

The Standing Commission on the Church in Metropolitan Areas

MEMBERSHIP

The Rt. Rev. Frank K. Allan, Diocese of Atlanta, 1994
The Rt. Rev. Herbert Thompson, Jr., Diocese of Southern Ohio, 1994
The Rt. Rev. Arthur E. Walmsley, Diocese of Connecticut, *Chair*, 1991
The Ven. Enrique R. Brown, Diocese of New York, 1994
The Rev. Everett W. Francis, Diocese of Bethlehem, *Vice-Chair*, 1991
The Rev. Dr. Daniel P. Matthews, Diocese of New York, 1991
Mrs. Marion Cedarblade, Diocese of California, 1991
Mr. Frank Connizzo, Diocese of Kansas, 1991
Ms. Ann K. Fontaine, Diocese of Wyoming, 1991
Mrs. Iris E. Harris, Diocese of Washington, 1994
Mr. Ronald W. Jones, Diocese of Missouri, *Secretary*, 1991
Mrs. Katherine Tyler-Scott, Diocese of Indianapolis, 1994 (resigned)
The Rev. Sandra A. Wilson, Diocese of Colorado, *Representative of the House of Deputies*

All of the above active members concurred in the report.

The commission benefited from the services of the Rev. Bliss Williams Browne, Vice President of the First National Bank of Chicago, Dr. Michael R. Rion, President, Resources for Ethics and Management, and Dr. George T. Haskett, Professor in the School of Social Work at Marywood College, who served as consultants during various stages of our deliberations.

Representatives of the commission at General Convention:

The Rt. Rev. Arthur E. Walmsley, House of Bishops, and Mrs. Marion Cedarblade, House of Deputies, are authorized by the commission to receive non-substantive amendments to the report.

SUMMARY OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

The commission met four times during the triennium. After gathering information through field visits in three cities, San Francisco, Hartford, and St. Louis, and meeting with the Chairman of the Jubilee Ministry Committee, the Rt. Rev. George L. Reynolds, and its staff person, Ms. Ntsiki Langford, the commission proposes four resolutions for General Convention action based on the rationale and data which grow out of the analysis in the Background Document that follows this report. It is essential that that paper be read as the necessary grounding for the resolutions we present.

The Standing Commission on the Church in Metropolitan Areas was organized as a joint commission following the General Convention of 1973. It was renewed in 1976 and made a standing commission in 1979. The long-range goal established for the commission by the 1979 Convention was to "develop recommendations and strategies which will be of concrete assistance to the Church in metropolitan areas in shaping new patterns of mission and ministry."

During the decade of the 1980s, acting in response to the crisis in American life, the Episcopal Church took three initiatives which have had widespread effect. In 1982

the General Convention authorized the *Jubilee Ministry* as a “major new commitment to a ministry of joint discipleship with poor and oppressed people, in the United States and abroad, to meet basic human needs and to build a just and peaceful global society.” In undertaking this initiative, the General Convention recognized the interrelatedness of the world economy and of different regions within society. From a mission perspective, Jubilee Ministry draws no distinctions between domestic and world mission, or among rural, suburban or urban outreach.

One of the high points of our review of Jubilee Ministry during this triennium is the distinguished leadership which has been given to it by Ntsiki Langford. We believe that the original vision has been enhanced, and that a process of sharing among Jubilee Centers has been put in place. The success of this effort leads us to propose that the theology and mission strategy of Jubilee be given church-wide support at the level of every congregation.

A second initiative was the strong call, in part generated by this commission, to link church-related programs of service to efforts of public policy advocacy with and on behalf of the poor. We commend the Presiding Bishop and the Executive Council for strengthening the Washington Office of the Episcopal Church, leading to a stronger and more visible involvement in national and international issues.

Finally, we call the attention of this General Convention to the action of the 1988 Convention to link the Church’s ministry of service to community programs of economic development. Many parishes and dioceses have supported self-help initiatives in such areas as affordable housing, community-based health care, local economic ventures, and the like. The national Church, many dioceses, and a variety of parishes have found new ways of making socially responsible investment of their endowment funds. We urge vigorous initiatives by the Economic Justice Implementation Committee in the next triennium, in close collaboration with dioceses.

In this report to the 1991 General Convention we concentrate on the linkage between effectiveness of ministry at the level of the local congregation and the impact of the Church on the civic community, its institutions and public policy. We have come to recognize that Jubilee is not a program but a vision for the Church at every level of its life. If the Decade of Evangelism is a call to the Church to be renewed for the proclamation of the gospel, it is equally a time to restate the Jubilee theme: the breaking of the cycle of disadvantage, of restoration, of new creation. The center of mission is the local gathered community of faith, acting in concert with its diocese and the national and international Church. Biblical themes, Biblical faith, and Bible study are, we believe, the key to this renewal.

FINANCIAL REPORT

| Income | <i>1989</i> | <i>1990</i> | <i>1991</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Appropriated by Convention | \$41,725.00 | \$30,685.00 | \$18,025.00 |
| Expenses | | | |
| Meetings | (2) \$13,533.96 | (2) \$14,679.70 | (1) \$ 4,000.00 |
| Consultants | 0 | 0 | \$ 1,000.00 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | \$ 1,060.00 |
| Totals | \$13,533.96 | \$14,679.70 | \$ 6,060.00 |

RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

Resolution #A124

Resolution on Jubilee Ministry

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That the imperative and national**
- 2 **program of Jubilee Ministry established in 1982 is hereby reaffirmed;** and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, **That this reaffirmation be reflected in its funding as an integral part of the**
- 4 **national Church program.**

Resolution #A125

Resolution on Commitment to Children

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That the Church be called upon**
- 2 **to renew this Church's commitment to God's gift of children;** and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, **That priority consideration be given to ministry with and on behalf of children**
- 4 **and youth, particularly those at risk;** and be it further
- 5 *Resolved*, **That each congregation provide an environment in which children and young**
- 6 **people, regardless of social or economic status, may be encouraged and enabled to**
- 7 **grow to the fullness of their potential.**

Resolution #A126

Resolution on Leadership Training for Mission

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That, in the spirit of Jubilee, it be**
- 2 **this Church's strategy that each congregation become an inclusive center for mission**
- 3 **and ministry;** and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, **That the Church at local, diocesan, and national levels focus training resources**
- 5 **to facilitate that goal;** and be it further
- 6 *Resolved*, **That either from among present staff or by judicious recruitment the Presiding**
- 7 **Bishop and the Executive Council no later than January 1, 1992, designate a staff ade-**
- 8 **quate to accomplish this goal;** and be it further
- 9 *Resolved*, **That there be established a churchwide initiative in the training of clergy,**
- 10 **laity, and congregations as leaders in spiritual formation for a pattern of church life**
- 11 **that links the Gospel and the Baptismal Covenant to the vision of advocacy, empower-**
- 12 **ment, and incarnation of social witness.**

Resolution #A127

Resolution on Congregations as Centers of Witness

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That each congregation be encourag-**
- 2 **ed to support engagement of social, economic, and political issues in the public and**
- 3 **private sector through individual and corporate witness to the faith as expressed in**
- 4 **the Gospel and the Baptismal Covenant;** and be it further
- 5 *Resolved*, **That the resources of the Church at the local, diocesan, and national levels**
- 6 **be focused to facilitate that goal.**

EXPLANATION

The commission is mindful of the fact that, under the principle of separation of church and state, current laws circumscribe the limits to which the Church, as a tax-exempt institution, may participate in the shaping of public policy. The intent of the

resolution is simply to *regularize* the concept that, within the limits of secular law, the response to social, economic, and political issues in the public and private sector is to be faithful to our covenant to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT TRIENNIUM

- I. To develop further the theology and strategy of Jubilee Ministry at the diocesan and parish level.

Objectives:

- a. Foster churchwide cooperation on a parish-based approach to service and advocacy, especially on behalf of children at risk.
- b. Monitor the training and leadership development programs put in place to achieve this end, with emphasis on their adequacy and the effectiveness of the results.

- II. To analyze changing economic and social trends which affect the lives of individuals and families in American society, especially children and youth, including but not limited to:

- the increasing gap of income distribution;
- the decline of available resources to serve the needs of center cities, rural areas, Native American reservations, etc.;
- the character and effectiveness of various approaches to providing social services, especially ones directed to women and children at risk;
- the globalization of the economy;
- the continuing impact of a massive military budget.

Objectives:

- a. Develop strategies for the Church's response, with consideration of making a similar process of study available to other General Convention bodies and areas of church life.
- b. Develop recommendations for parish and diocesan response.

PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE TRIENNIUM

| | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Income | | | |
| General Convention Assessment Budget | \$16,750.00 | \$18,350.00 | \$20,360.00 |
| Expenses | | | |
| Meetings | (2) \$16,000.00 | (2) \$17,600.00 | (2) \$19,360.00 |
| Consultants | <u>\$ 750.00</u> | <u>\$ 750.00</u> | <u>\$ 1,000.00</u> |
| Totals | \$16,750.00 | \$18,350.00 | \$20,360.00 |

PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR BUDGET APPROPRIATION

Resolution #A128

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, **That there be appropriated from the Assessment Budget of General Convention, the sum of \$55,460.00 for the triennium for the expenses of the Standing Commission on the Church in Metropolitan Areas.**

APPENDIX: BACKGROUND REPORT

Introduction

The history of the Standing Commission on the Church in Metropolitan Areas has been described earlier in this report. This appendix is a more detailed account of our analysis of the background which has led us to present the four resolutions we are submitting.

The commission was established to “develop recommendations and strategies which will be of concrete assistance to the Church in metropolitan areas in shaping new patterns of mission and ministry.”

What is the context, eighteen years after the creation of the commission, in which this report is written? In a word, the problems facing urban areas are familiar, more entrenched, complex, seemingly intractable: housing, drugs, education, day care, health, hopelessness, segregation of the poor, homelessness, crime, the growing disparity between rich and poor. Throughout America upwards of 20% of all children grow up in poverty. In urban centers, on Native American reservations, in pockets of rural America, those numbers reach staggering proportions. Today we face the realities of an economic recession, an upsurge of racism, the impact of war in the Persian Gulf and a disproportionate percentage of the minority population serving on the front lines. At home the disintegration of communities and family life continues with inevitable cutbacks at federal, state, and municipal levels in resources to alleviate human need. As the world economy links nations ever more closely, it is clear that the struggle to overcome the problems of hunger, homelessness, and despair must be viewed in a global way; what happens in Houston or Scranton or Miami is intimately linked to places as remote as Korea, Iraq, Nigeria or Brazil.

Within the United States, solutions to urban problems have in the past been fragmentary, with government, corporations, non-governmental agencies and organizations, and the churches working independently, without much collaboration, to provide programmatic solutions. Existing models of response no longer work; the problems are too complex and interrelated. The Church may point with gratitude towards its congregations and members who respond with compassion to relieve the suffering of those who are victims of these forces, and to those efforts of advocacy with and for poor people that seek to relieve the impact of the most oppressive conditions.

Nevertheless, the point of departure for this report must be that:

- as a nation, we are in severe crisis;
- as a Church, we are a marginal actor or partner in the fashioning of solutions;
- at all levels, programs which seek to meet human needs without addressing their causes perpetuate dependency.

Analyses of the urban crisis abound. We do not propose to write yet one more of them. People in all age groups within our society face serious issues. Yet a significant trend may be noted during the past twenty years. The economic circumstances of the older generation have improved. By contrast, the plight of the young has grown steadily more serious. Consider the following points.

1. Because of demographic changes, America faces a future in which children and young workers will be a shrinking share of the population. In the year 2000 there will be 4.1 million fewer Americans in the young adult age group (18 to 24) entering the work force than there were in the mid-1980's, a decline of 14 percent.

2. A growing share of this shrinking work force will be minority. In the year 2000 nearly one-third of the nation's 18- to 24-year-olds will be from minority groups, compared with less than one-quarter in 1985.
3. While we will need every individual in this shrinking future work force to be a productive worker, we are subverting the attainment of that goal by consigning a growing number of children to poverty. Between 1979 and 1988 the proportion of American children living in poverty grew by 23 percent. One in five American children lives in poverty. If recent trends continue, by the year 2000 one in four will be living in poverty.
4. American children's health and development is threatened as well by lack of health insurance and lack of access to health care. More than 12 million children and more than 14 million women of childbearing age have no health insurance.
5. The lack of access to health care is reflected in the worsening or stagnation during the 1980s of many key health indicators. After many years of substantial progress, our nation's improvement in the rates of early prenatal care, low birth-weight births, and infant mortality has slowed down dramatically or stopped. Immunization rates actually have declined. The United States has slipped to nineteenth in the world in preventing infant deaths, behind such nations as Spain, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Singapore.
6. The earnings of men younger than 30 have dropped sharply since 1973. When young men make very low wages, young couples are far less likely to get married. Since 1973, young men's marriage rates have declined by one-third, and the proportion of births that were out of wedlock doubled. As young workers' earnings declined and more single-parent families developed, median incomes for young families with children dropped by 24 percent from 1973 to 1987, even though many more women entered the work force. Just 29 percent of American children now live in "traditional" families in which fathers work for wages and mothers care for children at home.
7. One-half of preschool-age children today have mothers employed outside the home. By the year 2000 that figure will rise to nearly seven in ten. But our nation barely has begun to adapt to the dramatically expanding need for safe, accessible, affordable child care. Head Start serves fewer than one in six eligible children, and the other longstanding source of direct child care assistance for poor families, Title XX, in 1981 lost its direction that states have quality standards. Title XX also has withered in scope over the past dozen years (it now is funded at levels less than half those of 1977, adjusted for inflation), while the number of preschool children in poverty soared.
8. Our schools are failing. Many of them, and especially those serving poor and minority children, are simply not good enough to prepare our children for the demands of the twenty-first century. One-half million children drop out of school in the United States each year. Poor teenagers are three times more likely than other teens to drop out and are four times more likely to have below-average basic skills.
9. Between 1979 and 1986 there was a 66 percent increase in the reported number of cases in which children were endangered by abuse or neglect. In 1986 2.2 million children were reported abused or neglected, or both.

10. The fastest growing segment of the homeless population in America is families with children. Every night an estimated 100,000 children go to sleep homeless. The National Conference of Mayors reports that one in four homeless people in their cities is a child.
11. The U.S. teen pregnancy rate is twice as high as that of other industrialized countries. Two in every five American girls get pregnant and one in every five American girls bears a child before the age of 20. The vast majority aren't married. Much of this has to do with poverty and lack of achievement: regardless of race, teens with below-average academic skills and from poor families are about five to seven times more likely to be parents than are teens with solid skills and from nonpoor families.
12. As families with children have struggled against this rising tide of poverty, out-of-wedlock births, single parenthood, lack of health insurance, homelessness and bad housing, lack of quality child care, and inadequate schools, many sources of public help, especially at the national level, have shrunk. Low-income housing assistance is down 76 percent (adjusted for inflation) since 1980; federal help for elementary and secondary education is down 22.4 percent from 1979; the AFDC grant for subsistence in a median state has fallen by 37 percent since 1970; and the main federal program to place doctors in underserved areas of the country has lost more than 90 percent of its doctors.

Source: *Children 1990*, The Children's Defense Fund

We are a nation and a people adrift. Not willing or unable to take the steps to reverse this crisis, we risk the lives of our children as they face competition in the global economy of the future. By consigning more than 20% of them to a childhood shaped by poverty, we multiply the future costs of the medical, social and criminal justice systems. The tension between private gain and the public good makes center cities increasingly isolated, dysfunctional, and racially segregated enclaves. We lack a national vision and the will to implement it.

A severe crisis of funding for social programs tests not only the national political fiber. It also strikes at the heart of the Church as a community of religious belief and moral character. Undoubtedly the Church as institution can and must provide a variety of resources for responding to human need: direct social services (feeding programs, shelter, counselling, AA meetings, etc.), a community base for educational and political advocacy, financial support for new initiatives. But these contributions, even on an enhanced basis, can make no more than a marginal dent in the crisis. They do not represent the Church's unique and distinctive gift, its Gospel life.

Given these facts, we believe it is time for the Church through its leadership to proclaim once again *A Time of Jubilee*. The message of both Hebrew and Christian scriptures is that God intends the transformation of the world, the announcement of a new creation, the promise of a new Jerusalem. True to that faith, followers of the Christ in our society cannot condone what is happening to the most vulnerable members of society, the children and others at risk in our cities and countryside. The heart of Christian belief is that Jesus the Incarnate Lord is our mediator and advocate.

"Mediation" means *standing between*, in this instance, between those who are victims of a cycle of disadvantage and the forces which consign them to the prospects of a crippled life. "Advocacy" in contemporary usage is most often synonymous with political or social activism. "Advocacy" in the biblical sense is the heart of prayer, the holding

up before God of God's people and God's world. It is also a description of the Incarnation, Jesus being with us and for us, whether in his flesh or through the community of his body in this world. It is inconceivable from the perspective of biblical faith to separate prayer and advocacy as active witness. To separate them is to understand neither.

The first great missionary success of the Christian Church was in the urban world of the early Christian era. As Wayne Meeks has put it (*The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*):

Those odd little groups in a dozen or so cities of the Roman East were engaged, though they would not have put it quite this way, in constructing a new world. In time, more time than they thought was left, their ideas, their images of God, their ways of organizing life, their rituals, would become part of a massive transformation, in ways they could not have foreseen, of the culture of the Mediterranean basin. (p. 192)

Their congregations bridged social classes, brought new care for prisoners, the sick, the dead and dying. The *koinonia* of Eucharist and agape meal broke through the ennui, detachment and social distance of Roman cities. The Gospel vision was one of hope and transformation in this life, the dignity of every person in the mind of God, the transfiguring new life in Christ Jesus, and the empowering Spirit met in Sacrament, prayer, and the proclamation of the Word. They did not set out to *influence* their society; they *were a new community* the character of whose life subtly but drastically changed their society.

It is ironic that the Church grew as a transforming community in the midst of an urban culture. As far back as the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the observation was made that, in the 20th century, the areas in which Christianity has made the least impact have been the worlds of Islam, Buddhism and the culture of modern cities. We believe this need not be.

The Gospel is replete with images of human society for which post-industrial urban society cries out:

- inclusive community that values each person;
- the interdependence of all creation;
- health, wholeness, holiness, as what contributes to the well-being of individuals in community;
- the worth of each person born into the world, including especially a priority for the care of children and others who are vulnerable;
- hospitality, compassion, shalom, for the stranger within and the stranger without;
- the nature of *koinonia* as active love, brought into being by a God whose Trinitarian nature is itself dynamic and active love.

We believe that the model of Jubilee centers lifted up in 1982 needs to be a central part of the Church's approach to the Decade of Evangelism. The local church—every diocese and its congregations—is called to give voice and expression to a vision of inclusive community, one in which its members reach out to declare and to make real the proclamation of transformation of persons and of communities. Our call is not for more Jubilee Centers. *It is that every parish be a center of Jubilee.*

What would it be like if congregations and dioceses truly came to be and be seen as places of vision that provided leadership and moral discourse for their members, holding up the images and behavior necessary to fashion the common good? Racism and sexism are plagues which poison our human interactions and decisions. So do any number of

other behaviors by which power is protected or boundaries drawn to keep out the "other" in ways that limit or dehumanize them. What is needed, and this seems hardest for us to achieve, is the formation of truly inclusive communities.

Such communities would be accepting, places where people are able to name their hopes and fears and be freed to claim responsibility for them, rather than projecting them on others.

Such communities would be open, marked by compassion for the stranger and resistant to those forces world-wide which maintain or even reinstitute tribalisms of culture, race, national origin, and religious fundamentalism.

Such communities would be transforming, affirming the interdependence of all living things, open to their own conversion through God's gift of Jesus Christ.

In one of the cities which the commission visited during the triennium, a leader of the corporate community asked, with some poignancy, where are the religious leaders of the community today in the fight against social injustice, crime, poverty and the like. "I'm not talking about the useful human services their institutions provide to alleviate suffering. I'm talking about joining others to lead the conscience of the community into effective action."

Of all the programs visited by the commission during the past three years, one stood out: Grace Hill Neighborhood Services in St. Louis, Missouri. Grace Hill was historically a church-sponsored settlement house, established in 1903. Today it is a multi-purpose agency offering housing, child care, health services, child development and family support services, and services for the homeless.

What is Special About Grace Hill? The spirit of Grace Hill is self-help, "neighbors helping neighbors." A Member Organized Resource Exchange (MORE) has developed a wide range of "people helping people" services, providing a linkage of people with resources (both money and time) with people who need help. Senior citizens help young people; young people help seniors. A sense of community abounds. People are proud of their work. A Neighborhood College has developed with neighbors participating in course approval and evaluations. Career centers help those who need employment and readiness training. Literacy training is provided. Young families and new parents receive parenting training. Youth forums, assemblies and social events help to bring everyone together.

What is Different About Grace Hill? There are programs like Grace Hill in every community in America, but in most communities the programs are providing *services to people*. At Grace Hill people are being helped to help themselves. The Hebrew philosopher Maimonides maintained centuries ago, "There are many kinds of charity, but the highest is helping people help themselves and the lowest is when the receiver knows the giver and the gift does nothing to help the receiver help himself."

An odd thing happened when the commission went to Grace Hill. The Center had been informed of the commission's visit and had planned an orientation; each of the presenters was to be a professional staff person. The Executive Director, noting that schedule, called ahead to ask that community members conduct the orientation. They did, in all but a couple of instances. Combined with their enthusiasm was a level of confidence which the commission found just shy of amazing.

Grace Hill still shows the outward signs of a poor community. But it is one that is special and different from others like it around the country. People have

been invited to see a bright future and given resources to take their own first steps into it. Their children will have opportunities. If the Church could be part of doing this well everywhere, we would indeed be doing well.

What will it take?

* * * * *

Dioceses and parishes can be structures for transformation of the world beyond them to the degree that their members move from experiencing themselves as victims to being active agents of God's love and their own well-being. The call of the Decade of Evangelism is not solely a matter of asking *who* is to be evangelized; rather it is to reflect deeply on those strengths of the Church in ways in which the Gospel has been a powerful means of transformation of individual lives and of whole cultures. The call is for conversion. From the perspective of this report, the question is "Conversion to what?"

A VISION, A STRATEGY, AND A PARADIGM

Our Vision: That during the Decade of Evangelism the Episcopal Church will discover itself in fresh ways as a community of personal and communal formation, and that dioceses will take the lead with their parishes to become centers of moral discourse and passionate concern for the most vulnerable members of our society. Let the Episcopal Church be known as one which works for a society in which every child a woman conceives is wanted and in which every child born has someone to love and nurture it.

In less than a decade, the Episcopal Church has made a distinguished response to the AIDS epidemic. "Our Church Has AIDS!" has been a challenge to churches in all kinds of communities. Let the 1991 General Convention mandate be that in the Decade of Evangelism we will commit ourselves to the following:

—A *churchwide* effort on behalf of all children, that they may grow up as whole and healthy children of God contributing to society;

—Churchwide *local* efforts to insure that unprotected and vulnerable people are adequately cared for;

—A *national* church initiative in response to the crisis posed by drugs, including the abusive use of beverage alcohol.

Such a commitment puts flesh on the Presiding Bishop's call to be a church that knows no outcasts. But there is a difference: most of those we will seek to serve are not at the present time part of our household. Let our watchword be:

Our Church Cares
—for all children
—for all at risk
—for the poor

Our Strategy: During the 1950s and early '60s, the Episcopal Church embarked on a major application in its life of the insights of human relations training. The effort had a transforming effect on many parishes and countless individuals. At the same time, there was a new focus on Christian education, including the energy prompted by a church-wide emphasis on children. The outcome was a spurt of membership growth among families with children, particularly in the suburbs.

The present crisis in American society calls for an equally disciplined effort to transform the character of local, diocesan, and national church life. Only this time, the

challenge is to move beyond ourselves, beyond congregations which for the most part mirror only one segment of society—racially, culturally, and with respect to family situations. Our focus must be external as well as internal, avoiding self-absorption and internal issues which increases our isolation as a community participant. The communal culture within the body of the Church must be helped to shift in the direction of conflict resolution rather than avoidance. We must get in the habit of developing our own programs and social agenda in concert with those other institutions who might become our partners. We must be willing to persevere in the achievement of long-term agendas. We must resist substituting rhetoric for action.

To bring about a transformation, we suggest the following elements of strategy:

—A *churchwide* initiative in the training of clergy and parishes as leaders in spiritual formation for a pattern of church life which expresses our vision of the Gospel. We ask the Presiding Bishop and Executive Council to focus the training resources of the national Church on clergy and lay leadership development for that effort.

—Diocesan efforts to lead and assist every *parish* to be a center engaged in hands-on service of human need, especially to children and women, the vulnerable, and drug abusers.

—Resources of the national Church and dioceses to lead the development of appropriate involvements linking these local actions to public policy (the AIDS initiative offers a recent example of how such linkage can be effective).

—An important component of this strategy grows out of the recognition that the Church is already significantly involved in community issues through its lay persons. A major effort must be made to develop training for clergy and parish leaders in ways by which parishes become centers that assist their members to identify and strengthen their witness as Christians.

A Paradigm for Consideration: What is offered here is *not* just another social action proposal. It is a way of understanding the nature and purpose of local church life and of organizing it for the spiritual and communal formation of its members and as a center of planning and action for their life. What drives it is a view of the Good News as summoning believers to a way of life which the world around us recognizes to be different in its commitment to inclusivity and its passion for the outsider (and for the insider whose alienation may be just as real).

At every level of its life, the Church calls persons through faith to move away from a victim mentality to one which shares the transforming power of God's love in parishes, community, and society. The issue of drugs, and the devastation of the lives of children and young people, are not solely problems of economically disadvantaged communities. Every crossroad schoolhouse, every small town and suburb is caught in crisis. Our children are at risk. We need ways to help people claim their neighborhoods, towns, and cities. The Decade of Evangelism is a call to reclaim the power of the local Christian community to be a center of hope and the transformation of lives, an inclusive community of care and support that can override the deadly burnout and depression which is a hallmark of far too many congregations.

The 1988 General Convention called into being a mission development project. Every unit of the Church was thereby summoned to explore its life in light of the Gospel mandate. This report is a plea for that mandate to be seen—in the terms of Hebrew scripture—as a call to Jubilee, and—in terms of the Gospel—a call to transformation, Transfiguration.

A church which takes seriously the grim facts of the cycle of disadvantage to which the young are being condemned in this society must drink deeply at the well of Holy Scripture if we are to be empowered for that ministry.

The following diagram seeks to sketch the process to which this vocation calls us.

