

Thursday,
June 25, 2015

ISSUES 2015

The daily General Convention newsletter of the Consultation

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As we come to the 78th General Convention, TransEpiscopal looks forward to building on the major strides The Episcopal Church has made over the last decade on behalf of trans people. We also come with a sense of urgency about the gaps that remain between what our Church has done and what remains to be done.

In 2012, General Convention added nondiscrimination protections on the basis of "gender identity and expression" to Canon I.17.5 (aka "the Rights of the Laity") and Canon III.1.2 (regarding access to the discernment process for holy orders). By passing 2009-D032, the 76th General Convention declared that it would not discriminate against lay employees on the basis of gender identity and expression, among several other demographic categories. The same convention also passed D090 that encouraged the Church to allow for inclusive self-identification on all church forms, creating flexible options for people to identify their gender, names, and preferred pronouns.

At this General Convention two resolutions whose numbers are pending directly address trans people's interface in congregational life and the wider church.

The first will call upon the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to include the name change liturgy from *Changes: Prayers and Services Honoring Rites of Passage* to its proposal for significantly revising the *Book of Occasional Services* (BOS). Their proposal (resolution A059 in their blue book report) already seeks to include additional material from *Changes* as well as the *Enriching Our Worship* series (see p. 14 of the report for a fuller list). Incorporating this service in an expanded BOS would signal the powerful opportunities that congregations have to walk with trans people as well as others as they claim a new name. We are particularly inspired that the name change service in *Changes* originally emerged out of indigenous Episcopal communities, communities that for years have wisely highlighted the profound spiritual significance of a new name both for individuals and for the communities in which they live and worship.

The second resolution (also with a pending number) will call for a study of the canons to address the pastoral need to amend legal name changes in church registries and to reissue church certificates—baptismal, confirmation, or ordination certificates, for instance – when it is requested. The purpose of this study is ultimately to safeguard trans people's privacy, to assure that, should one not wish to disclose one's previous name, the Church will respect that wish, doing all it can to facilitate our freedom to make our way in the Church.

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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 25

11:15 am - Hearing: Palestine Israel Divestment
11:15 am - Hearing: Racism & Criminal Justice
1:00 pm - EPF Speaker's Corner: Palestine
6:00 pm - New Community Festival
7:30 pm - Hearing: Marriage Equality

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

ENDORSEMENTS

For Trustees of the Church Pension Fund:

Ms. Martha Bedell Alexander
The Rt. Rev. Clifton Daniel III
The Very Rev. Tracey Lind
Ms. Sandra F. McPhee
The Rev. Dr. Tim Mitchell
The Rt. Rev. Brian N. Prior
The Rev. Canon Dr. Sandye Wilson

For Treasurer of the General Convention:

Mr. Delbert C. Glover

For President of the House of Deputies:

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings

For Vice President of the House of Deputies:

The Hon. Byron Rushing

(The Consultation considers both demonstrated commitment to social justice and leadership skills for the position in making its endorsements.)

RATIONALE FOR HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A Historic Perspective: There are few historically black institutions more valuable to its community, economics and culture than Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Statistics show that approximately one half of all black college graduates are products of HBCUs, and one-third of African Americans with degrees in natural sciences and one-half with degrees in math have gained them through HBCU's. HBCUs graduate more than 50% of African American professionals and public school teachers and 70% of African American dentists. Even more importantly many, if not most, of HBCU students are first generation college educated, often coming from rural and inner-city communities. Finally, one of the most unrecognized benefits of these institutions is that they provide social, economic and cultural value to their municipal communities. This is particularly true of rural and other indigent communities where colleges and universities produce jobs, private rental housing, public and social services, and cultural and spiritual uplift. These are essential community benefits which would be otherwise unavailable in many such localities.

A Perspective in the Episcopal Church Regarding its HBCUs: For over a century the Episcopal Church, along with other Christian traditions, has sponsored and nurtured HBCUs. Since integration (despite the current benefits noted above) there is a growing attitude that these institutions are no longer needed... that the dynamics which necessitated them a century ago no longer exist. In addition to these assumptions, many in the Episcopal Church assume that the legitimacy of black colleges is grounded in producing new black Episcopalians through conversion, educating black Episcopalians, and producing candidates for the priesthood. While it is true that many black church leaders have received education from our HBCUs, we believe it is not the essential measure by which the support and mission of these institutions should be legitimized.

The True Value of HBCUs to the Episcopal Church's Mission: We believe that the true value of historically black Episcopal colleges is that they represent **the longest and most effective mission of the church to black youth and communities**. Other than black congregations, there is no other long sustained and specific ministry of the Episcopal Church to the black community. This is particularly true when considering those communities in the most economically, socially and culturally challenged circumstances. The Episcopal Church often laments the continued effects of historic injustice on the black community, but it forgets that our HBCUs have served these communities and offered certain remedies of grace and uplift on behalf of our church. These remedies of grace include:

1. Graduating a significant majority of youth who are first generation college educated;
2. Providing a safe and nurturing environment to grow in identity, intellectual inquiry, confidence, and character while being exposed to healthy role models and the rich contributions of African American history and culture;
3. Having a particular attraction to youth from rural and inner-urban communities;
4. Breaking the cycles of poverty and alienation from the larger society;
5. Producing professionals to serve both minority and majority communities in business, science, technology, education and other relevant disciplines.

These and other remedies are in keeping with the ethos of the Episcopal Church, including our values of ecumenism, diversity of thought and culture, and commitment to justice. However, because the Episcopal Church has not understood the value of our colleges, there has been minimal moral and economic support on the part of the church and its members. At one time there were approximately ten historically black schools supported by our church. With the recent closing of St. Paul's College in VA, there remain only two historically black Episcopal institutions of higher education: St. Augustine University in the city of Raleigh, NC, and Voorhees College in rural Denmark, SC.

Our black colleges were originally missionary ventures of the church in the 19th century to address the effects of slavery and the post-Civil War manifestation of systematic racism known as "Jim Crow" (which lasted until the 1960s). Today, even with the benefits of racial integration in community and education, we are faced with new forms of racism and segregation in the "new Jim Crow." This recognized phenomenon is best articulated in the book *The New Jim Crow*, published in 2010 by the New Press, by civil rights litigator and legal scholar Michelle Alexander. Issues of mass incarceration, unequal and deplorable elementary and secondary education, poverty and residential segregation are overshadowing whatever accomplishments African Americans have been making since the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, it is imperative that as the Episcopal Church considers its mission in addressing racial, economic and social injustice, it give priority to its most historic, longest sustained and most effective ministry to the African American community: our Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The Union of Black Episcopalians calls upon our Episcopal Church for:

- » An increase of financial support for the remaining two colleges;
- » The creation of a new church body or the specific assignment to an existing group in the church to work more closely with the HBCUs and the Office of Black Ministries to explore ways to advance this mission;
- » Support for HBCUs to have the very best chaplains, priests who bring strong intellectual abilities, gifts for spiritual guidance, experience in community leadership, and the Afro-Anglican ethos to communal life at HBCUs;
- » Increased awareness of these important institutions throughout the church, including their role in the church's witness to advance justice, reconciliation and positive development in our society.
- » Invitations for congregations to adopt a student whom they would nurture through the undergraduate years.

HBCU Forum will be held June 26, 1:00 - 2:15 pm, at the Sheraton Salt Lake.

Show your support for HBCUs at the PB&F hearings: June 26 and 27, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

A Trip to Palestine Israel

Today, as the Social Justice and International Policy Committee is expected to take up the issue of Palestine Israel justice, peace and divestment, we offer this personal reflection.

In December of 2010 I went to Israel for the first time. As far as I was concerned, it was just Israel – no Palestine, Palestinian Territories, or “occupation.” Like many brought up in upper middle class white Protestant households, I supported Israel unconditionally and was completely unaware of the complexities in the precious land that I was walking on. When I saw soldiers in Jerusalem carrying guns, I thought they were protecting democratic rights. When I walked through a checkpoint into the West Bank, I believed that these obstructions were placed there for the protection of innocent people from terrorism. However, on my return visit in January of 2014, I was able to use my eyes, heart, and mind to more fully see the reality.

In the fall of 2013, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary announced that there was going to be a travel seminar to the Holy Land during the next January term, and I knew that I had to go. I had no idea that this experience would challenge me, make me see the privilege I have as an American citizen, and entirely change my worldview. I already knew that many Muslims were peaceful non-violent people, that not all Arab people were terrorists, and that there were Christians living in Israel – yet I was completely unaware of what all

this meant for the non-Jewish people living in this sacred place.

During my second tour of Israel and Palestine I started to see how I, as an American, could travel freely around the region at my leisure while Palestinian Christians and Muslims were not allowed that basic right. I learned how the wall that divides Israel proper from the “dangerous” Palestinian Territories was nothing more than a tool to create divisions, increase differences, and decrease the outside world’s awareness of horrific humanitarian injustices. I noticed how Israel controlled all the water rights and could turn off the water supply to Palestinian neighborhoods for no reason other than to show power over others – Israeli Jewish settlers, on the other hand, could live illegally on Palestinian land with lush gardens and swimming pools. I saw what life under military occupation does to the human psyche, especially that of children, and I learned that a refugee camp does not mean tents in the wilderness but open-air prisons of concrete and despair. However, amidst all that, I also got a glimpse into the hearts of Palestinian people, hearts that are loving, pure, and crave the basic rights that all humans should be afforded.

- Deanna Roberts,
2014-2015 *Episcopal Service Corps* Member

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

Third in a series of ten excerpts from Nell Braxton Gibson’s memoir

At the time of this excerpt the author is thirteen years old

An all-white jury deliberated little more than an hour before returning a not-guilty verdict, provoking NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins to proclaim at a Harlem gathering that month that the state of Mississippi had decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children. “The killers of the boy felt free to lynch because there is in the entire state no restraining influence of decency, not in the state capital, among the daily newspapers, the clergy, not among any segment of the so-called lettered citizens.”

When the killers are freed, I think the federal government will step in and seek justice for Emmett Till. I don’t know that Milam and Bryant have become local heroes to like-minded whites. Thinking the feds will arrest them, I imagine they are on the run, possibly headed for Tougaloo (where we live) to continue their killing, making examples of me and any other Negro youngster they think needs to be taught a lesson. They have gotten away with murder in one of the country’s most high-profile cases, and I am convinced they are hiding out in the woods near our home to continue their killing. I am so terrified that I’m afraid to take the trash out in the evenings after dinner or to bring in dry clothes from the line, but at thirteen years of age, I am too ashamed to tell my parents of my fears.... Emmett Till’s murder steals my innocence, awakening me to the horrors of life in Mississippi, and I don’t know how to become normal again.

Those who contend that the murder of Emmett Till “had a powerful impact on a new generation of Blacks” are right. They say his lynching had a tremendous effect on my generation of teens because we became the “generation that would soon demand justice and freedom in a way unknown in America before.”

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.

October 5, 1973, Louisville

"CRISIS OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH"

There is nothing more disorderly than a closed system in process of transition to an open one. In the matter of the election of a Presiding Bishop, the church WAS (so to speak) consulted through the means of a Nominating Committee. And, the House of Deputies WAS asked to respond to the candidates... [But] is the Presiding Bishop to be understood as the chief pastor of the whole Church? If so, he cannot be elected by a process more appropriate to the selection of a chairman for the House of Bishops, though the brothers are now so numerous that even they need printed profiles to select their chairmen.

The crisis of which we speak is more systemic than a hassle over who shall be Presiding Bishop, and how he shall be elected. As parents, we can no longer command that our adolescent sons and daughters simply "go to Church." Members of parishes - the "laos" of God are not content to be treated as passive/dependent "children." Women in the Church are not content to be consigned to the kitchen and the altar guild... we ARE in this together. There cannot be a community of us all which does not somehow take into account the sensitivities of young and old, ordained and lay, black and white, South, Southwest, and yes, dammit, the urban North and Midwest.

Why has the House of Deputies delayed and fretted over the tough questions which face it? Obviously because the issue of AUTHORITY has been before us, and we have been unready to face it, except by fencing with each other. Now that a PB has been elected, will there be a mood to settle down and thrash out the matters before us? And will BOTH houses understand that we have come to a day and time when the people of the Church are prepared to walk out the front door - or more likely slink away in frustration and boredom at a system which treats them as naughty children for asking that they be treated as sensible and sensitive JOINT participants in a ministry which stems of our Lord Himself.

A new Presiding Bishop deserves better than a vote... by one fourth of his constituency.

*Transgender Advocacy
continued from page 1*

A third resolution, "Oppose Conversion Therapy" (D028), calls for The Episcopal Church to go on record in opposition to so-called therapies that seek to change people's gender identity or sexual orientation. By passing this resolution, TEC would join the American Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Counseling Association, among others, in decrying such therapies as deeply psychologically and spiritually damaging. By passing this resolution we would affirm once more our baptismal promise to respect the dignity of all human beings as God has created them and calls them to be who they are.

TransEpiscopal looks forward to tracking these resolutions as they move through Convention.

- The Rev. Cameron Patridge,
TransEpiscopal



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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