

# ISSUES 2009

THURSDAY JULY 9

## ***Observations on A 123 and A127- Going Forward***

In anticipation of this evening's gathering to assess the progress to date that the church has made on the implementation of two critical resolutions emanating from the convention of 2006, on the issues of reparations (A 123) and restorative justice (A 127). This gathering was made possible by the protestations of the leadership of the Consultation as a result of the failure of the national church to fully follow and implement the specific recommendations set forth in A 123; beginning with not holding a service of repentance at the National Cathedral, and failing to give the implementation of the specific recommendations in the resolutions adequate follow up to insure a broader response from the several dioceses. A total of twelve dioceses have attempted to address the particulars of A 123 - it is to their credit that they have done so - so the bulk of the evening will be spent coming to understand the powerful learnings coming from their experiences. While the request of the leadership of the Consultation was for a formal service of repentance at General Convention that might more adequately and appropriately express the spirit of reconciliation, this was denied. So we will make the best of a bad situation and attempt to move forward. While there are many who may be dismayed by the small number of dioceses responding to the purpose of this resolution and the paucity of the leadership's response (see my Open Letter to Various Church Leaders in the Episcopal Church) I would hope that we all would be alarmed at the total lack of response to the companion resolution A 127 that called the church to address the stories of pain and marginalization of the many other groups whose oppression also benefited the church. We will also attempt to address this amazing example of denial that evening. I therefore call upon all people of good will who care about the refusal to face our history

with courage to come out on the 9th and find out how we can in fact move forward together.

Ed Rodman, June 2009

**This evening remember the A-123/A-127 Forum at the Hilton Hotel, California Room D from 7:30 – 9:30 PM.**

## ***The Consultation Platform for Baptismal Ecclesiology***

*The Difference the Rediscovered Baptismal Theology Makes*

The difference the baptismal theology found in today's Book of Common Prayer makes can be seen clearly in terms of authority, ministry, and community. It is a departure from the top-down, clerically-dominated, individualistic, sin-scoped, validity-obsessed, mechanistically-"magical", conception so long imposed on baptism by medieval scholasticism and the 16th century Protestant and Counter-Reformations. The rediscovered baptismal theology of scripture and of the early church affirms the foundation of the church's ministry in baptism and the equality of status among the baptized. It affirms the church as sign and foretaste of the eschatological fulfillment of communion in the coming of the Kingdom for which we pray, while affirming the creation theology of the church as mission-driven-sacrament to the world.

Within Anglicanism this baptismal ecclesiology has led the North American Provinces toward the inclusion of all baptized people in the full life of the church without exclusion of any single category of persons. Thus all of the sacraments and positions of authority are becoming available, where personally qualified, to children, women, and persons of the various sexual orientations. For the North American Churches inclusiveness is a matter of justice, and we take justice as it is expressed in the baptismal covenant to lie at the heart of the gospel -- not merely a category to be found on the theological and ministerial periphery, as in "the prophetic role of the church".

Joe Doss, APLM

There may still be time to get a ticket-- Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) Breakfast, Marriot, 7:30 AM Saturday. Celebration of 35th Anniversary of the founding of EWC and ordination of the Philadelphia 11 and 20th Anniversary of Bishop Barbara Harris's consecration. Speaker: Dr. Pamela Darling, historian and author of *New Wine: Transforming Leadership and Power in TEC*. Tickets available at the EWC booth.

## **Lunchtime Speakers**

(1:00pm) in the Consultation Exhibit Area (next to the food service area) will Rock the House! Each day deputies, Bishops, exhibitors and visitors are invited to hear riveting talks from cutting edge Episcopalians speaking Christ' message of Justice and Peace. We will also have some afternoon speakers at 2:00pm.

**July 9th** – The Rev. Dr. Canon Naim Ateek: Founder and director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Theological Center Dr. Ateek, a Christian, an Arab, and a citizen of Israel, hopes to connect the true meaning of Christian faith with the daily lives of all those who suffer under occupation, violence, discrimination, and human rights violations. Canon Ateek's topic at lunchtime is based on his latest book, *A Palestinian Cry for Reconciliation*.

**July 10th** – The Rev. Ched Myers: Activist theologian who has worked with social change movements for more than three decades.

**July 11th** – The Hon. Byron Rushing

**July 12th** - Mr. Robert Dellello

## **Acceptance**

I wish to make a plea here for a change in language that keeps us focused on the issue before the church, at least, as LGBT people understand it.

LGBT people are not - I repeat NOT - asking the church to bless our same sex relationships. We are asking the church for the same thing afforded to 'opposite sex' (to quote the former Ms. California) relationships. We are asking the church to bless the COVENANTS we make between each other.

That's it. That's all.

With all due respect, 'opposite sex' couples do not ask the church to bless their relationship. Neither are those of us who are 'same sex' couples.

With all due respect, we are not asking for your approval of our relationship, just as 'opposite sex' couples do not ask for approval of their relationships (even though the statistics prove that 50% of them will end in divorce).

With all due respect, we are not asking you to welcome us in any other special ways that you welcome 'opposite sex' couples into your congregations.

With all due respect, we are not asking you to make us members of the church or even to 'accept' us as full and equal members of the church. Our baptism already does that. We are

already 'included' in the Household of God. We are asking you to recognize that fact and act accordingly.

This is not in the same category as blessing hounds, boats, motorcycles, vestments or religious jewelry.

We are asking the church to bless the COVENANTS we make between each other for faithful, life-long monogamy in a relationship marked by mutual respect, equality, fidelity and the holy love that is a reflection of the love of God. Thank you.

Elizabeth Kaeton EWC

**Episcopal Divinity School** banquet is to honor long-time Consultation member and general agitator, Ed Rodman. Bishop Barbara Harris will chair and speak at this evening. There will be a Cash Bar at 6:00 and Dinner at 7:00. Tickets, \$45.00, are available before Thursday Noon at EDS and Consultation booths and from EDS friends. This is not to be missed!!

## **Some questions**

A friend who is a close observer of the House of Bishops and is concerned about budget items in this time of financial limitation, has suggested that the Bishops acted out of order when they authorized \$70,000 for yet another study of homosexuality. Does anyone expect a different finding from another committee? Will this \$70,000 have priority in the Budget over the utility bill for 815, or missionary work in domestic or foreign missions, or even the much discussed new media program? We wonder if the Bishops are genuinely convinced that they have missed some theological insight which would have transformed our debates about sacraments and people, Or do we have yet another effort to delay the inevitable by using this study to allow the junior House to avoid action yet again. It would be interesting to see what answer these concerns might receive. Or should PB&F simply not allocate these funds? Perhaps 70 bishops could commit \$1000 over the next three years from their discretionary funds to underwrite this item without imperiling the ministries of the Church.

Ron Miller, ISSUES Staff

ISSUES 2009 can also be found on the web at [www.theconsultation.org/ISSUES-2009](http://www.theconsultation.org/ISSUES-2009) There is an ISSUES blog available at [ISSUES-TheConsultation.blogspot.com](http://ISSUES-TheConsultation.blogspot.com) and an RSS feed is available at that site.

### ***Observations on the Elephant in the Room at the General Convention of 2009***

As an outgoing member of the Executive Council, who was endorsed by the Consultation and attempted to lift up our concerns at every opportunity, I am compelled to offer the following observation on one over-arching challenge which confronts the church. Permit me to tell a brief story:

At one of the earlier Council Meetings in the last Triennium, the official church statistician was invited to make a presentation on what many perceived as the declining membership in the church with an eye toward determining whether or not the current controversies surrounding full inclusion and the consecration of Gene Robinson were contributing factors. At that point the statistician indicated that it was too early to track such a trend even if it did exist and would report back periodically as we went forward. The culmination of that work can be found in its full and alarming detail in the State of the Church Report currently before this convention. The important thing that happened at that meeting and is still the overriding statistical analysis was the observation that the current decline in church membership in all mainline denominations correlates to the mega-trend of the declining white birth rate. After much dither in which people attempted to shoot the messenger, I made the observations that 1- I am glad that someone finally admitted that this was a white church and, 2-that no matter how much we celebrate the growing edges of ethnic ministry in our common life, they are not statistically significant enough to overcome this trend.

Now four years later, we see a fuller explication of this fact, but what is more alarming is that we do not see any impact on our membership of what we know are the growing numbers of people of color in our population, which is now being projected to create a situation shortly after 2020 (how ironic) in which the United States of America in particular will have a majority of minorities. While those in Province 9 may find this entire situation amusing if not tragic, it pales in comparison to the now more fully understood

reality that the majority of the Anglican Communion is made up of my favorite category- the ABW's, i.e. anything but white. Putting these observations together makes a strong case for the pernicious and insidious institutional and cultural dimensions of racism as they play out as the silent elephants in the room of our ongoing failure to communicate honestly with ourselves and/or with the broader Anglican Communion.

Let me be clear, the American Church does not honor or respect our co-religionists in the Ninth Province or the broader Anglican Communion. We need to take a page out of Obama's book, who is attempting as our newly elected president, who because of his heritage has a different perspective on white privilege and American hubris and is attempting to walk a fine line showing the uncharacteristic virtue of humility and more dangerously admitting our past mistakes. If we are to grow as a church and make a significant difference in our national self-awareness, our church's need for contrition and reconciliation and building authentic bonds with our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion, we need a major time-out. If we do so we may be able to begin to connect the dots between my other observation on our lack of serious response to A123 and A127 and our current situation. This may take prayer for some, deeper social analysis for others, a road to Emmaus experience for those who do not have eyes to see currently, but at the end of the day we will fully understand the wisdom of Maya Angelou's observation that "history with all of its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage need not be lived again," or we may come to appreciate the folk wisdom contained in an old civil rights' observation "apathy is the refusal of people to go along your program."

Ed Rodman, June 2009

### ***The Brownings feted***

Episcopal Peace Fellowship will honor Bishop Edmond and Ms. Patti Browning, as the 2009 recipients of the John Nevin Sayre Award. Please go by the EPF booth in the Exhibit Hall to make a reservation for this \$35.00 event and join us on Saturday, July 11th at the EPF reception at the Red Lion Hotel, 6 to 7:30pm, with the Rev. Canon Brian Grieves, presenter and Bishop Greg Rickel, speaker (presentation at 6:30).

## ***Become a community Investor***

The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (ENEJ) has brought to Convention an opportunity for everyone to become a community INVESTOR! You may have never thought of yourself as an INVESTOR at all, but with just \$20 you can begin.

And there's a double bottom line! Whether you INVEST at Convention or from wherever you are on-line, an INVESTMENT in microfinance through MicroPlace will make a positive impact on poverty - in addition to providing a financial return. To date, in less than two years 5000 entities have invested a little more than \$3 million through MicroPlace. 38,000 people have received loans averaging \$280. By making an INVESTMENT you will be helping accomplish the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and/or supporting the rebuilding of an economically devastated community.

Community investing/ microfinance are relatively new opportunities in the world of investments. Nevertheless, they have become the means by which each of us can become INVESTORS who make a difference. Community investments provide financing or capital which is otherwise unavailable for community economic development and services, affordable housing, and around the world for enabling the poor as entrepreneurs to clothe their children, send them to school and ultimately to change communities.

MicroPlace offers affordable community INVESTMENT options around the world and here at home at a variety of loan terms and interest rates. You can INVEST whatever amount you wish or can afford. At the ENEJ booth, #742, ENEJ and MicroPlace - a website which enables everyday people to INVEST in the world's working poor - invite you to go to <microplace.com> where on-line you can make a loan (INVESTMENT). Staff from MicroPlace and ENEJ will be available to help you become an INVESTOR. You will contract with a non-profit CDFI, the issuer of the loan note, for a withdrawal from your checking account and you will need to bring your bank account numbers. The CDFI will repay the note with interest at the time you specify. Your loan can also be renewed as you desire allowing you to recycle your INVESTMENT dollars as many times as you wish. Begin your own life as an investor on-line by coming to Booth 742. See you there.

Dianne Aid ENEJ

## ***A gift from Fort Worth***

We have been welcomed home.

The deputies from the Diocese of Fort Worth have been overwhelmed by the warmth of the welcome we have been receiving at General Convention. From the personalized gift bags from "our friends in the Diocese of Rochester" when we checked in to the affectionate handclasps when we got our deputy badges to strangers in hallways, the message has been the same—"We are so glad you are here. We need you in our church."

It is, of course, an echo of Paul's metaphor of the Body - one part cannot be lopped off without the entire body suffering.

And while we from Fort Worth are touched deeply by the gifts we have been given, we know we come offering a gift to our beloved church as well.

Episcopalians in Fort Worth are living into a new and deeper understanding of what Paul was talking about. We are learning that even if part of the Body chooses to leave, the entire body suffers. There is a wound left behind that will ache for a long long time.

But perhaps the most important learning we in Fort Worth can bring to the Church is that when the Body excludes part of itself, the Body is crippled, off balance, and dangerously vulnerable to losing its way.

We know firsthand the cost of exclusion, of scapegoating. Most of all we know the devastating and distorting affect of fear on love. Fear clouds thinking. Fear makes it hard to see hope. Fear closes the Body down and cuts off creativity.

Fear's best friend is the word "no" - no to risk-taking, no to change, no to those who challenge or ask questions, no to anyone who is the slightest bit different from the people in charge. Worst of all, fear causes the Body to turn its back on the Holy Spirit.

What is it God's angels always tell us? Fear not, for you are not alone!

Let us remember that.

And then let us welcome home all those the Body has chosen to exclude.

Katie Sherrod

Your morning ISSUES is available in front of the main Convention Center entrance, on tables inside that entrance, and under the Consultation banner in the Exhibit Hall.