

Friday,
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ISSUES 2015

The daily General Convention newsletter of the Consultation

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Thanks to all who helped with ISSUES at #GC78!

Thanks to those who did the thankless work of standing behind the stanchions passing out newsletter after newsletter. Thanks to the good folks at Fedex Office, accommodating odd requests at odd hours. Thanks to Matthew Johnson, our off-site editor. And, of course, thanks to the many writers that contributed to ISSUES this go around. It was a privilege to work with so many gifted, sharp, faithful people. I particularly want to thank our two most prolific writers. The Rev. Holly Antolini of the Diocese of Massachusetts had the brilliant idea to interview women leaders in the church to raise their profiles in a time where we know we need more women in church leadership, but often fail to see the women leaders right under our noses. Holly's last piece is on page 2. And then there is indefatigable Laura Russell of the Diocese of Newark who cranked out TONS of economic justice content. Economic justice, less sexy than other justice work, often gets short shrift but Laura refused to let the needs of the poor be ignored. Her last article begins below.

With sincere gratitude,
Matthew Stewart, ISSUES Editor

Immigration

Did you know?

- » More immigrants now live in suburbs than in central cities.
- » The foreign-born population is 13.5% of the total US population, down from 15% a century ago.

The church is called to carry out an active ministry of compassion toward all immigrants, regardless of their legal status or place of origin. The importance of embracing those who differ from us is clearly required by the injunction in the Baptismal Covenant to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself" and by Christ's expansive definition of "neighbor" in the parable

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Support The Consultation and ISSUES

We hope the offerings of the Consultation, its ISSUES newsletter, its Exhibit Hall booths and its Open Meetings have been of use to you and more importantly to the mission of God as we try to live into it in the Episcopal Church.

As we begin to think about our next General Convention in Austin (*It is cooler there, right?*), we ask you to consider supporting the Consultation financially.

Checks can be made out to "The Consultation" and mailed to:
The Consultation
PO Box 583
Ocean Grove, NJ 07756-0583

From the history of ISSUES

ISSUES, conceived in the living room of the late William Stringfellow, has been around as a voice for social justice at General Conventions since 1967. This year we are sharing some articles from our history.

September 10, 1979, Denver

We affirm that the prophetic task of a pilgrim people is a call to constant renewal, a continuing assessment of our values, a questioning of self, an understanding of Tradition as an endless series of new beginnings, every moment (with T. S. Eliot) "a new and shocking evaluation of all we have been." To be concerned for the issues of renewal in church and society is to explore the corporate and community meanings of conversion. It goes to the roots of our theology, our liturgy, our spirituality. With the gloomy Dane, Soren Kierkegaard, we affirm:

Neither Church nor doctrine is to be reformed. If anything is to be done, it is the reformation of us all. The doctrine of the establishing Church, its organization are both very good. Oh, but our lives --- believe me, they are wretched.

To be concerned for renewal, we believe, is to understand that the church is called to be a witnessing community of unquestioned integrity, where compassion, and awe, and joy will not distract us from the pain of the world, but will empower us to share in it, and by God's grace, overcome it.

What's Next for Integrity - Are We Done? Are You Kidding?

"When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required." (Lk 12:48)

We celebrated great gains these past several days! The Sacrament of Marriage is now a reality for same-sex couples! Our Church has condemned the evil torture of so-called "Reparative (Conversion) Therapy." Transgender Episcopalians have asserted that their names are sacred and are to be recognized as holy within liturgy and church records; the Church concurred. Some might wonder—is Integrity is now finished with its mission? Are we done?

Are you kidding me?

- Transgender people are being slaughtered on our streets weekly; suicide kills even more.
- Gender-queer, non-binary, and trans Christians often find our churches less than welcoming.
- Over 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ; most rejected by "Christian homes".
- While more than 70% of lesbians and gay men say that the people they love know about their sexual orientation, for bisexual peoples that number is 28%. We are not paying attention to the "B" in LGBTQ. We must learn to hear!
- All Dioceses must be held to the Gospel of Inclusion proclaimed by this Church. We can no longer allow LGBTQ people, or children raised by LGBTQ couples, to be excluded from Holy Baptism! Access to Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Unction and Penance must be available to all the baptized. All who feel called to Holy Orders and/or marriage must be taken seriously and be given the opportunities to live out those vocations.

Racism and sexism still plague our church, society, and the greater LGBTQ movement. We must repent and work toward breaking down these ancient, yet artificial boundaries. We are all one in our Creator's love! We must still lead the Anglican Communion and stand in solidarity with to LGBTQ people in the many provinces where our people face prison or execution! We are now ready to begin to work even harder with God's help and yours! The Supreme Court has recognized our right to marry and The Episcopal Church recognizes our marriages as sacramental. Rights are nothing if not exercised and sacraments are meant to empower us to serve this broken world in Christ's name. Are we in the Promised Land after 40 years in the desert? Maybe—some of us are. If you find yourself there, rejoice and start building up Zion for those still on the way. If you are still in the desert, look for one another and keep an eye out for Jesus. Jesus knows the way! Our journey continues, yet some of us now finally have the privilege to build up the Church and to welcome others in a new way. Leverage that privilege and live into being outward signs of that inward grace we receive in the sacraments! Rejoice and be glad!

- Matt Haines, Integrity, President

TransEpiscopal: Keep On Keeping On

The British WWII propoganda poster "Keep Calm and Carry On" has been used by various organizations. At General Convention, stickers with "Keep Calm and Let the Archivist handle it" were passed out. But how does one Keep Calm, and should we keep calm? The past two weeks at General Convention have been full of anxiety, apprehension, vulnerability, and hope. As an organization, TransEpiscopal rejoiced at the Supreme Court rulings that upheld the Affordable Care Act and recognized marriage equality throughout the country. We held an outdoor "flash mob" Eucharist that included a rite of name change for one of our members. We gave testimony for resolutions D036 Adding Name Change Rite to the Book of Occasional Services and D037 Amending Names in Church Records, Registries, and Certificates. We waited as these resolutions went through committee and into consideration in the Houses. We celebrated Louie Crew and 40 years of Integrity at the Integrity Eucharist. After exhortations to the House of Deputies to be respectable, we were quiet in the gallery and on the floor as Resolutions A054 and A036 passed in the house, reacting with restrained joy.

After eight legislative days, there is an exhaustion that permeates one's body, but it is with hope that we look towards the last legislative day. D036 & D037 are still under consideration and hope lives on that they will be passed by both houses. There have been sweeping changes in both the law of the land and the law of the church, but our work is not yet not done. Trans people (particularly trans women of color) are still being murdered at an alarming rate in our

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Shattering the Stained Glass Ceiling

Throughout this General Convention, ISSUES has been profiling women leaders – almost all of them young women of color – who offer the vision and skills to assist us to live into our call to radical welcome in this venerable old Church. Many of them have advocated that, charged with spiritual energy by our baptism into Jesus Christ and our renewal and deepening of that baptism in Eucharist, we move outside our church walls and our bonds of familiarity to seek the Holy Spirit at work in those we have not yet met, have not yet even noticed, all around us, and to partner with these new friends to bring healing and wholeness to a broken and unjust world.

We have been profiling these young women in ISSUES precisely because they are the people our church most often overlooks when opportunities for

broader or wider leadership open up. As the Episcopal Herald pointed out in "The Stained Glass Ceiling" on June 30th, only 20 women have been ordained bishop in the Episcopal Church since the ground-breaking consecration of Barbara C. Harris in 1989. In the same 26-year period, 233 men have been so ordained, an 11-to-1 ratio, lower than the 10-to-1 ratio of the House of Bishops at the moment – 18 women, only 3 of whom are bishops diocesan, compared with 178 men. In short, we are sliding backward. A myriad of gender disparities – in salaries; in the level of resources in the parishes calling women to leadership; in the calling of cathedral deans and cardinal rectors, among them - underlie this highly visible failure of imagination. They are disparaging to women in general and are worse for women of color.

This is a tragedy, and not just for the women who are being overlooked. It is a

tragedy for our Church, a church that is being called out of "business as usual" into a brave new world filled with people of many faiths and no faith at all, a world desperately in need of the theologically hospitable spaciousness of the Episcopal Church. A world in need of a church with our high valuing of the power of the Incarnation in each and every human being; our sense of the sacramental nature of Creation, disclosing God's goodness to all who have eyes to see; and our prizing of the Spirit's creative movement, continuing to do new things calls us to live more fully into God's Kingdom, God's Commonwealth of *shalom*.

Let Arizona deputy and young Hispanic adult Ariana Gonzalez-Bonillas have the last word. Visit the Blog at www.theconsultation.org to hear her story.

- The Rev. Holly Lyman Antolini

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS US TO ACTION

During our time here at General Convention, we have had an opportunity to sing the prophetic words from the Black National Anthem written by James Weldon Johnson. The first opportunity was at Monday night's Integrity Eucharist celebrating the struggle for inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons in our church. The second opportunity we had to sing this anthem was the following Tuesday morning at the General Convention main worship service. In it, James Weldon Johnson calls out to the children of slaves in this country to continue the struggle for their liberty and inclusion in the overall society. Johnson's lyrics are as crisp and clear and relevant today as ever when he composed the following stanza:

Lift ev'ry voice and sing,
'Til earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on 'til victory is won.

In both services a number of the attendees were not LGBT or African American yet the song and the call to advocate for justice and liberty resonated throughout, as the Holy Spirit took her place and like a flowing stream rolled down upon

God's people. She called them to simply love God and love their neighbors as themselves. Marriage equality and the election of our first African American Presiding Bishop could not have been accomplished without our allies in the struggle for inclusion. It could not have happened without the realization that we are all God's children and are called to love and to action, advocating for justice, peace and unity in Christ.

The anthem words do not just speak to the children of slaves or former slaves but can resonate with any community of people that has been marginalized. Our challenge is to allow ourselves, as followers of Jesus, to be transformed in love and to continue to seek to break down barriers of oppression, injustice and intolerance. We are called by the Holy Spirit to love in a way that conquers fear, eradicates bigotry and eviscerates ignorance.

As we wind down to the conclusion of our 78th General Convention, let us heed the words of James Weldon Johnson as there is much work to be done and it will take all God's children to get us there to the place where Christ awaits us—the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is calling our church to action. Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring with the harmonies of liberty, justice, unity, dignity, equality and most of all love for all of God's people.

- The Rev. Dn. Guy Leemhuis,
The Union of Black Episcopalians

From Too Proud to Bend: Journey of a Civil Rights Foot Soldier

Last in a series of ten excerpts from Nell Braxton Gibson's memoir

The author is nineteen years old and a sophomore at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA.

At the end of the (second) day, I wash out my underwear and hang it up again before I climb between the sheets. In the middle of the night, a loud bang causes me to shoot straight up in bed. "Sorry," Mrs. Forman says, pointing to a large book. "I hit it on the way to the toilet." Two inmates are standing near her as she makes her way from the sleeping area through the bars and around the corner to the left to go to the toilet. The two inmates who had been standing near her saunter back to their beds.

Ruby Doris beckons for me to come over to her bed. I sit on her covers as she explains, "They"—referring to the inmates—"were bending over you while you were sleeping. They've been locked up a long time." No other explanation is needed. After that night, the three of us decide we will take turns, with one of us staying awake all night keeping watch while the other two sleep...

(In the morning) I sponge myself off and complete my exercise routine with Ruby Doris before we all eat breakfast. The rest of the morning moves along slowly.... At lunchtime the Negro trusty who usually brings our food calls Ruby Doris aside and gives her a pack of cigarettes, which she puts in her pocket. I've never seen Ruby with a cigarette in my life, and so I say, "I've never seen you smoke before." I'm wondering why the guard didn't give me the cigarettes, since I'm the smoker, but Ruby says, "Jail can make you do some strange things," and she offers me a couple of cigarettes.

(That night) after dinner, and as evening approaches we ready ourselves for bed. After a long silence with inmates shifting around in bed, everyone starts to settle down and drift off to sleep. The next thing I know Ruby Doris is shaking me awake and motioning for me to follow her and Mrs. Forman. Groggily I swing my legs over the side of the bed and trail them into the toilet area where we huddle under a dim light. Ruby reaches into her pocket and pulls out the cigarette pack the trusty gave her earlier in the day. Feeling around inside, she carefully extracts a long piece of toilet paper. "The trusty said he'll take notes back and forth between us and the boys if we want him to," she whispers as she prepares to read the note the boys have written to us on toilet paper.

"Dear girls, we are writing to see how you like your 'hotel accommodations.' Atty Donald Hollowell has been secured for us and has been here to talk with us about bail. All of us refused, so don't let him talk you into accepting it when he visits you. He'll probably come to you tomorrow. Billy was separated from the rest of us and put in a cell with other inmates.... Frank Smith is keeping a diary. Leo's writing poetry. Some of the others have made friends with the men in the cells. I made a chess board out of matchbook covers. I use burned matches for the black pieces and unburned ones for the white. One of the inmates and I have a good game going. We shall overcome because what we are doing is "all for the cause."

Note: *The good folks at Amazon.com would be happy to help you read more from Nell's book.*

Continuing God's Work to End Gun Violence as We Head Home

Diocese of Utah Bishop Scott Hayashi said in an Episcopal News Service article on June 28, "I think sometimes we in The Episcopal Church make bold statements, and we don't necessarily do anything about them." Bishop Hayashi supports the resolutions about gun violence prevention coming to General Convention but followed that affirmation by saying that "if you really want our government to act, then you have to create a groundswell."

Building on the momentum of the Bishops Against Gun Violence march Sunday morning through the streets downtown Salt Lake City and the small group conversation about next steps that followed it, I can confidently say that it is time for that groundswell. There is much work to do once we leave Salt Lake City and you can easily identify one or more ways to get involved. Outlined below (in no particular order) are a few steps you can take locally as we work together to end the epidemic of gun violence in our country.

1. If you are a gun owner, securely store all guns in your home. If you are a parent, ask about unsecured guns in the home before your child visits someone else's house. I ask before play dates, church dinners and also babysitting jobs; it's not as awkward of a conversation as you might think. Take the pledge to always ask about unsecured guns at www.askingsaveskids.org
2. Encourage your worshipping community to become a gun free zone and post notices in all entrances stating that guns are not welcome.
3. Use the Episcopal Peace Fellowship Gun Violence Prevention curriculum as an individual or in a small group to explore the issues of gun violence as they affect your community and congregation. Available for sale online at epfstore.myshopify.com
4. Write a letter to the editor in your local paper to keep the need for sane gun laws in the public eye. Use it as an opportunity to educate readers and your legislators on lax gun laws. To learn about the gun laws in your state visit www.smartgunlaws.org
5. Write and visit your state legislators and lobby for laws and policies that would prevent gun violence.
6. Visit the Diocese of Connecticut's Challenging Violence page; it's full of resources that are pastoral and educational, as well as full of advocacy tools.
7. See if your bishop is a member of Bishops Against Gun Violence. If they are members, ask how you can support them in their call to advocate for policies that would reduce gun violence. If they aren't members, encourage them to join this network of bishops: bishopsagainstgunviolence.org

- Allison Liles, *Episcopal Peace Fellowship*, Executive Director



The Consultation is a collaboration of progressive organizations within the Episcopal Church that partner to work for social justice. Before every triennial General Convention, we come together to develop a platform that will guide our shared advocacy and goals.

The Consultation member organizations are:

Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission
Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry Advocates
Episcopal Church Publishing Company
Episcopal Network for Economic Justice
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Episcopal Urban Caucus
Episcopal Women's Caucus
Integrity
TransEpiscopal
Union of Black Episcopalians

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('Immigration' continued from Pg. 1)

of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Immigrants are our neighbors, our fellow parishioners, and our friends. They are our sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ and we, as a church, must accept Christ's call to work together for a world where all might live with dignity and without fear or injustice.

Immigrants are one of the most vulnerable populations in this country. They are taken advantage of, treated unfairly, and refused assistance. Many are reluctant to seek help from any institution, fearing that they will be forced to return their native country and prevented from seeing their family in U.S. Unfortunately, these fears are well founded.

Currently, our Congress is at an impasse and has not passed any act for immigration assistance. Therefore President Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA). Simply stated, these policies provide relief from the fear of being deported and give applicants the right to work. Unfortunately, these programs are under attack and have been put on hold until the Federal Court system rules on their legality. This is why we seek your support for a resolution (D048) which affirms this type of immigration relief. At the time of this article's writing, the House of Deputies has voted in favor of D048 and several other immigration centered resolutions. We hope they will pass the House of Bishops shortly.

- Laura Russell,
Episcopal Network for Economic Justice

('TransEpiscopal' continued from Pg. 2)

country, the Federal Employee Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) still does not protect gender identity, and many trans people still face challenges in their lives and the lives of the church. As General Convention draws to a close, we recommit ourselves to Keep On Keeping On, sometimes calmly, sometimes in a spirit of holy chaos, but to continue the work of restorative justice for the trans community.

To stay informed about TransEpiscopal, visit www.transepiscopal.org

- Kori Pacyniak