

Supplemental Report

The Presiding Bishop's Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations

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A. MEMBERSHIP

The Rt. Rev. John H. Burt, chairperson, Bishop of Ohio (ret.)

The Rev. Dr. James A. Carpenter, General Theological Seminary, New York City

The Rev. Vesta Kowalski, St. Luke's-in-the-Field, New York City

*The Rt. Rev. C. Shannon Mallory, Bishop of El Camino Real

The Rev. Robert P. Patterson, Church of the Redeemer, Baltimore, Maryland

The Reverend Dr. Paul van Buren, Religion Department, Temple University, retired
Mrs. Jane Wolfe, Little Rock, Arkansas

Ms. Nancy Lown Young, National Conference of Christians and Jews, New
Brunswick, New Jersey

**The Rev. Canon Harold G. Hultgren, Los Angeles, representing the Episcopal
Diocesan Ecumenical Officers

*In 1990, the Rt. Rev. Andrew Wissemann of Western Massachusetts replaced Bishop Mallory on the
Committee.

**In 1989, Mrs. Midge Roof of Indianapolis replaced Father Hultgren as representative from EDEO.

B. PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Presiding Bishop's Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations (formerly called the Presiding Bishop's Advisory Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations) was established originally by Presiding Bishop John E. Hines early in the 1970s. Mrs. Theodore O. (Cynthia) Wedel was named the initial chairperson, serving, with great distinction until her death in 1985.

In the fall of 1986, Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, following the tradition of his two predecessors in that office, reconstituted the committee. To succeed the late Cynthia Wedel as chairperson, Bishop Browning named the Retired Bishop of Ohio, John H. Burt. Dr. Christopher Agnew, Associate Ecumenical Officer for the Episcopal Church, serves as staff aid to the committee.

The principal purpose of the committee since its founding has been "to maintain an overview of the wide field of relationships between Anglicans and Jews in the United States and around the world. The committee will not develop programs, but will report

activities that have been effective and are worth attempting in other places." To that statement, the committee has added its intent to provide "a liaison between the Presiding Bishop and the five national Jewish organizations with offices or departments of religious affairs." During the 1988-91 triennium the committee reaffirmed its "primary tasks" in pursuit of this purpose to be nine in number:

1. To offer advice and counsel to the Presiding Bishop (and through him to the Church at large) on issues affecting Christian-Jewish relationships.

2. To cultivate personal relationships between leaders of this Church and leaders in the Jewish community that will enable the discussion of current, and sometimes stressful, issues in an atmosphere of theological candor and truth.

3. To encourage Christian-Jewish dialogue on diocesan and local levels, in cooperation with the Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (EDEO).

4. To disseminate news and the experience of local Christian-Jewish activities for the benefit of other localities. To make available materials that have been produced locally to assist other communities to develop Christian-Jewish initiatives.

5. To report triennially to the General Convention concerning its activities (including the authoring of proposed resolutions) in order to raise the consciousness of the whole Church to the theological issues inherent in a religiously pluralistic world with particular reference to Christian-Jewish relationships.

6. To advise program groups in the Episcopal Church, especially in the fields of Christian education and evangelism, on the implications in their materials and programs for Christian-Jewish relationships.

7. To encourage education and training in Christian-Jewish dialogue at the various seminaries, working in cooperation with the Center for Jewish-Christian Studies and Relations at the General Theological Seminary.

8. To distribute the 1988 General Convention Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations.

9. To cooperate with, and support the work of, the National Council of Churches' Office on Christian-Jewish Relations and the World Council of Churches' Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People; and to maintain liaison with the Office for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The committee has long been aware that, because of its small membership (limited to eight) and budgetary restrictions on meetings (limited to two annually), there is a need to increase its effectiveness through the help of a larger group of Advisory Consultants named from among those across the nation interested in this activity.

C. SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

The committee has held one special and six regular meetings in the triennium just past.

Promoting Dialogue at the National Level

a. A major effort by the committee during this triennium has been to effect the publication of and distribution of its "Guidelines for Christian Jewish Relations" as formally adopted by action of the 1988 General Convention meeting in Detroit. In early 1989, at our urging, the Forward Movement did just this in a small booklet which also

contained a Foreword authored by the Rev. Dr. William Weiler, former member of the committee. The adoption of these Guidelines proved to be among the major news stories emanating from the Detroit Convention and were affirmed in several articles published in the New York *Times* and other newspapers across the land. The Guidelines are presently listed in the Forward Movement's regular catalogue.

b. The committee also promoted Episcopal attendance at the two National Workshops on Christian-Jewish Relations which were held during the triennium. About 100 members of our Church were present for the 1989 Workshop in Charleston, South Carolina, and about 82 for the November 1990 Workshop in Chicago. At the latter both Advisory Consultant Philip Cublertson and committee chairperson John Burt made major presentations. Corporate Communion services and caucus gatherings for Episcopalians were held at both conferences. At both, also, the local Episcopal diocese was a major "sponsoring body."

c. During the past triennium, the committee maintained and deepened its relationships with the national offices and leadership of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Synagogue Council of America, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Representatives of each of those bodies were official guests of the Presiding Bishop at the 1988 Detroit Convention and were presented to both Houses by our chairperson, who earlier had presided over a luncheon in their honor. Moreover, in the fall of 1989 the committee facilitated a full morning of discussion between representatives of these same five organizations and the Presiding Bishop, together with certain members of his staff, on the question, "Implications for Christian-Jewish Relations in the United States of the Crisis in the Middle East." Following this discussion, Bishop and Mrs. Browning hosted a luncheon for all conferees in their apartment at the Church Center.

d. In further attempts at Middle East understanding, in July of 1990 in Garden City, Long Island, the committee had a "Day of Dialogue" over Middle East matters with Episcopal Church Center staff persons who bear responsibilities for Public Affairs, World Mission and Communication.

e. In other activities with national implications, the committee opened conversations with the Standing Liturgical Commission over certain readings with anti-semitic overtones in the present Prayer Book Lectionary, expressed its continuing displeasure at anti-Jewish interpretations in the way Matthew 27:25 ("the blood curse") gets dramatized in the Oberammergau Passion Play; and established deeper ties with the Anglican Church of Canada's work with their Jewish community.

Promoting Dialogue at the Local Level

Our close alliance with the network of the Episcopal Ecumenical Officers (EDEO) is our principal channel for stimulating local dialogue—along with the assistance of our 36 Advisory Consultants. In addition, we seek to give special encouragement to unusual local programs and seek to promote them as models for use elsewhere. "The Abrahamic Accord" in the Diocese of Rhode Island, under the leadership of the Rev. Daniel Burke, is one such model. Its conferences on "Conversion and Community" dealing with Interfaith Marriage, and on "Theological Self-Identity and a Theology of the Other" were notable. A November 1990 Philadelphia Conference on "Captive and Free: Lessons of the Holocaust," a March 1991 Stockton State College (California) 21st Annual Scholars

Conference on the Holocaust, and the forthcoming October 1991 Midwest Conference on "Jewish-Christian Reflections on Change and Continuity" are illustrative of what is happening locally all over the nation. Nor should we fail to mention programs in our seminaries, led by the General Seminary's Center for Christian-Jewish Studies and Relationships under Professor James Carpenter, the visit of Hans Ucko to Nashotah House and Philip Culbertson's work at Sewanee. Among the various diocesan programs, the work and witness of the Diocese of New York on Interfaith Marriage is outstanding. The Dioceses of both Minnesota and Newark have hammered out their own Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Dialogue.

Another notable outreach to the local level was the publication of the February-April 1990 *Forward Day-by-Day* devotional booklet, which emphasized insights that regularly come to us in the Christian-Jewish dialogue. Three Episcopalians associated with our committee work were among the authors.

The Decade of Evangelism and Its Implications for Non-Christian Religions

A major concern of the committee during the triennium, as the Episcopal Church (along with other major Christian bodies) prepared for "A Decade of Evangelism," has been the implications for non-Christians, including the Jews, in this major new effort "to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such ways that persons may be led to him as Savior and follow him as Lord within the fellowship of the Church."

So often in the past, the style in which Christians have evangelized has involved methods that abused non-Christians. Unfair intimidation, cruelty and even terror have been employed. With respect to special attempts to convert Jews to Christ, there are today differing viewpoints among Christians, even in our own Church. Some feel a special mission to the Jews is obligatory and is for the Jews' own salvation. Many holding this view believe that Jesus Christ as Messiah has superseded the promises of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, it is would appear that God's eventual intent may be that Jews as Jews should disappear. Others, especially those with a biblically literalist turn of mind, believe the conversion of the Jews to be an eschatological event still to come which will climax the history of the world. Some such people see the emergence of the political State of Israel as foreordained by biblical promise, to be a sign that the eschaton and the Second Coming of Christ may be at hand. Still others, probably a majority in our Church, would simply include any individual Jews who so wish in the one Christian invitation that is extended to all non-Christians. Most with this view would argue that God does not break his promises and, thus, is still faithful to his Sinai covenant with the Jews, despite his subsequent revelation in Jesus Christ.

Early in this triennium members of our committee spent a day with representatives of CMJ/USA (formerly Christian Mission to the Jews and now A Christian Ministry Among the Jewish People) to discuss our varying views about evangelism and Judaism. Though we grew in mutual understanding we did not reach a full meeting of minds.

Subsequent to this, our committee undertook consultations with the Standing Commission on Evangelism on this same subject. We found ourselves grateful that our Anglican tradition, in its more enlightened moments, has been particularly respectful of God's truth as it exists outside of the Church, yet without compromising our devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. On the basis of such gratitude, we have been able to act jointly with that Evangelism Commission in proposing a resolution for the forthcoming General Convention on this matter. The words of the resolution and the "Explanation" for it are to be found in the later pages of this report.

The Present State of Christian-Jewish Relations

During the last twenty-five years, remarkable progress in the relationship between Christians and Jews has occurred. A recent milestone was a December 6, 1990, meeting in Rome when Pope John Paul II officially set forth his Church's admission that God's covenant with the Jewish people is permanent—that it was not superseded by the emergence of Christianity.

Many factors have contributed to this evolution but four of them stand out:

First, a new spirit of openness and mutual respect has allowed Christians and Jews to speak not just words of introduction to one another but also words of deep and abiding meaning. The increasingly pluralistic expression of religion in the United States fosters a particularly conducive environment for those in each religious tradition to meet each other as equals.

Second, both Jewish and Christian leaders care deeply for the state of human affairs in this land that has protected liberties and allowed the celebration of religious differences. Christian and Jewish leaders find themselves working side by side on such issues as racism, the challenge of poverty, sexism, concern for the environment and the preservation of civil liberties.

Third, there is a virtual revolution taking place theologically in current Christian biblical studies which some call "the rejudaization of Jesus." Without any Christian diminution in their affirmation of Christ's uniqueness as God's instrument of special revelation, his Jewish lineage and its effect on our understanding of him are being explored and honored in fresh ways.

Fourth, the historic complicity of Christians in the scourge of anti-semitism over 18 centuries, culminating in Adolph Hitler's "final solution," is increasingly being acknowledged by people in the churches. Liturgical remembrances of *Kristallnacht* and, in educational curricula, Holocaust studies grow in number. During this past triennium both our chairperson, John Burt, and our Associate Ecumenical Officer, Christopher Agnew, have been named to the Church Relations Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council which, among other things, is erecting a \$151 million Museum of the Holocaust just off the Mall in Washington, D.C.

There are, of course, some serious areas of divergence in Christian-Jewish relations. One which currently causes great pain to most Jews and puts real strain on our current interreligious efforts in dialogue involves developments in the Middle East and criticism of Israel by many American Christians.

The Incidence of Anti-Semitism

We continue to report with relief that, generally speaking, anti-semitism among most of the population remains at a low ebb in America. By encouraging pluralism and combating bigotry in the workplace, community life, schools and religious institutions, Jewish organizations with Christian help have managed to relegate religious and ethnic extremism to the American periphery. At the same time, there has been, year by year during the past triennium, an ominous and steady growth in crimes of hate against both American Arabs and American Jews, reaching record levels in 1990. According to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, a nationwide survey of incidents against Jews rose to 1685 in the year just past. Particularly troubling is the increase of bias-related incidents on college campuses, the environment above all others traditionally devoted to respect for diverse ideas, people and cultures. The audit reports that there were 927 incidents of anti-Jewish vandalism and 758 acts of harassment, threats or assaults against Jews and Jewish institutions, up by 18% over 1989 which had reported a 12% increase over

1988. The report also notes a decrease in one category: anti-semitic attacks by neo-Nazi skinheads which declined 27%, apparently attributable to more aggressive law-enforcement efforts. In explaining the reason for the record level of anti-semitic acts, the report cites "a coarsening of public expression and popular culture," combined with anti-Israel attitudes by some Americans and a deteriorating economy, which has traditionally heightened social frictions.

D. FINANCES

Until 1991, the committee had never had an official budget, its expenses consisting only of money needed for travel to two meetings annually plus modest duplicating and mailing costs. Beginning in this current year, a small item to cover these matters is now in the Program Budget of Executive Council. Occasional contributions by the Presiding Bishop from his discretionary funds have supplemented these monies when needed.

E. PROPOSED RESOLUTION (See Resolution #A060)

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, during this Decade of Evangelism, reaffirms its commitment to the fullness and uniqueness of God's self-revelation to humankind in Jesus Christ, while recognizing that the gospel in a pluralistic society also reminds us to be aware of the significance of God's self-revelation outside the Church; and be it further

Resolved, That even as we seek new opportunities to share our Christian faith with those who do not know Christ, we also affirm our willingness to cherish continuing opportunities to learn more of God from those whose perception of God's mystery differs from our own.

EXPLANATION

The General Convention of this Church has declared that the 1990s will be a Decade of Evangelism, calling upon the whole membership of our Church to dedicate itself to "the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such ways that persons may be led to him as Savior and follow him as Lord within the fellowship of his Church."

Our Anglican tradition has always been particularly respectful of God's truth as it exists outside of Christianity, yet without compromising our devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The Standing Commission on Evangelism and the Presiding Bishop's Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations have, during this past triennium, undertaken together a discussion of the person and work of Jesus Christ within a pluralistic society and jointly recommend the passage of the resolution above.

F. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMING TRIENNIUM

1. To further the implementation, as appropriate, of each of the nine "primary tasks" of the committee, as listed earlier in the "Statement of Purpose" section of this report.
2. To work with Executive Council, through its Committee on Partnerships, to find an improved way of working with non-Christian religions while affirming the special relationship which we believe links Christian faith with Judaism.
3. To press for more adequate treatment of Judaism (both in its historic and contemporary expressions) in the curricula of our seminaries.

THE BLUE BOOK

4. To continue surveying the present level and extent of Christian-Jewish dialogue and relationships both in local and diocesan programming.
5. To work closely with the Church Center's Middle East Working Group with special responsibility to interpret the Jewish point of view.
6. To press for the inclusion of *Yom haShoah* and *Kristallnacht* on the Church calendar.
7. To work with ecumenical commissions in the Dioceses of New York, Newark and other appropriate places toward the promulgation of a national set of guidelines on inter-faith marriages.
8. To work toward removing the doctrine of supersessionism from the canon, eucharistic liturgy, reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, prayers of the people and the lectionary.

Filed with the Secretary of General Convention
John E. Burt