

Friday,
June 26, 2015

ISSUES 2015

- PG. 1 A LITANY FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
- PG. 2 DEVELOPING WOMEN AS LEADERS,
HUMAN TRAFFICKING & ADDING CREATION
LANGUAGE TO THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT
- PG. 3 'ARE WE ALL MISSIONARIES?' &
EXCERPTS FROM 'TOO PROUD TO BEND'
- PG. 4 FROM ISSUES HISTORY: 'A FRESH LOOK AT
ASCETIC THEOLOGY IN A HUNGRY WORLD'

The daily General Convention newsletter of the Consultation



On Wednesday, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship offered the General Convention the opportunity to pray a litany at the stations of their *Wall of Injustice*. One such station, for Capital Punishment, included the picture above and the following prayers.

Leader: We stand before this Wall of Injustice in solidarity with all men and women condemned to a state sanctioned death. Based on our understanding of Jesus Christ's call to redemption, love and mercy, we reject retribution or collective vengeance as a reason for taking human life. Will you work and pray for the abolition of capital punishment in our country?

People: We will, with God's help

Leader: We stand before this Wall of Injustice recognizing that capital punishment is an expensive, racist, classist, error-prone, system with no internal consistency. While we give thanks for the 154 exonerated men and women whose lives have been spared since 1973, we rend our hearts over the 1 in 25 innocent individuals who remain on death row. Will you pray for all who are imprisoned on death row, that their lives may be spared?

People: We will, with God's help.

Leader: We stand before this Wall of Injustice remembering that Jesus Christ was a victim of cruel and unusual capital punishment, and even in the midst of his agonizing death, he was not overcome by hatred. Will you reach out to civic leaders, urging them to respect every human life by ending the use of the death penalty?

People: We will, with God's help.

Calendar

The ISSUES calendar seeks to communicate both official events of the convention but also many events that the official calendar cannot publicize.

If you have a social justice event you think other deputies, bishops, alternates or attendees would want to know about, please email us at issuesatgc@gmail.com. We'll post those events here and at www.theconsultation.org with more info.

June 26

- 1:00 pm - Open Meeting of the Consultation
- 1:00 pm - Historic Black College Forum
- 2:00 pm - EPF Speaker: Church Social Movements
- 7:30 pm - Hearing: Marriage Equality

June 27

- 1:00 pm - EPF Speaker's Corner: Fair Trade
- 2:00 pm - EPF Speaker: Trans people in the Church

June 28

- 7:00 am - Episcopal Women's Caucus Breakfast
- 7:15 am - Bishops Against Gun Violence March
- 1:00 pm - EPF Speaker's Corner: Human Trafficking
- 2:00 pm - EPF SC: Deportation in Dominican Republic

June 29

- 1:00 pm - EPF Speaker's Corner: Louie Crew
- 8:15 pm - Integrity Eucharist

Tip Guidelines for Housekeeping

Hospitality industry housekeepers, especially those not supported by a union, are very low wage earners. We usually do not encounter them as we do bell hops and restaurant servers where tipping is the standard.

It is a very kind and just practice to leave tips for housekeeper – they really appreciate this.

Standard tips are \$3 per day per person occupying a room; in upscale hotels, \$5 per day.

You can stop by the Exhibitor Booth for the *Episcopal Network for Economic Justice* (www.enej.org) and get envelopes to designate tips for your housekeepers.

Human Trafficking

What is Human Trafficking? It is modern day slavery. It is the taking of a human life and holding it in bondage without pay, without freedom, and without escape. Whatever the form, whether labor trafficking (especially for work in nail salons, hair braiding studios, sweatshops, or on farms) or sex trafficking (forcing women, children, and occasionally men to prostitute themselves), it is horrific

Traffickers work in plain sight in both suburban towns and major cities. They kidnap and coerce victims, including many runaways, from foreign countries as well as from within the United States. Trafficking is often depicted as a large ring of traffickers, an organized crime syndicate. But it is usually the opposite: one trafficker, holding a few people against their will. These small groups are not easily detected by law enforcement and many times go unnoticed by bystanders.

Trafficking is a lucrative business. A girl who has been sex trafficked, for example, can bring in \$3,000 a night. And her forced prostitution can continue for years. Interpol estimates that traffickers earn \$21 billion annually, and that number is increasing.

The efforts to combat human trafficking are inspiring, but there is always more to be done – Human Trafficking will not end without our help. We need to understand why it exists and what we can do to help end it. We need to mobilize and act. General Convention must continue to take a stand against human trafficking: A029 asks for protections for trafficking victims on Indian Reservations and for our support to stop this evil.

- Laura Russell, *Episcopal Network for Economic Justice*

STARTING EARLY TO DEVELOP THE GIFTS OF WOMEN AS LEADERS

If we want women leaders in the Church, says Gail Goldsmith in "Center Aisle," we have to start early and develop the gifts of women from youth group to campus ministry and on to leadership in our new and renewing Episcopal Church. Sarah Neumann, lay deputy from the Diocese of Massachusetts and rising junior at Williams College, is one of those women found, continuing to develop, and on her way. Lifelong Episcopalian, mentored by a 92-year-old grandmother she calls "*a bold person in a calm way*," Sarah says the nurture of parish, diocesan youth programs and camp enveloped her and imbued her with faith. But it was the invitation to be in the Official Youth Presence at General Convention in Indianapolis that was her first real "call" from God, that powerful tug to do something when you aren't sure why, something that pulls you out of your comfort zone. And the experience expanded and confirmed her in that call. "*People gave me opportunities, treating me not just like a 'youth representative' but giving me real responsibility, trusting what I had to say even when I was still figuring it out*," she says. Now she steps out of her comfort zone regularly, whether to mentor kids herself at camp as she was mentored, or to volunteer on the sexual assault hotline at college, or run for lay deputy to General Convention. She thinks stepping out of our comfort zone is what church is all about. "*Church should be physically & emotionally safe, sure*," she says, "*but church – the church we're becoming – should make us UN-comfortable, not coddle us. If we really begin to act like 'God loves everybody, no exceptions,' it WILL make us uncomfortable. But that's what we're called to in the Episcopal Church: the discomfort of disagreement while still all being part of the same family in Christ.*"

- The Rev. Holly Lyman Antolini

Adding Creation Language to the Baptismal Covenant

The Diocese of Connecticut is requesting that the 78th General Convention authorize the trial addition of a sixth question to the Baptismal Covenant as follows: "Will you cherish the wondrous works of God, and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation?" (C015)

The additional sentence, drawn in part from Job 37:14, was developed after a Baptismal Covenant Working Group, appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, led a year long study and comment period including a survey to all congregations.

Adding language to the Baptismal Covenant that addresses just and loving relationships with God's creation would bring the rite of Holy Baptism into alignment with the multitude of creation-centered references in Scripture and in the *Book of Common Prayer*. At the same time it would address a growing concern for the well-being of "this fragile earth, our island home" (*BCP*, 370).

During the study, the Working Group detected a strong sense of urgency and longing from the participating congregations to use this additional language, with the hope to do so now.

This concern is leading an increasing number of congregations to add creation questions or additional wording of their own making to the Baptismal Covenant without any authorization on the part of General Convention. This is a pressing reason for allowing what is proposed here to be used throughout the Church on a trial basis.

Equally important is that the Working Group recognized that the shape of the Baptismal Covenant evolved over the course of the decade leading up to the adoption of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. In *Services for Trial Use* (1971) only two of the present five questions that follow the threefold recitation of the Apostles' Creed were included. In *Authorized Services* (1973) two more questions were added. It was not until the publication of the *Draft Proposed Book* (1976) that concern over the omission of any reference to sin, repentance and recommitment to Christ was addressed by including the present second question. The Working Group concluded that the inclusion of a question about care for creation would be in keeping with the evolving character of the Baptismal Covenant from 1970 onwards.

- The Rev. Stephanie Johnson

Are We All Missionaries?

Well, to look at the marquee for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society "booth" in the Exhibit Hall, we are. Plain as day it says, "We are all Missionaries."

Well, yes and no. It is too simple to say it, just like that. There are some odd goings on out there in General Convention land. Resolution A009 would precisely delete the notion that people in the Church constitute the membership of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, which would, I assume also end the notion that we are all, in the DFMS, missionaries. This resolution came from TREC. Apparently the people who do the DFMS real presence in the Exhibition Hall do not speak to the TREC people.

Still, whacked out of the Canons or not, the perception is that "We are all missionaries."

Here are several questions about this statement:

(i) In the Episcopal Church way of thinking we are all members of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. Yes, we are all part of the Society but are we all missionaries? Well, yes and no. If this is really about the presence and work of the baptized, in which we take on the "Mission of the Church," we are engaged by baptism in the "mission of the church (which is) to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." In that respect, yes, we are all missionaries. No, if you mean by missionary people specifically called to a particular sort of work related

to that mission of restoration. Missionaries, in this sense, are people sent specifically and deliberately by the Missionary Society to do particular work related to the restoration to unity.

(ii) If we are all missionaries, then has the word lost its meaning? Saying we are all missionaries dilutes the sense that being a missionary is a special call within the wider Christian community. In that sense not all of us are missionaries although all of us participate in God's mission to restore to unity the fallen and broken creation. And yet to say "we are all missionaries" really does affirm that we are all sent to do the restorative work to which we are all called by baptism.

(iii) And of course we need to ask, "We are all missionaries... for what?" Is our work to win the world for Christ, or make new Christians, or to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world, to make new Episcopalians or Anglicans? Are we meant to be missionaries of our church's agenda, or are we meant to be missionaries for God's agenda - that is for the Mission of God? Are the one set of possibilities the same, tangential or simply different from the other?

The statement, "We are all missionaries", is OK as a slogan. But what does it really mean?

Mark Harris, Priest

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

Fourth 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.

On Monday, February 12, over a hundred Negro students from the five universities that make up the Atlanta University Center complex get into formation to begin a march to the state capitol building; many are still revved up from the mock burial of Jim Crow at Spelman on the previous Sunday. I move down the middle of the street between Anna Jo (a white exchange student) and Joycelyn McKissick in a group of eight abreast singing songs of freedom.... Walkin' and talkin' with my mind stayed on freedom.... Someone in front begins a new song, "Keep Your Hand on the Plow, Hold On," followed by "Oh Freedom!" Our voices grow stronger with every verse, and so do we. We feel unstoppable.... Suddenly a white woman in the mob (lining the street) spots Anna Jo and yells, "Look at that nigger-lover!" People behind her take the cue and begin to chant, "Nigger-lover! Nigger-lover! Nigger-lover!"

Immediately a host of accusations fly at us from every direction. "We don't need no northun' agitators down here!" "Goddamn niggers! Why don't you go back to Africa?" What in the world am I doing here? The air is charged with hatred, the mob is yelling obscenities, cops seem ready to let the dogs go, debris is starting to fly (and) students are marching and singing freedom songs...

So it's come down to this—come down to putting my life on the line if that's what this turns out to be. I think about the freedom I've experienced in New York and the oppression I've felt each year returning to Mississippi. I think of all the children—some right outside my English class at Spelman—who will never know that kind of freedom if someone doesn't take a stand. Negro children in the South have to experience what I've felt at Camp Woodland (in the Catskill Mountains), and I know the only way for them to do that is for me to cross the street. One day my children have to have that freedom, too, if I live long enough to have children; if I don't, somebody's children have to experience it. My grandparents have done their part to advance the cause for freedom. My parents are doing theirs. Now it's my turn.

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

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 going to reprint some articles from our history.

September 11, 1976, Minneapolis

"A Fresh Look at Ascetic Theology in a Hungry World"

Russian iconography, in Rublev's famous painting, presents the Holy Trinity under the form of three poor men, strangers and pilgrims, needing to be fed at Abraham's table. They are shown in conversation with one another, and on their faces is an infinite sadness. It is said that their talk concerns the coming descent of the Son into suffering humanity.

Buried in this symbolism may be a model for Christian living in a hungry world. The issue confronting Christians is not simply that a vast throng of the world's

people, like the three poor men, appear to us as strangers, hungry, and condemned to brief lives of unrelieved sadness. The realities of the world situation--overpopulation, depletion of natural resources, increasing waste and pollution, a widening gap between rich and poor--force us to ask probing structural questions, of international economics and national policy, as well as one of voluntary response through the church and other organizations in the relief of human need.

The assumptions we bring to such questions (and the measure of our passion) are formed, deep down, in our theology and the personal and corporate life style which grows out of it. In the icon, creation--indeed, the being God himself--is presented in human terms, as a table of hospitality and a cup of blessing. As E. Vordeekers has noted, "Abraham must first make ready the dish of hospitality and brotherly love, in faith and hope, and wait in the coming Encounter the answer to the burning pain of his own heart and of the world."

- Sr. Rachel Hosmer, *Order of Saint Helena*



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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