministry of the Diocese of Rochester. We had seven congregations represented here with seven clergy including the oldest (most senior priest) in the diocese.

– Bruce Colburn



## My S/hero!

by the Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton

*(The following are remarks made by the Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton at the retirement of the Rev. Dr. I. Carter Heyward who received the Louie Crew Award from Integrity at her retirement from EDS.)*

I'm embarrassed to admit it now, but I literally got weak in the knees the first time I met her.

It was in the refectory (religious-speak for 'cafeteria') of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA I was in line for breakfast - but I was already feasting on the sights and sounds and smells of the place. "Visiting days" were being held at the seminary, and I was there for the mutual interview process - trying to determine if I wanted to invest my seminary education with this venerable institution, and they, likewise, would determine if I was "right" for EDS.

The year was 1982. The first women - forever known as "The Philadelphia Eleven" - had been "irregularly" but validly ordained on July 29, 1974. That event blew the rust right off the hinges of the church's doors and shook it to its foundations. The ordinations had taken place, but "The Eleven" had been effectively denied the ability to practice their priesthood until the institutional church could formally decide on the ordination of women. In 1975, two of those women, Isabelle Carter Heyward and Suzanne Radley Hiatt, were offered the opportunity to share one faculty position at EDS for three years until each was offered a full time appointment.

It was a controversial and courageous move for the semi-

nary—one that cost EDS (itself the one year old creation of a merger between Philadelphia Divinity and Episcopal Theological Seminaries) dearly as one bishop after another began to either transfer their candidates for Holy Orders to other Episcopal Seminaries or refused to allow aspirants and postulants to even consider going there. Sue Hiatt (who recently died) used to joke that sharing a position was a safe move - at least she and Carter could cover each other's backs as they walked down the hallways.

It was no joke. Indeed, my own bishop had strongly urged me not to consider EDS. "You're a woman who comes accompanied by no small amount of controversy. Why ask for more?" he counseled.

It was because of her. Carter Heyward. Author of two books which I devoured *A Priest Forever* and *Our Passion for Justice*. And now, here she was. Right in front of me. She was arguing, forcefully, to be sure, but blunted somehow by the drawl made soft by a childhood spent in the gentle, rolling mountains of Western North Carolina, about—are you ready?—Breakfast.

The seminary's refectory menu had not kept up with the changing demographics of its student body, she said, nor did it reflect the socio-political realities of our world. Young, twenty-something men of a generation ago ate eggs and bacon, toast and home fries for breakfast every day. Where were the sensitivities to heart-conscious diets? Where were the vegetarian alternatives? And why couldn't we order our coffee directly from Columbia from a food co-op in Boston that supported developing nations?

I knew in that very moment that I had to do whatever it took to get admitted to this seminary.

I had the recent honor of being part of the 30th Anniversary of Carter's ministry at EDS, which was also her "retirement" party—but, I'm not holding my breath waiting for Carter to sit in a rocking chair on her porch, drinking Mint Juleps. Over 230 guests came from all over the world to share "Carter stories" and fond memories of this feisty, passionate, opinionated, most amazing woman.

One of my favorite stories came from her mother, "Momma," as Carter calls her with obvious, deep affection. As Chair of the Episcopal Young Churchmen (!) in 1962, Carter helped foment a little revolution by attempting to integrate the Diocesan Church camp. The Bishop never forgot. Years later he refused to ordain her stating she had "an authority problem."

There are two important things that Carter taught me I would need as a woman who is a priest that I have never forgotten. The first is this: "It is much easier to ask for forgiveness than permission." And the second is like unto it: "Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter, lest, when she finds liberty, she will use it" (Sirach 26:10),

The evening ended with a slide show depicting scenes and highlights of Carter's life and ministry. It was accompanied by the music and lyric of what has undoubtedly become the anthem of the Christian feminist's movement. We all held hands and danced in place as we sang Chris Williamson's "Song of the Soul"

This verse, for me, summed up Carter's life: Come to your life

like a warrior/Nothing can bore you/You can be happy... Stay in the light it will heal you/And you can feel you/Sing out a song of the soul/ And we'll sing this song/ Why don't you sing along/And we can sing for a long, long time.

I looked around the room and saw so many of the women whose lives and ministries have been shaped and formed by Carter's life and ministry and I came to a sudden realization: Since that first encounter with Carter, my knees have never again been weak. We've all been made strong by the will of God, the spirit of Jesus, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, Sophia, working in and though the life of Isabelle Carter Heyward.

May we have the grace and strength, the will and the courage, to sing the song of justice which Carter taught has us for a long, long time.

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## Testimonial

*(The following testimonial was written by Integrity Secretary Sarah Dylan Breuer and read to Carter Heyward by Elizabeth Kaeton)*

I've never known a day of being in the closet. From the very first day I've encountered any model at all for being all of who I am, I knew of a person whom I'd never met, someone who was a theologian, a priest, a woman, an out and proud lesbian, and a priest in the church that called me to priesthood...a woman named Carter Heyward. I don't think I've ever met her, except perhaps in a moment of shaking hands. But I know that she, and the hard and very costly work she did, made my life possible.

Maybe that would be something worth saying—that you know a 34-year-old lesbian on the board of Integrity who is a postulant for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church, and who has never known the lie that women aren't called to the priesthood, who never knew that openly gay people shouldn't be clergy, who since the first moment she really knew what the Episcopal Church or what a lesbian was, knew that there was a book called *Our Passion for Justice* and there was someone named Carter Heyward who was a priest, and a lesbian, and who had done something of what I felt I might be called to do.

I've been in the same room with her at least once, but I don't know if I've ever met her. And still I know that she made just about everything I do possible. I doubt that she's ever heard my name in a context in which she might remember it, but I hope that hearing my story might help her realize just how much her witness has accomplished—so much, in fact, that she's left me with a pretty big job to do in convincing the nineteen-year-olds I'm mentoring for leadership that there are some out there who don't know that strong, proud, women who love women are called to leadership in the church. They don't know anything else because their youth minister has always been out and proud.

[And by the way, I also heard, long before I ever thought about kissing a girl, about a certain Elizabeth Kaeton, who was ordained when I was sixteen. Her name was also one I heard early on that made it possible for me to have my second thoughts about ordination be pretty much entirely about the institutional church and its politics and not at all about my being a lesbian.]

I dream of a day when I can tell a generation of youngsters gathered at General Convention 2051 (is my math right on that?) that there was once a time, shortly before I was ordained, when I preached about the end of malaria, of AIDS, and of nations held in poverty because of debt, and I will be greeted with as profound disbelief as I was in 2005 when I told young adults in my pastoral care that at one point it was disputed whether Carter Heyward should be ordained.

I thank God regularly, if not daily, that there were people who went in generations before me who, long before they met me, taught me to dream so audaciously.

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## Who Is The National Religious Leadership Roundtable?

Several Integrity board members attended the Eighteenth Annual Creating Change Conference held on November 9–13, 2005, in Oakland, California. This conference was sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), an organization that many of you probably belong to. (*There will be more about this conference in the winter issue of the Voice.*) A part of the Task Force which is not known so well consists of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable (NRLR). The Rev. Michael W. Hopkins, a former national Integrity president, is Integrity's representative to this group.

NRLR is an interfaith network of leaders from lesbian, gay, bisexual

and transgender (LGBT) faith, spiritual, and religious organizations. Its mission is to amplify the voice of pro-LGBT faith organizations in public discourse; promote understanding of and respect for LGBT people within society at large and in communities of faith; promote understanding and respect within LGBT communities for a variety of faith paths and for religious liberty; and achieve commonly-held goals which promote equality, spirituality, and justice.

The NRLR desires to mobilize progressive people on the religious left by a strategy known as God's Extravagant Welcome which will be a counterweight to the religious right's stance of fear and scarcity. Religious organizations on the left need to move away from seeing themselves as victims to seeing themselves as a power base to be mobilized. People of faith in local communities must be seen as resources to be organized for community and political action. In order for a collaborative group such as

the Roundtable to have a greater and more immediate media voice in the public discourse on religion and LGBT issues, it will be necessary for NRLR to allow trusted members to speak on its behalf without excessive consultation. With the Task Force staff, the Roundtable will develop a coordinated media response at the local and national levels. It will also develop coordinated messages on Roundtable topics and Task Force priorities. Further, NRLR will most likely need to revise its membership criteria to better diversify and recruit new leaders committed to inspiring people of faith to a vision of fairness and justice.

### Quote from Archbishop Tutu's All Saints Sunday sermon:

"Jesus did not say, 'I if I be lifted up I will draw some,'" Tutu said, preaching in two morning festival services at All Saints' Church in Pasadena, California. "Jesus said, 'I if I be lifted up I will draw all, all, all, all. Black, white, yellow, rich, poor, clever, not so clever, beautiful, not so beautiful. It's one of the most radical things. All, all, all, all, all, all, all, all, all. All belong. Gay, lesbian, so-called straight. All, all are meant to be held in this incredible embrace that will not let us go. All.

"Isn't it sad, that in a time when we face so many devastating problems—poverty, HIV/AIDS, war and conflict—that in our Communion we should be investing so much time and energy on disagreement about sexual orientation?" asked Tutu, the Nobel laureate and Archbishop Emeritus of Southern Africa.

### Malcolm Boyd Receives Unitas Award

On October 6, 2005, the Reverend Malcolm Boyd was presented the Unitas Award by the Union Theological Seminary Alumni Council of New York City. The Unitas Award is given to Union alumni and alumnae who have made extraordinary leadership contributions either to the church, academy, or to social justice organizations. The award ceremony took place during a weekend filled with lecture discussions and class reunion celebrations.

Our congratulations to Malcolm Boyd for accepting this honor.

## The Bible and Homosexuality: Sodom and Gomorrah

The Rev. Edward J. Mills III



*[This article is the second in a series of articles examining each of the proof texts from the Bible that are used to argue that homosexuality is sinful. Each article will examine one of these texts in the light of current scholarship.]*

In this essay I wish to examine perhaps the most frequently cited biblical text used to condemn homosexuality, the story of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis Chapters 18 and 19, and its twin/mirror text about similar behavior in Gibeah in Judges Chapter 19 (which has no divine judgement, but pretty barbaric human vengeance, attached). When read in their proper cultural and textual context there is no possible way, in my opinion, that Genesis 19 can be read as God's punishment of homosexuality. Neither story is, in fact, about homosexuality at all. However, when read through eyes conditioned by our modern cultural biases and context, particularly through the eyes of those reared as Christians, it is almost impossible to read these texts in any other way.

Parenthetically, I will from, this point forward, be fairly fluid in reference to "the story" (from Genesis) and "the stories" (both of these texts). They are closely related textually. I will specify "the story" when I only intend one of the two texts. Also, I do not intend to discuss the issues of whether the two stories actually refer to historical events. The texts themselves took a life of their own and are the key to how Jewish and Christian beliefs about homosexuality developed—be they history, legend, or both.

The story of Abraham, Lot, and Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18–19 (which scholars believe to be a self-contained unit, one that contrasts the life of Abraham with Lot/Sodom) is part of what is referred to by scholars as the "J" Document. It is one of several sweeping stories of the early life of Israel blended together in the biblical books from Genesis through II Kings. It uses the covenant name Yahweh for God (*Jahweh* in German, hence its name) and its beginnings as a written text may go back to the time of David and Solomon in the 10th century BCE. Its interests are those of the southern half of Palestine (later called Judah), its capital Jerusalem, and the monarchy. Other scholars suggest that these interests reflect the time and needs of the later King Josiah and his desire to unify all Israel around an ideology of Davidic calling and destiny and suggest that the text's beginnings are then later, from Josiah's time in the 7th century BCE. The text from Judges 19 comes from another of these epic stories, one dominated by the theology of the Book of Deuteronomy which is then reflected in the historical books beginning with Joshua and Judges. The roots of this,

the Deuteronomist History, may lie much further back historically than the reign of Josiah, but they become living texts from his time on. They provide the theological under-pinning for Josiah's, and later, hopes for a unified, purified nation following the crushing defeat of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, by the Assyrians in the late 8th century.

Both texts, the Yahwist Epic and Deuteronomy/the Deuteronomistic History continued to grow and be edited for several generations. Only after the return from the Babylonian Exile in the late 6th and the 5th centuries did they end up woven into the larger story of Israel we now call the Old Testament (the *Torah* and historical books), which brings us back to the texts themselves.

In all the research I did for this essay, scholars were unanimous in the opinion that the most important cultural context for these texts is the hallowed Hebrew cultural more of hospitality and compassion for the alien/sojourner (in Hebrew *gur*), the widow and the orphan. This societal norm is embodied in many biblical texts, but perhaps most clearly in Exodus 22:20-23:

*You shall not wrong a stranger (Hebrew gur) or oppress him, for you were strangers (again, gur) in the land of Egypt. You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan. If you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to me, and my anger shall blaze forth and I will put you to the sword, and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans.*

Serious business. The ancient world was very different than our own. It was centered upon clan

and kinship, patriarchy, honor and shame. The patronage and protection of city/village, clan, kin, family, and father were the *only* way one made one's way in the world. Strangers, widows (all women, for that matter—read what happens to the women in our stories!), and orphans had no sponsor, no protector, hence no safety, security or source of the necessities of life. Further, strangers were viewed with great fear and suspicion in the ancient world. They were always feared as possible foreign agents such as Joshua's men sent to spy on Jericho (Joshua 2). The God of Israel again and again commands His people to live beyond their fears and their cultural norms and to practice hospitality and compassion on the weak and powerless. While Exodus 22 *commands* this virtue, the story of Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19 (and the story from Judges 19) *are acted parables* of this virtue—or lack of it.

The Yahwist history is already dropping hints about the corrupt nature of the five cities of the plain (including Sodom and Gomorrah) early in the book of Genesis, as well as that of all of the nations inhabiting the Promised Land (enemies of Israel—more on this later). The scene is set with Abraham as a hero figure earlier. In Chapter 13 Abraham gives Lot the choice of which half of the Land in which to live and Lot chooses the evil cities of the Plain, leaving the Promised Land to Abraham. In Chapter 14 Abraham is a rich sheik who delivers the kings of the Land. Abraham is set *in contrast* to the ephemeral, faithless Lot. Then in our story Chapter 18 portrays Abraham as the paragon of the virtue hospitality to the angels/God (they seem to be both) in contrast with the vacillating Lot and the aggressive, mali-

cious dwellers of Sodom—already known as a notorious city—in Chapter 19. This, the virtue of hospitality, is the moral of the story.

It is also the moral of the story for all that reference the story in later biblical writings. Ezekiel, for example, references Sodom by saying, *"Only this was the sin of Sodom: arrogance! She and her daughters (the other cities) had plenty of bread and untroubled tranquility; yet she did not support the poor and needy. In their haughtiness, they committed abomination before me, so I removed them, as you saw. (16:49–50).* No mention of sex here, only arrogant, stingy wealth. This in a chapter dripping with sexual imagery about the whoring of Israel after other gods (for example, verse 36 in Hebrew describes Israel as *"your juice was poured out"*, i.e. she was aroused by the other gods, and verse 25 says, *"you spread your legs to every passerby"*). One would think that if the point of the story of Sodom was in any way sexual in nature that Ezekiel would have referenced this fact. He was not bashful about the issue!

By the time of Jesus there were Jewish writers, such as Philo, who began to read the story in terms of sexual "perversion" primarily as a response to their experience of the excesses of Greek and Roman sexual behavior. Interestingly, Jesus himself did not. Jesus declared the coming judgment upon the cities that rejected his messengers using the words, *"Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on that day than for that town."* (Luke 10:12). He meant that they shall be judged because of their lack of hospitality (to him and his). The Galilean cities' sexual practices were simply immaterial to Jesus'

pronouncement. But, back to the details of our story.

Accurately noting the details of a story is very important in how we interpret a story. Being loose on the details of both of these stories is, I believe, one of the main reasons that the church and modern conservative interpreters interpret these stories so incorrectly. When the angels come to Sodom, Lot (himself a stranger/gur) shelters them. The men of the town, alarmed by the presence of strangers, shout to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may (literally) know them." (19:5, and Judges 19:22 quotes the men of Gibeah similarly). Some scholars challenge the notion that the Hebrew word *yadah*/to know refers to a sex act here. Then the story is not about homosexuality in any way. The men of the town then simply want to "know" whom the men are; i.e. are they spies? They may be correct, and if so, this article could end here. However, the Yahwist author does tend to use this verb for sexual intercourse/activity. Secondly, the fact that in both stories, those trying to protect their guests offer what innocent women they have at hand (Lot's daughters and the virgin daughter and concubine of the two men in Gibeah...pure victims) to the men of the cities would indicate that *yadah* does indeed imply a sexual act. In fact it becomes a gang rape of the concubine in Gibeah, an act of violence with sex as the weapon. And this is the second moral of the story.

Neither of these stories is about healthy sexuality of any variety or about homosexual love in particular. The stories are about violence and rape, not love and

sex. Violence, sexual degradation, and rape have been staples of male dominance and warfare as far back in humanity's history as we can trace, and they dwell with us to this day. The behavior of the villains of our stories have far more connection to the abuses at Abu Ghraib Prison and the alleged abuses at Guantanamo than with gay and lesbian love. They are not even vaguely about homosexual love or relationships. They are about dominance and rape, by definition an act of violence, not of sex or love.

Another interesting cultural context is that both stories use their villains to demonize the enemies of David and Israel. They are both shaped by ideology—the need for propaganda, and this is the third moral of the story. Genesis 19:30–38 tells us that Lot (his wife dead) and his daughters (without husbands) incestuously mate and produce... Moab and Ben-ammi, the ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites, mortal enemies of Israel. In other words, *"see what disgusting people our enemies*

*are! Their ancestors were born of incest!"* Gibeah, in the tribal region of Benjamin, was the residence of David's predecessor and rival, King Saul, and the story casts a pallor of barbarity over Saul by virtue of the behavior of the men of Gibeah/Benjamin—Saul and his people look bad, David looks good. Both stories are political propaganda.

There is one final point to which I have already alluded. In their own cultural, religious, and textual context, there is no way Genesis 19 can be interpreted as a condemnation of what we know as gay and lesbian desire, love, and relationships. They are about dominance, brutality and rape. It is for these things, as the summit of Sodom and Gomorrah's arrogant wealth, that God is said to have judged the cities of the plain. However, read through the eyes of our culture, and its often-subconscious beliefs about homosexuals, particularly gay men, Genesis 19 is "obviously" about God's judgement on homosexuality. Our society generally assumes that gay men are "ravenous sexual

predators, corrupters of boys and men, with limitless sexual appetites" (all words I have found in Christian writers). This was taught by the church for centuries and still lies hidden below the surface of almost any discussions about homosexuality in our culture. Through these modern eyes, then, the "ravenous and predatory" behavior of the men of Sodom and Gibeah is simply "understood" to be the way "faggots" behave. Seen through this bias, of course the stories are about homosexuality and Genesis 19 is about God's judgement upon the "perverts" of Sodom. The details of the story, however, belie this reading at every turn. The traditional interpretation that God judged Sodom for homosexuality simply cannot be taken from the story if read within its own context. The adage applies, *"A text out of context is a pretext"*, even if it is a subconscious context or pretext.

Next edition, Leviticus.

## The Consultation's Role in the Episcopal Church

Integrity and the Episcopal Church are moving rapidly toward General Convention proceedings in June of 2006 in Columbus, Ohio. It is customary for the national officers of Integrity to plan its own strategy and presence at this triennial event and in recent years Integrity has been part of the collaborative efforts of Claiming the Blessing.

Moreover, it should be kept in mind that Integrity has belonged for many ears to another association whose presence is felt not only at General Convention but throughout the Episcopal Church year by year.

The Consultation is an association of independent interest groups within the Episcopal Church that came together originally in 1983 following the General Convention of 1982. It was organized to provide leadership to the progressive forces at General Convention on a variety of issues. Currently, the groups who belong are:

Integrity  
 Young Adult Caucus  
 Episcopal Urban Caucus  
 Episcopal Peace Fellowship  
 Episcopal Women's Caucus  
 Union of Black Episcopalians  
 Episcopal Ecological Network  
 Episcopal Church Publishing Company  
 Episcopal Network for Economic Justice  
 Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry Advocates  
 Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission  
 Province 8 Native American Ministries Network

CHURCH VOICE

## CHURCH VOICE

The name of the association expresses the function of the organization. The Episcopal Church Publishing Company and its Executive Director Barbara Harris were from its inception the organizing and convening focus. Until 2001, coordination was handled in the offices of Canon Edward Rodman and Bishop Barbara Harris at the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. At present, The Consultation is headquartered in Maryland with former Steering Committee member Mary Miller as its coordinator.

Further, The Consultation early on agreed to work out together the

logistical considerations regarding joint exhibit space, office space, communications, and distribution of information at General Conventions so that Convention attendees would observe a strategic cooperation of the interest groups. In 1997, The Consultation officially took over the publication of *ISSUES*, the daily newsletter at General Conventions which was founded in 1967 by a coalition of church-related groups. *ISSUES* has continued the many-colored "broadside" familiar to deputies at General Convention.

The Consultation continues to exist to provide a forum for member

interest groups to develop common goals, strategy and tactics at General Convention and it is a rallying point for Convention deputies and bishops to gain information and direction regarding elections and pending legislation. For example, Integrity's Nerve Center under the direction of John Clinton Bradley in recent years tracks many of the resolutions on the floor of both houses of General Convention that have relevance and impact to member groups of the Consultation. Thus, The Consultation provides a much-needed collective voice to General Convention from the progressive segment of the church.

## HISTORICAL VOICE

### Some Historical Realities

The Rev. Edward J. Mills III

One hears, of late, many calls to remove, punish, banish, or otherwise censure the American Episcopal Church within the worldwide Anglican Communion. Into this situation I would like to inject a reminder of several historical realities that should inform how we, the Episcopal Church, might respond. All seem to me to be more than substantially sustainable historically.

First of all, the illusion of a big, collegial, worldwide Anglican Communion of longstanding centuries of harmony is just that, *an illusion*. Where it existed, it was a colonial church, run by and for the British Empire. The "sun never set" on the British Empire, nor on the Anglican Church. In the 1990's I was a friend of a former "Lord Bishop of Polynesia", a political post in a colonial church that

covered more landmass on earth than any other diocesan entity in the Anglican Communion. It was a position of colonial power in a colonial church, as best as I could tell. He was not a bad man, just a man stuck in a bad situation, trying to make the best of a bad situation. While I was in seminary in the late 1970's I became friends with most of the indigenous African students in my seminary. They were, simply put, a lot of fun to have as friends. I was appalled at their consistent stories of abuse at the hands of their church leaders (all white Westerners). They were beaten or otherwise punished (when young) for offenses such as looking a white woman in the eyes, not stepping into the street and off the sidewalk to make way for a white person, and so on. These men came from all over Africa, so this was not a localized aberration. I finally asked a friend from Malawi the question that had haunted me for a year or more of hearing these stories, "Why are you a Christian—given this treatment at the hands of the church?"

He blinked at me, and answered, incredulously, "Because I love Jesus." Well, duh.

The truth of the matter, historically, is that the Anglican Communion we now know only came into being *after* the breakup of the European colonial empires following the two world wars, and actually some time after that. Only then was it any sort of association of peers in communion. Even then, it has been a very bumpy ride.

The second historical reality is one of those "you can pay now or pay later" situations. Since the time of the Wesleyan Movement, we in the Anglican Church, and then the American Episcopal Church, have refused to decisively and definitively go on record that we are not, nor have we ever been, a Fundamentalist Christian body. We have failed to serve our historical role, forged in the English Reformation, as being a *Middle Way* between extremes—in the modern context between Fundamentalism, on the one side, and secularism,

on the other. We have, putting a positive spin on it, preferred to live together civilly within a reality that no longer reflects our ethos. More cynically, I would offer that we have lusted after the numbers, money and success of the more fundamentalist among us. And we found an ingenious way to do so. We sent them overseas as missionaries. This happened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelical Revival in the Anglican Communion and they thrived in the conservative environments of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Following the Charismatic Renewal of the 1970's we again did so, but this time more dominantly to Latin America where they too thrived among the conservative peoples there fed up with the Roman Catholic Church. We wanted them there, away from us. They wanted to be there, away from we apostates. It was a deal fraught with eventual disaster. We refused to "pay" then by being honest about who we are, so we are "paying" now. Paying now, paying later, is *always* more expensive.

The third historical reality is actually the "dirty little secret" of the success of the modern Anglican Communion. This is the fact that for years we in the West have bought off the silence of the burgeoning Third World Anglican Church. We have capitalized upon their desperate poverty with millions of dollars of what I can only call "hush money." We have made an deal, explicit or implicit, that for this money they will not complain about our liberal ways and we will not complain about their cultural realities with which we struggle such as polygyny. But the cat is now out of the bag and the Western Anglican Fundamentalists have become political players—and have begun paying their own "talk money" to replace our "hush

money." The ugly truth about all this is that it has been predatory, colonial behavior no matter who was paying the bills. It is cynical to the "nth" degree and a recipe for eventual disaster.

Finally, I have a daughter, and I have no desire for her to live in a church and world dictated by current Third World Christian mores. I remember my utter astonishment, while in seminary, when I realized why my friend from the Sudan's wife walked 8–10 steps behind him on their daily walk around campus. Dumb *hillbilly* from West Virginia that I was, I had no idea that that was a woman's place in a marriage! I want my daughter to be her husband's equal not his servant or pet. I do not wish for her or her daughters to be genitally circumcised in order to ensure that they are virgins when married—a practice still widely performed on young women in Africa and the Middle East. I have no desire to either banish her, or have her stoned to death, for the crime of becoming pregnant outside of marriage. I have no desire for her to be banned from the priesthood—in fact, at present I simply hope she will remain a Christian given what she has seen of the church in her lifetime. All of these cultural norms are, to a large extent, part of the belief structure of those parts of the Anglican Communion that wants us censured or gone. They are part and parcel of their belief structure that so opposes our *rap-prochement* with homosexual persons. Given these historical realities, I offer a solution.

If they do not want our presence at the Anglican Consultative Council, or in the Anglican Communion, let us separate as friends and thrive separately. In fact, this will allow us to actu-

ally thrive for who we are—or could be. I have served eleven churches in just under thirty years (mostly as an interim) and have found that the rank and file of the Episcopal Church are thirsting for the real thing, for what we really are and can be, a *middle way*, between Fundamentalism and agnosticism/atheism. We can in fact embrace a way open to the sciences, the social sciences, historical research, biblical scholarship *and* a real and substantial Christian faith. Everywhere I have served I have found an enormous response to even my worst stumbling efforts to preach, teach and chart a path in this middle way. Let us part company with those parts of the Anglican Communion who wish to be done with us with grace, love and dignity. Let them take their obvious numbers, success, and prestige. God bless them. More daringly, let us continue to give to them from our economic wealth...but now with no strings attached. No more hush money, but love money, because of their desperate poverty. Let's not burn our bridges either. When and if they wish to have us return, let us also return with grace, love, and dignity. It might just eventually happen.

## Integrity Membership Form

Please mail your check or money order with this form to: Integrity, 620 Park Ave, #311, Rochester, NY 14607-2943.

Name(s)		
Address		
City	State	ZIP
Phone		
E-mail		
Chapter	Diocese	

I want to share in Integrity's work for justice for LGBT folk! Please enter my membership as checked and begin my subscription to the *Voice of Integrity*.

- Individual Annual Membership, \$35
- Couple Annual Membership, \$60
- Low Income/Students/Seniors, \$10

## Integrity Membership Information Change Form

Please mail this form to: Integrity, 620 Park Ave, #311, Rochester, NY 14607-2943.

### Old Information

Name(s)		
Address		
City	State	ZIP
Phone		
Email		
Chapter	Diocese	

### New Information

Name(s)		
Address		
City	State	ZIP
Phone		
Email		
Chapter	Diocese	

## Become an Integrity Partner!

Does your congregation or organization share Integrity's vision? If so, we urge you support our ministry by becoming a corporate partner.

Partners receive:

- a subscription to *Voice of Integrity*
- a partnership certificate suitable for display, and
- a listing on Integrity's web site and in *Voice of Integrity*. (Both are a great way to announce that you are welcoming to LGBT folk!)

A complete list of all Integrity partners can be found at [www.integrityusa.org/partners/](http://www.integrityusa.org/partners/).

### Integrity Partnership Form

Name of Congregation/Organization		
Contact Person (for Integrity use only)		
Address		
City	State	ZIP
Telephone		
E-mail		
Web Page		
Level of Support	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75 (min)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Signature of senior clergy person		

Mail this form, along with your check made payable to "Integrity" to:  
Integrity, 620 Park Ave, #311, Rochester, NY 14607-2943

## Integrity Needs YOU to be a Network Coordinator!

Did you know that a third of the dioceses in the Episcopal Church have no organized Integrity witness? If you live in one of those dioceses, we urge you to volunteer to serve as an Integrity network coordinator and start a network.

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. Each network has a volunteer coordinator, who is appointed by the Integrity regional vice president.

Regional vice presidents are the primary liaison between national Integrity and diocesan networks. Unlike chapters, networks do not meet on a regular basis. However, they are encouraged to sponsor four gatherings a year: 1) a presence at diocesan convention; 2) an educational activity for local congregations; 3) an outreach activity to the local LGBT community, such as a presence at LGBT pride festivals; and 4) a social activity for members. 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].

Visit [www.integrityusa.org/networks/networks.htm](http://www.integrityusa.org/networks/networks.htm) to see if your diocese has a network coordinator. If it does not and you are interested in serving, please visit [www.integrityusa.org/networks/](http://www.integrityusa.org/networks/), read the *Handbook for Diocesan Networks*, and complete the application form. Your regional vice president will contact you to confirm your appointment. Your name and contact information will be listed on [www.integrityusa.org/networks/networks.htm](http://www.integrityusa.org/networks/networks.htm) and you will be subscribed to an e-mail list exclusively for network coordinators. [Coordinators must have e-mail.] You will also be provided with names and contact information for Integrity members in your diocese.

## CONTRIBUTE TO INTEGRITY ONLINE!

Integrity accepts online credit card donations via Network For Good. You may designate your gift for a special project—such as the Hopkins Fund For Global Mission—if you wish. You may also make your gift in honor of a friend or family member, and notify them of your gift by e-mail. All donations are tax deductible. To make a donation, click the Donate Now button at:

[www.integrityusa.org](http://www.integrityusa.org)

