

# The Committee on the State of the Church

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During this triennium, the Committee attempted to assess the state of the Church and the attitudes of its lay members in several ways. The description of these studies, together with the conclusions drawn and specific recommendations, are presented in the subsequent sections of this report.

In carrying out its work, the Committee met as a whole four times, two of these meetings being coupled to meetings of the Council of Advice to the President of the House of Deputies, of which the members of this Committee are a part. In addition, a considerable amount of work (especially work on the profile of Episcopalians) was carried out by telephone and mail.

## A. MEMBERSHIP

<i>Province 1</i>	The Rev. Donald E. Bitsberger <sup>1</sup> (Massachusetts) The Hon. Joseph E. Michael, Jr. (New Hampshire)
<i>Province 2</i>	The Rev. Carol Anderson (New York) Dr. Warren C. Ramshaw <sup>2</sup> (Central New York)
<i>Province 3</i>	The Rev. Paul M. Washington (Pennsylvania) Mrs. Raymond Rich, Jr. (Washington)
<i>Province 4</i>	The Rev. Alex Dickson (Mississippi) Mr. Eugene H. Bowens (Atlanta)
<i>Province 5</i>	The Rev. O. Dudley Reed, Jr. (Springfield) Mr. W. Scott Gerstenberger, <i>Chair</i> (Michigan)
<i>Province 6</i>	The Rev. Canon Ronald L. Wiley, <i>Secretary</i> (Nebraska) Mrs. J. B. Robinson (Montana)
<i>Province 7</i>	The Rev. Canon James P. DeWolfe, Jr. (Dallas) Mr. Thomas Deal Reese (Texas)
<i>Province 8</i>	The Rev. Canon John H. M. Yamazaki (Los Angeles) Mrs. Marion Cedarblade (California)
<i>Province 9</i>	The Very Rev. Sabino Reyba <sup>3</sup> (N. Mexico) Mrs. Vilma White (Panama)

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<sup>1</sup> Replaced the Rev. Edward B. Geyer, Jr., who resigned.

<sup>2</sup> Replaced Dr. Malcolm D. Talbott following his death.

<sup>3</sup> Did not participate in the work of the Committee.

**B. PROFILE OF EPISCOPALIANS, 1981**

In 1981, the Committee undertook a comprehensive, random sample survey of the opinions of nearly 1,000 lay people throughout the domestic dioceses of the Episcopal Church. This sample size is sufficient to produce results which are accurate to within four percentage points 95% of the time. A comprehensive report of the results of this survey is presented in Appendix 1. This analysis contrasts the 1981 results with the data from a similar survey done for this Committee three years ago, the results of which may be found in the *Journal of the General Convention, 1979*.

The Committee would like to highlight the following points learned from the analysis of the results of the 1981 survey:

1. The representation of racial minorities within the Church is lower than in the U.S. population. The Committee lists as an objective for the next triennium the task of trying to find out more about the feelings and needs of minority groups. Section D, Black Clergy Deployment, of this report presents additional data about the current deployment of black clergy in the domestic dioceses.
2. The representation of young adults, under age 30, in the Church is lower than in the U.S. population. The Committee recommends that, as an objective for the next triennium, the attitudes and needs of young adults be studied. About one-fourth of all Episcopalians are over age 65. We also recommend that the 1981 survey data be more thoroughly analyzed in order that the feelings and needs of these older members can be more clearly understood.
3. The Committee notes that most of our members do not see their own occupations as ministry.
4. The survey asked people if they agreed that "the goals of the Episcopal Church are public and clearly understood by the people." The responses show that only about 17% agree with this statement, while 58% disagree, and 25% aren't sure whether they agree or not. People with incomes less than \$20,000 per year tend to disagree with this statement less than do people with higher incomes. People in the over-65 age group also tend to disagree with this statement less than do younger people.
5. The survey asked people if they agreed that "members should support national Church programs more." The responses show that about 26% agree with this statement, while 28% disagree, and the balance (46%) have no strong opinion. People with incomes less than \$20,000 per year tend to agree with this statement more than people with higher incomes.
6. The survey asked people if they agreed that "there is good communication between the national Church and the people." The responses show that about 19% agree with the statement, while 40% disagree, and the balance (41%) have no strong opinion. People with incomes less than \$20,000 per year tend to agree with this statement more than people with higher incomes. In addition, widows and widowers tend to disagree with this statement less than other people.
7. The survey asked people if they agreed that "the Episcopal Church is not involved in the community sufficiently." The responses show that about 34% agree with the statement, while 40% disagree, and the balance (26%) have no strong opinion. This result is interesting because most people (74%) had an opinion on the question and the opinions are quite balanced. In addition, there was no significant relationship between the responses to this question and income, region of the country, sex, age, or marital status.
8. The survey asked people if they agreed that "the Episcopal Church does not place enough emphasis on social issues." The responses show that about 25% agree with the

statement, while 41% disagree, and the balance (34%) have no strong opinion. The results from three years ago indicated that, at that time, the level of agreement with this statement was only about 20%, five percent less than now.

9. The survey asked people if they agreed that "Christian education is generally of high quality." The responses show that about 44% agree with the statement, while 16% disagree, and the balance (40%) have no strong opinion. This result shows much less agreement with the statement than there was three years ago, but no corresponding increase in disagreement, i.e., many people who agreed with this statement three years ago are no longer sure how to answer. People in the 40-49 year age group tend to agree less with this statement than others do, while people with incomes less than \$20,000 per year tend to agree more than people with higher incomes.

10. The survey asked people if they agreed that "the Church does not devote enough time to evangelism." The responses show that about 32% agree with the statement, while 33% disagree, and the balance (35%) have no strong opinion. This result is interesting because it shows such an even distribution between agreement, disagreement, and uncertainty. However, the number of people who agree has risen from 25% three years ago to 32% now. In addition, there was no significant relationship between the responses to this question and income, region of the country, sex, age, or marital status.

11. Since the data from this survey was collected late in 1981, the Committee has not had sufficient time to analyze it in several respects. In particular, we recognize that there are areas of dissatisfaction among our members which need additional analysis. We would also like to understand better the demographic characteristics of those who are dissatisfied. We are recommending that this analysis be an objective for the next triennium.

### C. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

In attempting to assess the state of the Church, the Committee takes note of the fact that many Church members view the current United States divorce rate as alarming. We believe that a commitment to the permanence of marriage is an essential part of the basis for any marriage, whether it be in a first marriage, or when a person is seeking to marry again after having experienced a broken relationship. We believe that it is the pastoral responsibility of the Church to offer theological guidance to its members in any significant area of personal and/or corporate life. We, therefore, offer one statement of what we believe the Church teaches about the importance and necessity of a commitment to permanence in the relationship of marriage (See Appendix 2).

We acknowledge and are concerned that some marital and premarital relationships exist without the basis and precepts of this statement. For that reason, we present the following resolution.

#### **Resolution #A—113.**

Examination of concerns about marital relationships.

***Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That during the next triennium the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health examine the concerns raised in the report of the Committee on the State of the Church, Section C, Christian Marriage, with the express charge of bringing to the 68th General Convention recommendations on ways the Church can best respond to these concerns, based upon Christian teachings.***

## D. BLACK CLERGY DEPLOYMENT

In the report of the Committee on the State of the Church to the 66th General Convention in 1979, that Committee stated its hope that "in the next triennium, the Committee will continue to hold up a mirror to the Episcopal Church, and to the larger church of which we are a part, always with the aim of bringing our small contribution to bear upon the tasks of seeking the truth, of helping the church to draw nearer to the mind of Christ, and of doing its work in obedience to his will." It is with this hope in mind that we look at the area of black clergy deployment.

There are approximately 400 predominantly black congregations in the domestic dioceses of the Episcopal Church. Many of these congregations are not served by black priests; approximately 35-40% are served by white priests. In addition, a significant number are served by priests from the West Indies.

The 1981 Profile of Episcopalians indicated that about 96% of our lay members belong to predominantly white parishes. Further, about the same number indicated that their rector was of the same racial background as the majority of the members of the congregation. These people (whose rector was of the same race as the majority of the congregation) were asked if they would welcome a new rector, were one now being called, of a different racial or ethnic background. Overall, two-thirds said they would. Nevertheless, as far as the Committee can determine, there is currently only one black rector of a predominantly white congregation in the domestic dioceses. Moreover, there are currently only 20 blacks from domestic dioceses attending the seminaries of this Church. In addition, it should be noted that the answers to this question showed significant variation with region of the country, age, and sex, with larger percentages of "yes" answers among people living in the West and North Central regions, among younger people, and among women.

**Question:** If your present rector is of the same racial or ethnic background as the majority of the members of your parish and if your parish were now calling a new rector, would you, yourself, welcome a person of a different racial or ethnic background than the present rector?

Percentage of those responding "yes"

Region of Country	Age	Sex			
North East	67.3	Under 30	73.9	Female	72.8
North Central	73.8	30-39	77.1	Male	59.4
South East	57.7	40-49	76.3		
South Central	56.6	50-65	62.5		
West	90.2	Over 65	58.0		

## E. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Committee was interested in surveying the involvement of parishes and dioceses in community outreach programs and, in some way, attempting to encourage additional involvement throughout the Church. The National Commission on Social and Specialized Ministries was contacted about their work in this area. It was determined that they were already attempting to promote increased involvement in community outreach programs.

In these times of substantial reduction of government involvement in such programs,

the Committee has observed increased activity among Episcopalians and other church groups in partial response to these reductions. Both traditional and new forms of outreach ministries are being developed by our Church to address the multiplicity of needs brought on by reductions in government supported programs. We applaud these outreach ministries in our dioceses, parishes, and missions, and encourage the National Commission on Social and Specialized Ministries to identify and publish descriptions of model community outreach ministries—so that successful programs may become known and emulated elsewhere.

## F. COMMUNICATING THE ACTIONS OF GENERAL CONVENTION

During the previous triennium, the Committee on the State of the Church addressed the question, "What impact do the actions of the General Convention have upon actions or concerns in succeeding diocesan conventions?" As a means of checking to see what follow-up occurred, that Committee surveyed 79 diocesan journals for the year 1977, looking for actions on 20 resolutions of the 1976 General Convention.

Realizing this was only a beginning step to the sort of analysis which could have been done, nevertheless that Committee "concluded that the concerns that the General Convention considered pressing upon the Church did not at once arouse significant discussion or calls for action in the dioceses." They, therefore, set a goal for this Committee to "help provinces and dioceses to discover how best to use the General Convention and its interim bodies." As a result of their work and considerable discussion by this Committee, the following resolution is offered:

### **Resolution #A—114.**

Communicating the actions of General Convention.

*Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That,*

- 1. All resolutions passed by General Convention which require action by Dioceses be identified in the Journal by a certain symbol or code to be determined by the Secretary of General Convention;**
- 2. The Chairpersons of legislative Committees of General Convention be instructed to include in all resolutions for which specific action is expected in the Dioceses, a Resolve clause which calls the matter to the attention of the Dioceses;**
- 3. A list of all action items be published upon adjournment of General Convention in the Summary of Actions of General Convention and be distributed to the Bishops and Deputies of each Diocese along with a request that the list be printed in an official publication of the Diocese and referenced in some manner, at the Bishop's discretion, in the Bishop's address and/or acted upon by resolution at the next Diocesan Convention;**
- 4. The Bishops and Deputies from each Diocese convene within 30 days after receiving the Summary of Actions of General Convention to determine a plan to communicate to all people of the Diocese the actions of General Convention; and**
- 5. The Chairperson of the Deputation from each Diocese file a report with the Secretary of General Convention stating the diocesan plan for implementing the decisions of General Convention which call for specific action on the part of the Diocese.**

## G. CHURCH STATISTICAL DATA, 1979-1981

In each of the past several triennia there has been substantial improvement in the

collection and analysis of parochial and diocesan statistics. The forms have been revised with the help of the Committee to reflect real needs for the data and avoid unnecessary paperwork by parish and diocesan offices. The information is released to the secular and Church press every Fall and is published triennially in the *Journal*. During the year there is a substantial demand by Church and secular agencies for "hard and soft" information and its analysis. Comparative figures of interest to the Convention, providing data through 1981, will be distributed to it as an appendix to this report.

## H. DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Committee had received a \$24,000 appropriation from the 1979 Convention to participate in research and development of a contemplated ecumenical management information system for the Church. Other judicatories were unable to provide staff and funding.

However, we did participate with a broad spectrum of almost every denomination in America in a county-by-county survey of churches and membership. Delay in publishing a report of this significant demographic study was occasioned by the unavailability of relevant census figures for comparison. We expect to have the results available in mid-summer.

Since we did not feel it appropriate to use for our own purposes funds which had been granted for an ecumenical project, we let the balance lapse. However, the Joint Commission on Program, Budget, and Finance was responsive to our need to use the rapidly-developing technology in management information systems ourselves. Since we had already demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of such systems over the past several triennia by reducing the per page costs of our publications despite inflation, PB&F authorized the acquisition of some equipment from funds already appropriated for publications and statistical analysis.

Thus, while not using new funds or even some of our previously-authorized appropriations, we are able to start this year to use state-of-the-art technology in text management, electronic filing and retrieval, data entry, reporting, and analysis. We have shared the resultant benefit with others. The budget-planning process of the Executive Council, the calculation of various NDBI formulae, and allocation among the dioceses is now also facilitated by the system, whose development was encouraged by the Committee. We are developing the system into a pilot project which may not only benefit the national staff, but the Church as a whole. Considerable interest has been expressed by diocesan administrators, and a substantial part of their regional conferences will be devoted this year to computer technology and management information systems.

A continuation of this research and development of management information systems, on an on-line basis, is hoped for in our request for \$3,000 for this purpose in each year of the next triennium.

## I. FINANCIAL REPORT, 1980-1982

	1980	1981	1982 (est.)
<b>Income</b>			
Appropriated by General Convention	\$17,600	\$24,075	\$17,900
Sale of profile data analysis			200
	<u>\$17,600</u>	<u>\$24,075</u>	<u>\$18,100</u>

**Expenses**

Meetings	\$6,693	\$ 3,807	\$ 8,203
Statistical data processing		6,000	3,000
Management information system		3,000	
Profile of Episcopalians:			
Postage and printing		3,279	100
Consultant	471	1,572	2,420
Computing services			1,000
Diocesan Press Service	270		
Miscellaneous	188	206	7
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$7,622	\$17,864	\$14,730

**J. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, 1983-1985**

During the next triennium, the goal of the Committee will be to continue to seek out and present in meaningful ways, information about the Church, its members, and its relationship with other parts of the church of God and society, helping the Church to draw nearer to the mind of Christ by doing its work in obedience to his will.

More specifically, the objectives of the Committee will include:

1. To attempt to determine more carefully the needs of minority groups within the Church. The 1981 Profile was unable to accurately assess these needs since the number of minority respondents was so small (less than 5% were non-white). The Committee feels that, since minority representation in the domestic dioceses is less than in the population as a whole, it is important to find out what minority people need that is not being adequately provided. It is intended that the Committee use whatever data is already available, but it is anticipated that it will be necessary to sample the opinions of minority groups within the Church.
2. To attempt to understand more clearly the attitudes of young adults, under age 30, within the Church. Again, the 1981 Profile was unable to accurately assess these attitudes since the number of such people was so small (less than 6% of the respondents were under age 30). As with minority groups, the representation of young adults in the domestic dioceses is very much smaller than in the population as a whole. It is clear from the 1981 Profile that adults do not generally become active in the Church until they reach age 30 or, perhaps, when they become parents. For example, there are three times as many active adult members in the 30-34 age group as there are members below age 30. It is important to the future of the Church that we find out what these young adults are thinking and feeling. It is anticipated that it will be necessary to conduct a random sample of the opinions of young people within the Church.
3. To examine more closely the clear finding of the 1981 Profile that people in the Church do not see their occupations as ministry.
4. To study the data from the 1981 Profile in more detail to discern the opinions and needs of elderly people. Since about one-fourth of our members are over 65 years old and a similar number retired, the 1981 Profile data needs to be examined in much more detail to determine the opinions and needs of this large segment of our membership. No new data gathering will be necessary to accomplish this objective.
5. To study the 1981 Profile data to discern areas of dissatisfaction within the Church. The purpose of this study will be to learn what people are dissatisfied about and who is dissatisfied, i.e., what are the demographic characteristics of the dissatisfied groups. Here again, no new data gathering will be necessary to accomplish this objective.

**STATE OF THE CHURCH**

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In order to accomplish these objectives, the following budget is proposed for the 1983-1985 triennium:

Meetings	\$54,000
Four meetings of the Committee, two of which would be joint with the Council of Advice to the President of the House of Deputies.	
Steering Committee meeting	1,000
One meeting of a small group to plan the first meeting of the full Committee.	
Sample minority needs (Objective 1)	10,000
Sample young adult needs (Objective 2)	10,000
Statistical data processing	9,000
Analyzing the data received from the annual Parochial and Diocesan Reports.	
Management information system	9,000
Continuing the development of a system wherein many kinds of information about the Church can be centralized for easy, consistent, and accurate access by Church leaders.	
Miscellaneous phone and postage	800
<b>Total Budget Request</b>	<u><u>\$93,800</u></u>

**K. BUDGET REQUEST, 1983-1985**

**Resolution #A—115.**

Appropriation for the Committee on the State of the Church.

*Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That there be appropriated from the Expense Budget of General Convention, the sum of \$93,800 for the triennium of 1983-1985 for the expenses of the Committee on the State of the Church.*

APPENDIX #1

Profile of Episcopalians — 1982

A survey by the  
Committee on the State of the Church

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**General Background and Purpose**

It was in 1978 that the General Convention commissioned the first sample survey of the Episcopal Church. The *ad hoc* Statistical Research Committee, constituted by the Finance Department at the Episcopal Church Center, gathered information needs from the Executive Council staff, the State of the Church Committee, and the Venture in Mission staff and designed a survey which would produce a profile of the characteristics and opinions of the members of the Episcopal Church. Other churches and coalitions of churches had used the sample survey method, but this one was designed specifically to meet the needs of workers and decision-makers in our Church.

Since this was the first effort of its kind, it was decided that the survey was to be conducted by an independent research organization. The contract was awarded to Market Facts, Inc. of Chicago, and a summary of the results can be found in the *Journal of the General Convention, 1979*.

Part of the purpose of such a survey is found in its ability to produce trend data — the comparison of responses to similar questions over a period of time. We can thus sense changes in the shape of the Church (e.g., in the age of its people and their geographical distribution) and in their opinions and concerns (e.g., about important issues in both the Church and the world).

The first survey was found to be so useful that the Convention commissioned a second survey to be conducted by its State of the Church Committee in preparation for the 1982 General Convention.

The objectives of the 1981 survey were:

1. To provide demographic information about the Episcopal Church. Since we had begun work to discover this information, it was felt that a continuation would prove even more valuable.

2. To determine the opinions of the laity of the Episcopal Church about the Church and its programs, and to discover patterns of religious background, belief and behavior.

The information gleaned from this survey will allow us to continue to describe the life of the Episcopal Church. We now possess a great deal of useful data. For those who serve the Church, this information will be invaluable.

### **The Way in Which the Survey Was Conducted**

The 1981 survey was designed to gather information about and from active Episcopalians over eighteen years of age who live in the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. A small amount of information was also gained about those persons' spouses and children.

To undertake the survey, we requested that a random sample of 750 parish clergy (one of every ten who serve congregations) send us their parish lists. The clergy were asked to cross out names of inactive persons. We received 246 usable lists which contained an estimated 65,000 names of persons who are qualified to be included in our sample. The lists were subsequently assigned to their proper provinces. Since we know the distribution of members in each province, that percentage of our national total was calculated (e.g., 12.1% in Province I). Then a sample of 2,000 persons was randomly chosen from the assembled lists with the appropriate proportion selected from each province.

Questionnaires were mailed to the approximately two thousand persons selected. Each questionnaire was to be completed and returned anonymously to the Computing Center of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. A reply card addressed to our New York office was enclosed with the questionnaire with a request that the respondent let us know that he/she had replied. This enabled us to follow up non-respondents, without knowing what any person's replies had been. Completed questionnaires were returned by mail from 894 persons, or 44% of the sample.

To improve the accuracy of the survey, a sub-sample of 200 of the non-respondents was selected. These persons were also chosen randomly and in proportion to the known membership in each province. This group was then contacted by telephone and one hundred and twenty calls were completed. Fifty of these persons said either that their questionnaire was in the mail, or that they would put it in the mail promptly. Seventy chose to answer the questionnaire over the phone. These answers were combined with the mail responses for a total sample of 964.

### **Validity of Our Results**

We can be reasonably confident of the information gained in our Profile. Samples of around 1,000 respondents, similarly selected, are commonly used by major research organizations for opinion polls of the entire United States population. Such samples have a tolerance within four percentage points 95% of the time.

## **FINDINGS**

### **A. The Importance of Religion**

The first items on the "Profile of Episcopalians" questionnaire attempt to measure the importance of religion to the people of the Church. Religion is clearly a very important part of the life of our members. Sixty-four percent term it "very important," and an additional 30% choose "fairly important" to describe their opinion. This view — that religion is important to our members — is similar to what was found in our 1978 study.

Comparing this with the most recent Gallup study, we find that members of the Episcopal Church rate religion a full eight points higher (94% vs 86%) than does the average American as reported in the Gallup study.

We also asked whether the people of the Church think religion is increasing or losing influence. Less than a majority, 44%, feel that religion is increasing its influence, while 37% think it is losing. Nineteen percent believe the influence of religion is unchanged, a similar finding to that of Gallup for the American population as a whole (1981).

### **B. Religious Beliefs**

Two questions in the 1981 survey asked about the religious beliefs of our members. One tried to assess the people's beliefs about the Bible, and the other about the nature of Christ.

The query about Christ was a new question. The previous profiles had deliberately borrowed a question from a 1978 ecumenical survey of the unchurched in order to make specific comparisons with that survey. Some consternation ensued in Church circles when it was reported that only 56% of Episcopalians seemed willing to say "Jesus Christ is God." Then, 20% had opted for the reply "a divinely inspired man."

But, when presented with the 1981 question, "Do you think that Jesus Christ was God and man?", 73% of the members of our Church chose it. Other answers were: "God" — nine percent; "a divinely inspired man" — 14%; and "other" — five percent. At first glance it would seem that in 1978 roughly 76% of Episcopalians believed in our Lord as God or as divinely-inspired, compared with 96% in 1981. We do not think that their beliefs have changed so drastically, but rather that those responding prefer to be precise when using theological language.

There has indeed been a sharp change from 1978 in the other principal item of religious belief assessed by the survey: belief about the Bible. The proportion of our members who believe the Bible is "to be taken literally, word for word" has fallen from 15% to 11%, and the proportion believing that the Bible is the "inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word" has risen from 74% to 80%. It appears that those who take the Bible literally, or who, on the other hand, hold it to be a book of legends are in a distinct minority in our Church.

### **C. Religious Practices and/or Behavior**

Several of the questions on the survey were aimed at finding out about the religious and ecclesiastical behavior of Episcopalians.

We asked about attendance. It is evident that our record of attendance is substantially higher than for the average American. Forty-seven percent of our members attend Church services weekly, versus 31% of Americans. It is still very impressive to find that 78% of our people attend at least twice a month. Furthermore, the proportion of people whom their rectors call active, yet who say they never attend, has dropped from eight percent to three percent in the last three years. This may merely mean that our survey this time reached fewer of our inactive people.

In this connection, we may caution that, although each of our questionnaires was invariably addressed to a specific person, the spouse may have actually filled it out. Some clergy may have provided us with lists on which the addressees were "Mr. and Mrs.," even though one spouse was not an active member. Hence three percent of our respondents may be relatively inactive. This low figure in our sample contrasts with other national religious surveys which admittedly include high percentages of relatively inactive persons as "members."

An important aspect of our religious behavior is our prayer life. Three questions were directed toward an assessment of the prayer life of Episcopalians. It is strong. Virtually all pray (99%). The most usual schedule of prayer is "about once a day," and, most

frequently, this is private prayer. Other occasions for prayer are “a worship service” (86%), “with the family at meals” (53%); and “on other occasions with the family” (13%). There was a significant drop in the proportion who prayed as a regular part of some group — from 27% to 23%. Yet, there was a similar increase in the proportion who answered “on other occasions,” which may offset or modify this finding.

Pledging or giving money to religious causes is always an interesting part of our religious behavior. There appears to have been a drop in the proportion of members who make pledges, from 97% to 91%. It may be that the slightly different form of the question prompted a more conservative answer. Under any circumstances, the number of members who say they pledge is still very high and may reflect intention as well as actual behavior. Another question deals with Christian giving. We also asked about the “tithe” (described in the questionnaire as ten percent of income for the work of God) as a standard for Christian giving. Fifty-three percent of the people think it a “good standard.” Stronger support for tithing comes from households with income under \$20,000 (61% favor it), while only 41% of households with income over \$50,000 favor the tithe as a standard. Widows and divorced persons are more likely than other members to affirm the tithe as a good standard for giving. It will be interesting to note any changes in this response over the years.

Another facet of religious behavior is participation in the organizations and activities of the church. In 1978 we simply asked an open-ended question, “In what church activities or committees are you involved?” Church activity was found to be very high. In 1978 about 56% of the members were involved in some activity. In 1981 this number increased to 69%. We asked the question using the categories generated by the 1978 responses and presented them in order of level of response, with some new categories. The most frequent activities cited in 1981 were: Episcopal Churchwomen (22%); fund-raising (19%); vestry (14%); altar guild (13%); helping human needs (12%); acolyte, chalice bearer, lay reader (11%); church school teaching (11%); choir and adult education (ten percent). The only really significant change over the three years has been a large increase in the number of our members involved in fund-raising — from 7.5% to 19.3%.

This question also yielded some interesting information on Church activities. When asked which parish activities the respondents actually are involved in, it was found that the largest proportions of our people are served by parishes that have:

Family-oriented activities, dinners, etc.	49%
Adult study programs	40%
Weekday worship	39%
Youth groups	29%
Prayer groups	22%

Our confidence in this estimate of involvement in adult religious education is reinforced in another way. An estimated 35% of the respondents said they had received religious training in the last two years and they named the type of study program. The most frequently attended programs are:

Study of:	
Bible or Christian doctrine	8%
Confirmation classes	4%
Lay training	5%
Other adult education	17%

While there seems to be a considerable amount of organizational activity in the Church, other activities and services are still needed. The most strongly desired of these appear to be:

A professional counseling service	14%
A senior citizens' program	14%
Cultural programs	14%
A day care center	14%
A program for single adults	13%
A program for young married couples	13%

These programs are apparently not available and are wanted by about one in seven of our members.

**Christian Outreach and Ministry**

Christian outreach and ministry beyond the activities of the parish were reported by a large percentage of our sample. More than 30% of those responding on this point told us of specific activities they undertake. The most frequent examples of such ministry were visiting the sick and shut-ins, doing volunteer work with organizations such as the Cancer Society, the Red Cross, and serving on school or hospital boards in their communities. More than half of those responding told us that their ministry was: to be a good Christian example to others, to be helpful, thoughtful, and responsive. Nearly eight percent saw their own occupations as a form of ministry. Nineteen percent had no activity in this area or left the question unanswered.

**D. Church and Denominational Background**

Substantially more than half our adult members have been members of another denomination. Of the estimated 58% who belonged to other churches (up from 48% in 1978), the largest proportions came from the Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Baptist Churches in 1981.

Denominational origin of Episcopalians  
who have been members of another Church body

	<b>1981</b>
Methodist	26.0%
Presbyterian	14.5
Roman Catholic	19.3
Baptist	16.9
Lutheran	7.2
Congregational	5.3
Church of Christ	2.2
Other	8.5
	99.9%

We also attempted to assess the respondent's reasons for affiliating with his or her local church. The answers for 1978 and 1981 are similar. We list them in order of frequency.

<b>1978</b>	<b>1981</b>
1. The type of liturgical worship.	1. Same.
2. The way the faith is presented.	2. Rector.
3. Like the rector.	3. Way faith is presented.
4. Brought up in the congregation.	4. Sacramental emphasis.
5. Its sacramental emphasis.	5. Geographically close.

It is evident that the style of worship and the characteristics of the rector are very important to the individual in explaining his or her decision to affiliate with a parish.

We learned from the survey that virtually all Episcopalians have received religious training as children. It is interesting to note that the proportion of our people (90%) who

said they had attended Sunday or Church School is significantly higher than the national average of 76%.

A similarly high proportion of our members (89%) received training in preparation for confirmation. Most of this instruction lasted between six and twelve sessions, with only 20% lasting more than twelve sessions.

#### **E. Issues Facing the Church and the World.**

In the Gallup Organization's *Religion in America*, 1979-80, it is said that the key issues facing the church are abortion, interfaith marriage, prejudice in voting, and the place of the homosexual in U.S. society. None of these issues concerned more than one percent of the people in our survey, when they were asked, "What do you consider the most important issues facing the church today?" The answers to that question varied widely, but there were distinct clusters which revolved around the following themes (in order of frequency):

1. Concerns over young people.
2. Concerns revolving around the vitality of the church (need for evangelism, spirituality, renewal, better attendance)
3. Concerns about the relationship of faith and works in the local church (making church more relevant)
4. Concerns over social issues (getting the church either more or less involved in social issues)
5. Concerns over the survival of the local church (especially, financial survival)

What is most evident is the absence of unanimity or clear focus about what the important issues are. It would appear that there is little evidence to support any contention that a majority of our membership sees any particular issue as central.

A wide range of issues facing American society were reported by our respondents. Approximately 20% of the responses — we received 1,700 responses to the question because most people named more than one issue — listed the loss of moral and religious values as the most important issue facing American society today. Following that, in descending order, were the issues of inflation and the general economic situation, crime, the decline in family life, and drug abuse. Also listed as important issues were these: keeping the peace, poverty, terrorism and violence, fear of war, and unemployment.

#### **F. Likes and Dislikes in the Parish and the Church in General**

In 1978 when asked what our respondents liked most and least about their local church they named (1) the warmth and friendliness of the parish members, (2) the rector, and (3) the worship program. Seventy-three percent of the answers were contained in these categories with the largest proportion being in category (1).

The response was even clearer in 1981. Eighty-nine percent of the replies fell in the same three areas. Forty-four percent like "church members, friendliness and warmth" best; 29% liked the rector best; and 16% found the "worship, liturgy, and ceremony" to be what they liked best. When asked what they liked least, the respondents had much less agreement. The only significant categories appeared to be: (1) some characteristics of the rector (nine percent), (2) unfriendly, uncaring, cliquish people (nine percent); and (3) the unsatisfying nature of the 1979 Prayer Book (six percent). The other responses are too varied to be categorized (some dislike smoking; others resent lack of opportunity to smoke; bad coffee was mentioned by several as a "gripe;" some said their parish was too wealthy; others too poor). Thirty-six percent had no negative comments.

#### **G. Agreement/Disagreement with Statements**

Another question also provided an opportunity for the respondents to assess the

Church. In this case it is the national Episcopal Church. There are some significant changes in the estimates on these statements we received from 1978 and 1981.

This multi-part question asked the level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements. These statements, with comments on the responses, follow:

**1. Christian education is generally of high quality.**

The proportion of our people who consider Christian education to be of "high quality" has fallen from 58% to 44%. People in lower income brackets are much more likely to agree with this statement compared with people in upper income brackets.

**2. There should be intercommunion and closer relations with the Roman Catholic Church.**

There was little change with regard to closer relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. Forty-one percent of our members support the idea.

**3. The Church does not devote enough time to evangelism.**

The proportion wanting more time devoted to evangelism has risen from 25% to 32%.

**4. There should be increased cooperation with other Protestant churches.**

Sixty-one percent of our members support increased cooperation with Protestant churches.

**5. Elderly persons do not receive enough attention from the Church.**

There now appear to be more persons in our Church (40%) who believe that the elderly deserve more attention than in 1978 (36%). Women are more likely to agree with this statement than men.

**6. Episcopal Church members should support national Church programs more.**

Twenty-six percent of our members agree that members should support national church programs more. In 1978 41% agreed with that statement. The survey indicates that people in lower income brackets are more likely to agree with the statement compared with people in upper income brackets.

**7. The Episcopal Church is not involved in the community sufficiently.**

The 1981 response appears to indicate that about 34% of the Church wants more involvement in the community. While there is a slight change in the order of words in this question from the 1978 version, the change in response (up 7%) is so large that it may represent a significant change in opinion.

**8. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer provides excellent worship services.**

There appears to be no change in our people's opinion of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer since its official adoption. A majority of the 1981 respondents (54.3%) agreed with this statement as they had in 1978. Twenty-five percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Twenty percent expressed no strong opinion either way.

**9. Adolescents and youth do not receive enough attention in the Episcopal Church.**

Forty percent of our members believe youth and adolescents do not receive enough attention. That proportion is about the same as those who do not think we exercise sufficient concern for the elderly. Members in the 40 to 49 age group are more likely to agree with this statement.

**10. There is good communication between the national Church and the people.**

There is a much smaller proportion of people who agree with this statement. In 1978, 27% agreed, while in 1981 there were 19%. Communication between the national Church and the people is not seen as good. Lower income persons are more likely to agree with this statement than those in other income categories. Older members are more likely to agree with this statement than younger members.

**11. The Episcopal Church does not place enough emphasis on social issues.**

There was a significant increase in the proportion of our members who want more emphasis on social issues. The proportion has risen from 20% in 1978 to 25% in 1981. Members in the Northeast and Western regions of the country are more likely to agree with the statement. Members in the North Central and Southeast regions are more likely to disagree. Members in the South Central region are more likely than all others to be uncertain about the subject and have no strong opinion either way.

**12. The goals of the Episcopal Church are public and clearly understood by the people.**

There is still little evidence to support the idea that our Episcopal Church goals are understood. Only 17% of our membership agrees with that statement, the same as in 1978. Low income members are more likely to agree with the statement than other members.

**Venture in Mission**

The proportion of the membership of our Church who have heard of VIM has increased dramatically (from 23% to 52%). It is evident from our survey that the campaign had only small effect on regular giving. Eleven percent of the people indicated that their giving increased; four percent said it decreased and 85% said that the campaign had no effect on their regular giving.

**H. Demographics**

The demographic information which was gathered suggests:

**1. Male/Female**

There is a larger proportion of females than males in our membership. The selection of the sample indicated that 54% are female; 46% male. This is similar to the finding of Gallup (*Religion in America 1981*) which was reported as a 55%/45% ratio.

NOTE: The response rate (on the questionnaire) for females was much higher than for males.

	Gallup 1981	Questionnaire Sample, 1981	Questionnaire Responses	
			1978	1981
Male	45%	46%	35%	38%
Female	55%	54%	65%	62%

**2. Race**

The racial distribution of Episcopalians was estimated by the Gallup survey to be 95% white, five percent non-white. Our estimates are that both our membership and our parishes are 96% white, three percent black, and less than one percent oriental. The U.S. population is 88% white.

It was also found that 68% of our people indicate that they would welcome a rector with a racial or ethnic background different from the majority of their congregation.

**3. Marital Status**

The marital status of Church members closely resembles the distribution of the United States population with two differences. There are proportionately fewer single persons and more married persons in the Episcopal Church than in the U.S. population.

	US Population (Percent)	Gallup, 1981 (Percent)	Profile, 1981 (Percent)
Single	17	17	7
Married	66	69	77
Divorced	5	5	5
Widowed	9	8	11
Separated	2	1	—

**4. Community size**

The largest segment (51%) of our people live in towns from 2,500 to 50,000 in size. This is a significantly higher portion than in 1978 (45%).

One conclusion may be that, from 1978 to 1981, a large number of our people have left the larger cities — those from 500,000 to 1,000,000 in size. Seven percent of our members now live in such places.

**5. Age**

Our age distribution differs from the U.S. population.

Age	US Population		Episcopalians	
	1980 (Percent)	1978 (Percent)	1981 (Percent)	1981 (Percent)
18-24	18	4		2
25-29	11	7		4
30-34	10			10
35-39	9			10
		34		
40-44	7			8
45-49	8			10
50-65	26			32
		56		
over 65	11			24

The table indicates that younger persons are omitted from our parish mailing lists, or that they failed to respond, or that there are fewer young people in our parishes than we would expect, based on the United States population.

**6. Education**

Fifty-seven percent of our people have completed college and 31% have completed graduate or professional training. This compares with 30% of the U.S. population who have completed college.

**7. Occupation**

Almost half of our membership is involved in professional or business work. Three percent are manual workers. Seven percent are in clerical or sales work. Twenty-five percent are retired.

**8. Income**

Thirty-two percent of the U.S. population had income over \$20,000 in 1980. In 1981 seventy-one percent of Episcopal households had income over that figure. Given the considerable inflation of the period from 1978 to 1981, it is very difficult to make meaningful comparisons about income changes among Episcopal Church members during that time.

**9. Distribution by Province**

The survey was designed to represent the proportions of membership in the eight provinces. This chart tells how close we came to achieving our goal.

Province	Returned	Sent	Returned
	1978	1981	1981
		(in percents)	
I	8.1	12.1	11.7
II	14.4	15.9	11.7
III	14.6	16.3	16.8
IV	16.8	16.8	18.4
V	15.2	11.7	13.9

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VI	6.6	5.4	5.4
VII	11.3	9.9	9.4
VIII	11.8	11.9	11.2

Except for Province II, which was not as proportionally responsive as the others, our replies have equitable provincial representation, a substantial improvement over 1978.

## APPENDIX 2

### Statement on Marriage

A report of the Commission on Family Life,  
The Diocese of Mississippi

As members of the Body of Christ, our concept of marriage is necessarily based on and derived from the understanding we have of our relationship with Almighty God. Much of this understanding is stated in the *Book of Common Prayer*, which draws on Holy Scripture and our Christian experience of God in history. The *Prayer Book* states that "the bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in Creation." Marriage, the formation of a new family, "signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his church." The Church further proclaims that "marriage is a lifelong union of husband and wife." Each person promises exclusiveness ("forsaking all others"), permanence and fidelity ("be faithful to him/her as long as you both shall live"). In Holy Matrimony both the man and the woman take a "solemn vow" "in the Name of God" that, under whatever circumstances that may develop, they will "love and cherish" each other permanently—"for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and health, . . . until we are parted by death."

The Church fully realizes how difficult it is for a man and a woman to keep these vows. All of the prayers of the liturgical act of marriage ask for the blessing and grace of God to enable these two people to keep these vows. In addition, the whole Christian community is asked to "do all in their power to uphold these two persons in their marriage." The Church also fully intends that the blessing and grace of God Almighty will come not just through the marriage ceremony itself, but as these two people and their children, "if it be God's will," are nurtured in the knowledge and love of the Lord through their life in the Church thereafter.

The moral teachings of Jesus Christ and his Church are not to be seen as a New Law imposed upon a struggling humanity, but rather as an invitation to live in the kingdom of God instead of in our own kingdom or someone else's. The consequence for failing to do so is that we pass up the opportunity he offers and the grace, fulfillment, joy and peace that comes from living in his kingdom.

We fully recognize that we frail human beings break many of the solemn vows we make "in the Name of God," including the vow of marriage. We, therefore, must recognize the reality of divorce. The pathway to reconciliation with God in any broken relationship is the same. We trust in a loving, forgiving God who takes the broken relationships of our lives and heals them when we turn to him with repentance and faith.

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Copies of a 475-page document, "Raw Data — Profile 1982," containing the specific replies to each question in every category, with histograms, and cross-tabulations are available for \$30 each, postpaid, check with order, payable to General Convention, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017-4594

At such a time we also need and have a right to expect the same kind of love, support and forgiveness from his Body, the Church.

But let it be understood by all people that it is the expectation of Almighty God and his Church that the marriage of a man and a woman is a lifelong union lived out in faithfulness with honor toward each other.