

## Standing Commission on Human Affairs

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#### A. MEMBERSHIP

The Rt. Rev. Frederick Borsch, Diocese of Los Angeles (1994)  
The Rt. Rev. Edward L. Salmon, Jr., *Vice-Chair*, Diocese of South Carolina (1997)  
The Rev. Reynolds S. Cheney II, Diocese of West Tennessee (1997)  
The Rev. Gay C. Jennings, *Secretary*, Diocese of Ohio  
Dr. Howard R. Anderson, *Chair*, Diocese of Minnesota (1994) resigned, replaced by  
    Ms. Dawn Conley, Diocese of Chicago (1994)  
Mr. Bruce Garner, Diocese of Atlanta (1997)  
Dr. Germaine A. Hoston, Diocese of Maryland (1997)  
Mr. Mel Matteson, Diocese of Olympia (1994)

In addition, the Hon. George T. Shields served as our liaison with the Executive Council, and Ms. Diane M. Porter was our liaison with the staff of the Church Center. The Rev. Dr. Sheryl Kujawa also assisted the Commission in its work with the matters of children and youth at risk. Upon the ordination of Dr. Howard R. Anderson in 1993, he resigned as chair of the Commission and served as consultant to the commission for the remainder of the triennium.

Representatives of the Commission at General Convention:

The Rt. Rev. Frederick Borsch, House of Bishops, is authorized by the Commission to receive non-substantive amendments to the report.

The Rev. Gay C. Jennings, (Ohio), House of Deputies, is authorized by the Commission to receive non-substantive amendments to the report.

#### B. SUMMARY OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

The Commission met six times during the triennium, once in Minneapolis, Minnesota, twice in Charleston, South Carolina, once in Los Angeles, once in Memphis, Tennessee, and once in Delray Beach, Florida.

In the course of the Commission's work, a wide variety of people spoke to the Commission regarding their work and ministry with and on behalf of children and youth at

risk. The Commission met with gang members and leaders, former gang members, and those who work with them. A representative of the Commission attended the National Gang Summit held in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1993. The Commission also visited programs serving rural and urban youth and collected models of effective parish-based youth ministry which we hope to share with the wider Church through the Office of Youth Ministry. Both those who spoke to the Commission at its meeting along with site visits to a variety of programs encouraged the Commission as to the quality of ministry.

Three members of the Commission attended the Integrity National Convention held in Houston, Texas, in 1992. A hearing was held to gather information concerning the status of participation of gay and lesbian people as baptized members of the Episcopal Church. A representative from the Commission attended the National Episcopal Youth Event in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1993.

### **C. FINANCIAL REPORT**

	1992	1993	1994
Income appropriated by			
General Convention	\$17,000	\$19,500	\$14,000
Expenses	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Est.)
Commission Meetings	12,145	19,484	10,500
Consultant Expenses	881	853	2,500
Subcommittee Meetings	2,098	400	0
Administrative	0	0	1,000
TOTALS	\$15,124	\$20,737	\$14,000

### **D. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION WITH RESOLUTIONS**

#### *The Promises*

"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" *I will, with God's help.* "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?" *I will, with God's help.*

These two promises from the Baptismal Covenant are at the heart of the work of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs. In response to God's gracious and boundless love for us, we have promised to live lives of respect for and service to others. Those two promises would be difficult enough to fulfill if they required respect and dignity for people merely like ourselves; but in fact, they require it toward *all* persons.

During the last triennium, this Standing Commission on Human Affairs has struggled with the Episcopal Church's continuing failure to live up to those promises—a struggle we want to share with the Church in this report. To be sure, no individual and no institution can perfectly fulfill God's purposes for them; and yet, we have become convinced that there are two glaring examples of our inability to do so. At best, they are the result of inattention and blindness; at worst, they are examples of our prejudice and misplaced priorities which allow us to "write off" certain fellow human beings in our midst. In either case, it is time to

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acknowledge our sin and to recommit ourselves to the respect and service we pledge in the Baptismal Covenant.

### *The Focus*

During the 1992-1994 Triennium, this Standing Commission on Human Affairs has focused on two groups of people who desperately need—but are not receiving—the attention, respect, resources and loving concern of this Church. One group is as near as our own families; the other is nearer than most of us probably realize. The first is as valued as "motherhood and apple pie"—at least in theory; the second is often hated and feared. The first runs the risk of losing our attention; the second is often the victim of scapegoating and the target of our anger and derision. Both have been marginalized.

The first are our children—*all* of our children, and particularly those at risk. The second are our sisters and brothers in Christ who find themselves—among other things—to be lesbian and gay.

### *The Audience*

To whom is this report addressed? Beyond the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops at this 1994 General Convention, we hope to address ourselves, the membership of the Episcopal Church. It is all too easy to point out the splinter in the eyes of others, while missing the planks in our own eyes. And so we will attempt to set our own house and priorities in order and to address ourselves, as members of the Episcopal Church, about the needs of children—those within the Church, and those beyond it, as well as addressing ourselves as Christian citizens to the need for full civil and human rights for lesbians and gay men.

### *The Goals*

In our report on children and youth at risk, we hope to summarize the many circumstances which make the world a risky place for our young people. Then we will look at the Episcopal Church's response to its own members who are children and youth, and describe what might be a working theology for effective children's and youth ministry. Next, we will offer some ideas for how the Church might find its ministry in response to its own young people and those in the surrounding communities, offering some examples of what might be done in the name of Christ.

In our report on civil and human rights for gay men and lesbians, we will contrast the theory and the reality of the Church's relationships with its lesbian and gay members. We will raise some questions which trouble us about our actions (and inactions) as Episcopalians and as Christian citizens with respect to lesbian and gay people.

### *The Question*

Finally, we hope to leave the General Convention and the members of this Church with one important question: Does baptism confer full membership in the Body of Christ or not?

"An Outline of the Faith commonly called the Catechism" says that "Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God." Indeed, each newly baptized member is greeted by the full congregation with: "We receive you into the household of

God...share with us in his eternal priesthood." The troubling question with which this report deals is whether or not the Body of Christ has first and second class membership.

### **Part I-A: Children and Youth at Risk**

#### *Whose kids are these, anyway?*

As we begin to talk about the children and young people in our churches and beyond, it is important that we define who they are, and ask to whom they belong.

In most church discussions and for the purposes of this report, "children" denotes children in the 6th grade and younger, while "youth" or "young people" denotes those in the 7th-12th grade age group. However, most secular institutions (e.g., the Children's Defense Fund) use the legal definition of "children" as all those under 18 years of age. This report will often use the collective noun "kids" to refer to all our children and young people. Though "kids" is sometimes used in a derogatory or discounting way, we hope to reclaim it as a term of affection and respect.

So, whose kids are these? In the name of rugged and tenacious individualism, too many people in the United States have lost their sense of community. In the process, the family, no matter how configured, has come to be regarded as a private, competitive fighting unit against the world, whose only appropriate concern is for itself. In that process, we have abdicated much of our communal responsibility for the raising and nurturing of children to their particular parents, who may or may not be present. Such a hands-off attitude, which holds little concern for and prohibits any community intervention into the life of another family, has helped perpetuate widespread child abuse (and domestic violence).

It is time we recover what we once knew, and what other cultures maintain better than we: "the children" belong to all of us, and we all share in the responsibility for their nurture, support and development. As Christians and as Episcopalians, we share in the responsibility for their salvation and their growth in the life of faith. As a well known African proverb proclaims, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." It is time that we take that responsibility for our children.

It is important that we own the truth—these are *our* kids. Typically, children are seen as "women's work." Women still do the vast majority of caring for children in the home, teaching them in our schools (and Sunday Schools), and providing services for them in our society. Men are crucial to this important work.

#### *What kind of world is it for kids?*

Is the world facing our kids really different than that in which most of us grew up? In many ways, yes, it is a different world. The expectation for many of us growing up, and our expectations for children and youth, have been that they will grow up and become productive members of society. In surveys and interviews where young people across the country were asked about their prospects and dreams for the future, responses indicated that many youth are living in an environment where they do not expect to find productive work, or even to be alive to see the age of 21, and realize these dreams.

**Families.** In the twenty years after World War II, most children grew up in intact, "traditional" families. (Please note, of course, that this non-extended, "private" family of the 50s is a major *break* with the extended families of the past, and not "traditional" at all.)

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But with the rise of divorce and out-of-wedlock pregnancies, the norm<sup>i</sup> of two-children-living-in-the-same-house-with-both-biological-parents has crumbled into a minority. Many of those families who do have two adults present are dealing with step-parents and siblings, half-brothers and sisters, and all manner of "blended" families.

One out of four children under the age of 18 in the United States now lives in a single-parent family in which, "on the average, [the youth are] clearly more at risk than those in two-parent families....This increased risk level in single-parent families holds true for both males and females as well as across racial-ethnic groups."<sup>1</sup> These 6-12th graders in single-parent families rank higher than their two-parent family counterparts in frequent alcohol use, binge drinking, daily cigarette use, illicit drug use, sexual activity, depression, suicide, theft, vandalism, school absenteeism, and incidences of riding with a drunk driver. We must be clear that not every child in every single-parent situation fits this description, nor is every child in every two-parent home happy and well-adjusted. But on average, the growing numbers of single-parent families has put increased pressure on kids, often with the single parent having fewer resources with which to respond to those pressures.

**Gangs.** Nowhere is the longing for community and family more dramatically demonstrated than in the proliferation of gangs. Perhaps it can even be said that if no family exists, then we will create one—even if it is not healthy and productive. These surrogate families, in which one not only exists but belongs, are not confined to inner cities but are now springing up in suburban and rural areas. Indeed, there have been increasing pleas for "gang consultations" in some of our cities' wealthier suburbs. The proliferation of violent gangs stands as an indictment of our failures as families and as a Church community.

**Sexuality.** In addition to all the external influences pressuring kids, one notable pressure comes from inside. Because of better nutrition and the conquest of major infectious diseases, adolescence begins at an earlier age—with its attendant awakening to sexuality. Unfortunately, the onset of wisdom has not enjoyed a similar earlier arrival. Over a million unmarried teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 get pregnant each year, plus an additional 30,000 *under* the age of 15. This clearly indicates a high incidence of unprotected sexual activity. In 1988 half of all unmarried girls ages 15 to 19 were sexually experienced (double the proportion in 1970). About three-fourths of all 18- and 19-year old girls are sexually active, regardless of race or ethnic background.

There is little evidence that young men are sharing equal responsibility—for birth control, STD/AIDS (sexually transmitted disease/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) prevention, or unwanted pregnancies—in their relationships with young women. The burden for prevention still falls to the female partner, and when prevention efforts fail it is usually the young woman who bears the lasting brunt of that failure. The absence of young fathers in the lives of their children usually commits young mothers and their children to a life of poverty.

The risk to young people of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases is enormous. The fastest growing age group of those being diagnosed with AIDS is that of 20-to 29-year-olds. Given the eight- to ten-year incubation period between infection and the onset of AIDS symptoms, it is very likely that for most of these new cases infection occurred during the teen years. All of this in a population of kids which thinks of itself as invulnerable.

**Homosexuality.** Although seldom acknowledged and rarely discussed, teenagers who come to know themselves to be gay or lesbian face special pressures. Positive self-esteem is difficult enough for a teenager to achieve, without having to do so as a person whose sexual orientation is the object of ridicule, prejudice, and hatred. "Homo" and "queer" are epithets of the meanest order on any playground or in any school cafeteria—beginning at a frighteningly early age. Not only must lesbian and gay youth withstand ridicule and, often, violence from their peers, they risk outright rejection from their parents should they decide to "come out." The combination of the culture's condemnation of homosexuality and the alienation from one's home and parents (supposedly a haven of security and support) causes an unusually high rate of attempted suicide. "Gay youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual young people. It is estimated that up to 30% of the completed youth suicides are committed by lesbian and gay youth annually....Twenty-six percent of gay youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts with their families over their sexual identities. Up to half...engage in prostitution to support themselves, greatly increasing their risk for HIV infection."<sup>2</sup>

**Poverty.** The financial news is not just about the future; it is about the present. "One in five young adolescents aged ten to fifteen lives in poverty. In absolute numbers, most poor children are white, but a higher proportion of black and Hispanic children are living in poverty: 45 and 41 percent, respectively, compared to 13 percent for white youths. Families headed by women are more likely than other families to live in poverty; 46 percent of female-headed households are impoverished. While the median income for all American families is above \$30,000, those headed by women with children have a median income of only about \$9,000."<sup>3</sup> An estimated 2.5 million children are among the homeless in America. There are 9-12 million children with no health insurance, and millions of others who, along with their families, have inadequate insurance.

**Racism.** It is impossible to survey all the risk factors in the lives of children, without seeing, at almost every turn, the sin of racism (and its attendant poverty). On virtually every scale of risk, children of color fare less well than white children—not because they are less smart or more sexually driven or less responsible or more violent. Poor education, low paying jobs (if there *are* jobs), and outright discrimination all contribute to the poverty that is such a part of the lives of so many people of color. The circumstances of where one lives, works and plays are determined in far too high a measure by divisions of race.

When one reads through the statistics related to the lives of young people, one cannot help but be struck by the statistics related to black teenaged males. The plight of children of color stands in stark contrast to the plight of white children. Young black males in urban areas stand out among those of color as being particularly threatened. It would not be alarmist to say that we stand to lose nearly a whole generation of black men if we do not respond to the needs of these children.

**Economic future.** For the first time in recent memory, young people do not expect to do better financially than their parents. In an American Home Economics Association survey of 500 adolescents, "sixty percent of all the adolescents in the sample believed that their lives will be more difficult than their parents'."<sup>4</sup> The nation's budget deficit will become a living reality—even to the middle class young adult—as workers of the future "pay the piper" for past extravagances. For those who are unskilled and undereducated, the forecast is even more grim. "Thirty years ago, a teenager who dropped out of school often could find a job that paid a living wage and look forward to earning enough in the future to

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support a family. Today, a high school dropout has only one chance in three of having a full-time job. A typical male high school dropout between the ages of 18 and 24 earns only about \$6,000 a year, and a young female dropout earns even less.<sup>5</sup>

**Education.** Long the hope of achieving a better life, education has become, for many, the institution of greatest disappointment. While there are positive and encouraging signs of progress in some places, school systems often find themselves unable to meet the increasing demands being placed upon them by parents and communities. Although graduation rates have risen overall in recent decades, some graduate functionally illiterate, and one in five American students do not graduate from high school at all. That figure is even higher in some cities. School segregation is, for all intents and purposes, still a reality for many blacks and Hispanics, who "are less likely than white and Asian students to be enrolled in academic (college preparatory) programs, and more likely to be enrolled in remedial and special education courses."<sup>6</sup>

**Alcohol and other drugs.** "More than half of seventh- to twelfth-graders nationwide drink alcohol. Eight million—about 40 percent—drink weekly. Four million drink when they feel upset; more than 2 million drink because they are bored....One in 15 teenagers and one in six young adults say they currently use both alcohol and illegal drugs....In 1990 almost one-quarter of surveyed 12- to 17-year-olds and more than half of 18- to 25-year olds reported having used illicit drugs (drugs other than alcohol and tobacco) at some time in their lives."<sup>7</sup> These are not figures confined to the inner city. A recent television public service ad shows a clean-cut white kid, skateboarding through his suburban neighborhood to meet a friend, while a voice asks, "Forty-six percent of kids who use illicit drugs live in the inner city. Where do you think the other fifty-four percent live?"

**Media.** Beginning at a very early age, the media becomes the substitute babysitter in many families—whether or not there is a parent present. These media all too often "glorify casual...sexual intercourse as glamorous, portray alcohol and cigarettes as symbols of maturity, and hold out the accumulation of consumer goods as the measure of success and status. The implication is that self-indulgence is a virtue and that crime pays."<sup>8</sup> The influence of media—TV, movies, magazines, music videos—is hard to overstate. A connection between violence in the media and violent behavior is becoming increasingly evident.

**Violence.** The toll that violence takes on life in the United States is extraordinary and completely out of proportion in comparison with other industrialized nations. In the U.S., the homicide rate for young men 15- to 24-years old is five times that of the next nearest country (Scotland), ten times higher than almost half of the world's industrialized countries, and 70 times higher than the country at the bottom of the list (Austria). For white males, the risk of death by homicide is 11.2 per 100,000; for black males, the rate is 85.6 per 100,000. It is important to note that studies indicate, however, that poverty—more than race—is the causative risk factor. The statistics about violence affecting young black men reflect the greater likelihood of African-Americans to be living in poverty. In addition, "about half of all homicides in the U.S. occur between two people who know each other and who get in an argument. Twenty percent of the time, the two people are family members while another 30 or 40 percent are friends or acquaintances. Only 15 percent of the homicides that occur in America are 'stranger bad guy' homicides related to burglary, robbery or drug trafficking...the violence we read about in the newspapers or see on television."<sup>9</sup> Again, the violence which is affecting our young people is not, for the most part, related to crime but

to conditions of poverty, a sense of hopelessness and the lack of alternative ways of dealing with conflict. Every person in America is confronted by the glamorization of violence. From all sides we are taught that violence is an acceptable means of solving problems. The astoundingly easy availability of handguns in our society greatly exacerbates the problem. Ours is the only industrialized country where kids as well as adults have such easy access to guns, with the result that there are fifteen times more handgun deaths in the United States than in the next most dangerous society. Thousands who kill and thousands who die are teenagers. "Make my day" and reaching for a handgun have become a way of life for too many.

In addition to the physical violence of guns, of course, too many of our children and young people are still subject to a wide range of other violences, including verbal and emotional abuse, an assault on self-esteem, the abuse that expresses itself as neglect. There is *no* family structure where these forms of violence are unknown. Nor is there any ethnic or socio-economic group which is immune to their impact. Neither affluence nor education protect against them. We, as adults, compound that violence through our own inaction. Our doing nothing and saying nothing about the lives of all our children is the sin of omission with which we all must confront ourselves.

#### *Respecting the dignity of all*

At the core of all the factors described here—poverty, racism, poor education, and gang violence that mar American society—lies the tension between individual freedom and social justice in community. Excessive individualism, evident in increasing atomization of individuals and families, underlies the social disintegration that has increasingly afflicted American society since the 1950s. To be sure, the postwar era has seen the weakening of social bonds, some of which were patriarchal and oppressive. Yet those social bonds have not been replaced by the balance between individual and social values that can create the basis for a more equitable society—much less the biblical vision of community.

On the contrary, many children and youth in the United States have not experienced the attitude of respect for all human beings celebrated in the Baptismal Covenant. Rather, they have been subjected to the devaluation of their humanity through neglect and abuse, whether purposeful or not. Too often, children and young adults, rich and poor, in the cities, in the suburbs, and rural areas, learn from their own experience and those of their peers that they are at best superfluous and worthless, and at worst even burdens on our society. How is it possible for children and youth who internalize these attitudes, and thereby do not value and respect themselves, to value the dignity and lives of those around them? Where human life is cheap and there is no alternative that is readily apparent, suicide and homicide are often the tragic consequences. Middle class children and youth who feel their parents value them only for their accomplishments in school or in the job market learn that their own lives have no intrinsic value, but rather only contingent value for the luster that can be added to parents' stature in the community.

The strong sense of inadequacy, anger and rejection on children and youth from more affluent homes parallels the feelings of socially and economically deprived children. The result in wasted life is often the same in either instance. We are diminished as a community by these tragic social failures.

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### *Is this hopeless?*

The picture of our American youth is, at first glance, a bleak one. There is no doubt that our culture is putting unprecedented pressures on all young people. These issues are real in the lives of all our kids. A number of our children and youth are remarkably strong and wise and are responding reasonably well to these pressures, but even for them, the pressures are still there. There is not a child in this country—even those who live in our most affluent neighborhoods—whose self-esteem and well-being aren't under siege by one or more of these factors. And as the number of the above-mentioned factors increase in the lives of young people, the more "at-risk" they become.

The prognosis for these young people is not hopeless, but it is gravely serious if we do not act. Soon. "Many young people believe, because of the conditions surrounding them, that equality of opportunity does not exist; so they give up. This creates a vicious circle: talents are squandered, teenagers are ill prepared, employment is denied, at-risk behavior is reinforced. Adrift in a desolate and often hostile environment, these young people desperately need adults to whom they can turn for guidance and support."<sup>10</sup> What better place to turn than to the Church? Who better to provide guidance and support than we Christians for whom nothing (and no one) is hopeless?

### **Part I-B: Our Children and the Church**

#### *There is good news*

There is an abundance of good news for children and young people in the Episcopal Church, and much for which to be grateful. First, of course, is the ultimate Good News, Jesus Christ. We follow a savior who offers endless hope and infinite possibility. As one African-American priest, standing in the doorway of his church, surrounded by housing projects, matter-of-factly and powerfully told our Commission, "The power of the Gospel is plenty powerful enough to transform lives."

Many dioceses are taking on the challenge of ministry with young people in new and exciting ways. This Standing Commission has seen and heard about dramatic and Spirit-filled ministries to, with, and for young people within and beyond our Church:

- One diocese has begun a program of "midnight basketball," providing an alternative to the streets and offering both fellowship and education. Consequently, there has been a significant drop in the local crime rate.
- Church people have cooperated ecumenically in several large cities to utilize the structure of gangs to equip gang members with skills to enjoy productive and fulfilling lives. These young people are given opportunities and rewards for competing in learning instead of fighting over drugs, turf or money.
- Many dioceses and parishes across the Church have not only included young people in their conventions (with voice and vote), but also have included them on search committees for priests and bishops.
- A teenager has her life transformed by being invited to a Central American diocese, where she sees death, poverty, ignorance, fear and intimidation neutralized by the power of the Gospel, lived out by loving teachers, clergy and church members.
- A tiny congregation (average attendance of nine) decides to "go out of business in style" and commits its small endowment to fund and host a big brother/sister program in its small community. Within a year, average attendance has increased to 65 (with a

Sunday School of 25 children), drawn not from the clients served, but from the community that sees in this ministry to children the work of Christ.

- Many congregations have begun to minister with young people at risk through local school systems and government organizations, following the maxim that "mission" is determining where God is already at work in the world, and then joining God there.
- The Episcopal Youth Events of the last decade, sponsored by the Episcopal Church Center's Youth Ministries Office, have been a significant part of that revitalization. The most recent "EYE" was attended by young people from all but three dioceses in the U.S. Twenty-five percent of attendees were young people of color.
- Many dioceses have a long tradition of significant funding and program oriented toward youth. Many dioceses own and operate camp and conference centers with significant programming for kids, and many are including marginalized kids from the community in those programs. Several dioceses have training programs for both volunteer and stipendiary youth ministries.
- Some dioceses and congregations are, for the first time, employing part- or full-time youth ministries staff people.
- While many small congregations are learning that youth ministry does not require a big budget and large numbers of youth to make a difference in the lives of their kids, many parishes and dioceses are learning it is also true that effective youth ministry often does require some serious commitment of financial resources.
- Many isolated, rural and small town congregations are learning that working ecumenically can have a big pay-off in a small community.

*On the other hand....*

On the other hand, the news—from the local congregation to the national church—is not all good. The Episcopal Church, as a whole, has *never* funded children's and youth ministries as generously as other denominations. Over the last decade, our national Church budget for youth and children has only been cut, never increased.

In all too many of our dioceses and congregations, young people are not near the top of *anyone's* agenda—at least not the decision-makers', and no one is dealing with the issues facing young people. Despite "youth ministry" being high on nearly every congregation's profile of priorities as it searches for a new priest, this priority is seldom reflected in the congregation's budget; young people are seldom represented on the search committee; and once the new priest arrives, other duties and pressures push kids and kids' issues aside. Local parish youth group leaders burn out quickly, due in large measure to their weariness from having constantly to beg for financial support and to seek parishioners willing to lend a hand.

In most congregations, canons and bylaws do not allow or encourage young people to participate fully in the life of the church (e.g., to serve on the vestry). In many congregations, there is an ongoing controversy about the inclusion of young children in the liturgy, and seldom is the recitation of the Lord's Prayer slowed down enough for younger children to keep up. Many congregations act as if the only kind of "mission" young people can do is dishwashing after the parish potluck supper. Children and youth are seldom invited to make a pledge along with their congregation's stewardship efforts. Only our largest and wealthiest congregations have someone on the staff whose primary task is youth ministry, and even then they are often the first to be let go in a financial pinch.

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Youth ministry is a special calling. Instead of giving this precious responsibility for our kids to our best and brightest, both clergy and lay, we often delegate it to the newest and least experienced. Many clergy are eager to accept the first lay volunteer they can find to "do" the youth group, providing little training and ongoing support for these sincere and committed volunteers. And even if training is sought for this ministry—by clergy or laity—there are few good opportunities for receiving it (and even fewer within the Episcopal tradition).

### *What does the Episcopal Church have to offer young people?*

To offer the Good News of Jesus Christ, which will always be our most important gift to young people, we must offer ourselves. "Young people need adult disciples and mentors who will talk to them about values and the virtues of faithfulness, honesty, self-control, courage, compassion and the willingness to make sacrifices in the name of love."<sup>11</sup> It is through ourselves that our young people will come to know the love of Christ. It is in our incarnated ministries with them that young people will come to know Christ.

This adult companion is often the youth group leader, in a congregation that is large enough to sustain such an ongoing group. Or, in a smaller setting, it could be any adult who sincerely cares and takes an interest. But this gift of ourselves cannot be a once-a-week offering; indeed, this kind of mentoring takes time and is ministry "for the long haul." The kind of youth ministry called for in today's world requires mentors who do as they say—who "walk the talk," which includes not always getting it right, admitting failure when it occurs, acknowledging the pain.

Ministry to, with and for young people must move beyond the dissemination of information, toward formation. "In the case of youth ministry, the medium really is much of the message. The youth group (the same would apply to a relationship between a young person and another Christian adult) is a vehicle by which the participants can experience the Gospel of God....the life of the youth group can express, or at least point to, the acceptance, forgiveness, love and growing wholeness that comes from God. It is the relationships within the group, and the overall tone or quality of the group in which participants sense and absorb the presence and activity of God among them and within each of them. It is through the life of the youth group that participants sense and grow aware of God's movements toward healing and wholeness, that is, toward salvation. Youth and adults together discover themselves to be actually working out their own salvation 'in fear and trembling' as they live together and sense God working out his will within and among them."<sup>12</sup>

### *What principles might guide us?*

In 1986, in preparation for the first Youth Ministry Leadership Academy, sponsored by the Diocese of Connecticut and the national Church's Youth Ministry Office, four principles were articulated for doing this kind of "relational ministry" with young people:

- I. *There is infinite respect for the individual.*
- II. *Honesty with self and others is essential.*
- III. *There is a common responsibility for what happens.*
- IV. *Explorations of life experiences and the Gospel are shared and affirmed.*

What is clear about these principles of relational ministry is that they apply to all ministry, not merely to ministry with young people. This kind of ministry has ramifications

for any Episcopal congregation or any individual Episcopalian who wants to use them in their ministries with children, youth and adults:

**Effective ministry takes time.** One has to spend a lot of time building a relationship with a fellow Christian in order for real growth and formation to occur. One has to spend a lot of seemingly meaningless or frivolous time with a child or young person before enough trust develops for the child to ask a question that comes from the heart. That question may be pondering a decision about sex or drugs, or wondering aloud why parents fight so much, or asking what it means to live a Christ-centered life. So-called "quality time" is a myth in youth ministry, in the sense that it rarely happens except in the context of spending a lot of "down time" in building relationships and trust. (Parishioners should be reminded of this when they complain that "all the youth minister ever does is play volleyball with the kids.")

**Faith is caught, not taught.** Our usual method of education assumes that the teacher has a body of knowledge that the learner needs, and in one way or another, we attempt to open up the brain of the learner and "pour in" the information. While there is information, history and facts to be learned, more is required if we are to enable our young people to become mature Christians. Formation is a different approach to learning, and asserts that the most important learnings about living the Christian life are learned from watching, arguing, playing, working, making decisions, crying and interacting with other Christians. Along the way, mentoring is helpful and necessary—such as Bible study and learning about the Church's historic faith and practice, or developing a prayer life. But faith, and a life in faith, requires nurturing.

**Kids do not need to wait until they are "grown up" to have a ministry.** Their ministries are NOW, and any congregation which so acknowledges that will learn how much power there is in it. Kids can be empowered to live out their own baptismal promises now. They can learn about their faith. They can be among our best evangelists. Children can learn about and actually do outreach. Helping to gather and sort food for the parish food pantry is but one example. Young people can take their place in the decision-making and work of the church. They can become knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and share that information in a peer relationship at school among kids that we could never reach. Over the last decade, our young people have raised a united voice: "We are not the Church of the future. We are the Church now." It is time we believed them.

### *How might a commitment to kids look in a congregation?*

If the Episcopal Church were to take seriously its commitment to our children, what might we see happening in our parishes and communities? What might a children's advocacy "wish list" look like for the Episcopal Church?

1. A group of stay-at-home parishioners might invite mothers and children from the community to come in once a week. The children would be cared for (and enjoyed) by the parishioners, while the mothers learned a craft, took a course, or talked with each other about the joys, struggles and strategies of being a good parent. Such a ministry would go a long way to break down the isolation felt by so many single parents.

2. Families in our congregations could be a tremendous resource to each other. Families could be linked up for a specific period of time (a school year), to share their lives and faith journeys with one another. Linking a single-parent family with a two-parent family might provide welcome support and understanding to both.

3. We, the Church, might make all kinds of families feel more welcome if we were to use another, more inclusive term for families, i.e., households. We must make it abundantly and frequently clear that the term "parish family" refers to the entire parish community, and is meant to include everyone, no matter what the configuration of the household.

4. A congregation might do a survey of what they are doing (or might do) in their parish to welcome children. A trip to McDonald's might be a good place to start, since they really know how to make kids welcome (from child-height drinking fountains and urinals to bright and cheerful playgrounds). A child knows from the moment they drive in to McDonald's that this is a place for them, where they are wanted and welcome. Do they know the same when they come to church?

5. More opportunities might be provided for people to gather intergenerationally. Confirmands might be assigned adult mentors for the duration of the confirmation class with whom they might regularly worship, do a service project, and talk about what it means to be baptized into the Body of Christ. Vestries might invite the youth group to send two of its young people to vestry meetings to make input from the youth point of view. Young people might "adopt" an older parishioner or person in the community who might be shut-in and in need of assistance.

6. A congregation might open its doors to the youth of the neighborhood, providing a safe and positive environment for gathering. In rural, isolated communities where there may be few options for social gatherings, a congregation might work with their own few kids and those of other denominations to create something interesting for young people to do on a Saturday night. It might even lead to a "program night" in which young Christians of different denominations talk about what difference being Christian makes in their lives. We must not be blinded to opportunities of working ecumenically.

7. One congregation might want to do something for education in its local schools, but feels powerless to change an entire school system. Being faced with its own limitations and not being able to do everything, often becomes an excuse for doing nothing. It could, however, impact one class or one grade. Members of a congregation, adults and young people alike, might volunteer to assist a 6th grade class for one whole school year. Acting as support for the teacher over the course of a year might make a big difference in the life of that class. Tutoring, chaperoning trips, being another adult present in the classroom, fundraising for special events, sponsoring day care and latchkey programs are also needed in many communities to augment the efforts of the schools to support families.

8. A congregation or diocese might form a Child Advocacy Committee which would monitor local, state and national legislation affecting children—WIC (Women with Infants and Children) and Head Start funding, public assistance benefits, childhood immunization efforts, etc. Congregations could be alerted to issues about which their members would like to testify or write their legislators. The current health care reform debate will have a tremendous impact on the lives of at-risk children and youth—nine to twelve million of whom are uninsured. A congregation could decide to undertake an educational effort about this issue, leading to advocacy on behalf of those children.

9. Members of a parish, at the time of the every member canvass, might be asked what they will pledge to do in the coming year for the young people of the parish and/or the community. One's lay ministry in the world might include being a Big Brother/Sister, offering respite care to parents of severely disabled children, tutoring a student in a local school, helping to organize a local chapter of P-Flag (a support group for Parents and

Friends of Lesbians and Gays) or working with a school board to get effective and complete AIDS education into the school curriculum. Then the parish could celebrate and lift up those ministries before the whole congregation using "A Form of Commitment to Christian Service" from The Book of Common Prayer.

*Can congregations play a role in at-risk prevention?*

In the face of so many at-risk factors, can the Church play any real role in responding to the crisis? Can the Church help to bring about the spiritual revitalization that is so urgently needed in our society? Data gathered on 46,000 youth in public schools indicates a resounding "yes."

"Youth who attended religious services at least once or twice a month (active youth) were nearly half as likely to engage in any of the at-risk behaviors than those who rarely or never attended religious services (inactive youth). This finding holds true for all ages and for both males and females."<sup>13</sup>

Religious, along with family and social, values affect responsible decision-making. A national sexuality curriculum evaluation, determined "the greatest influence on the intention not to engage in sexual intercourse is whether or not the student feels it is against her or his values to do so."<sup>14</sup>

Church congregations are one of the few settings where young people can interact with a wide variety of age groups, thereby getting a broader perspective than is otherwise available to them. Also, an individual has the opportunity to be exposed to this same community over a span of years, thereby having a potentially powerful influence on a person's life.

Churches do not always live up to that potential. Another Search Institute study of 3,000 adolescents in Protestant congregations determined that "43 percent of students report two or fewer hours in their lifetime spent at church discussing sex. And 36 percent report spending two or fewer hours learning about alcohol or other drugs." The report goes on to conclude that "young people's long-term involvement in and loyalty toward faith institutions may be dependent on whether their congregations address 'real life' issues. If not, young people may see faith institutions, finally, as irrelevant—a pattern and a memory that is no longer significant."<sup>15</sup>

The challenge and the opportunity is to raise these issues from a faith perspective. Young people often know the facts (which is why a young person's initial response to an issue is, "We already learned that in school"). What is missing in other settings is the opportunity to look at issues as they relate to faith and experience. Such an approach, which goes deeper than a "just say no" simplicity, needs the strong support of both clergy and lay leaders in order to succeed.

Finally, Search Institute's Carolyn H. Eklin and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain point to three "protective factors" which churches can provide: (1) genuine care and support from one or more adult persons in the congregation, (2) high expectations on the congregation's part for its youth, and (3) opportunities for youth to be contributing members of their congregation. "Youth need to be able to participate in meaningful, valued activities and roles—those involving problem-solving, decision-making, planning, goal-setting, and helping others. These opportunities enhance young people's sense of responsibility and purpose, which can, in turn, help reduce negative behaviors."<sup>16</sup>

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All of this brings us right back to the Baptismal Covenant. As adults in the Episcopal Church, it is only in respecting the dignity of all our children, and seeking to serve Christ in them that we will be able to acknowledge and empower their own ministries within the church and beyond it.

### *Not a new program—a new attitude*

As the Standing Commission on Human Affairs, we are not calling for any one specific program for children and youth, but rather for a new attitude toward children and youth by this Church and by its individual members. The children in our churches and the children beyond our churches are experiencing an assault on their physical lives, their emotional health and their spiritual well-being. The familiar saying is true: if we are not contributing to the solution, then we are a part of the problem.

What we need is a true change in our hearts so that, like Christ, we authentically beckon all of God's children to come. It is time that we, the Episcopal Church, do more than give lip-service to the importance of our church's and our nation's children. It is time that we recommit ourselves, with God's help and guidance, and with all the resources we can muster, to their physical and spiritual well-being. No one can do everything, but each of us can do something, and together, we can make a difference in the lives of our children.

It takes a whole village to raise a child. Can we, will we, be those villages?

## **Part II: Dignity and Full Membership for All**

In the 1992-1994 triennium, this Standing Commission on Human Affairs has struggled with our—the Episcopal Church's—treatment of and attitude toward lesbian and gay people, within and beyond the Church.<sup>17</sup> It is clear from the baptismal promises we make, to "respect the dignity of every human being" and to "seek and serve Christ in all persons," that everyone is to be respected and served.

### *What does the Church say it believes?*

Former General Conventions have passed a number of resolutions related to people whose sexual orientation is toward people of the same sex: The 1976 General Convention (Minneapolis) passed Resolution A-69: "It is the sense of this General Convention that homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church." It is interesting to note in the Journal of the Convention that two amendments were proposed to this resolution—one to substitute the word "all" for "homosexual," the other to add the word "forgiveness" after acceptance. Both amendments were defeated. The Journal, with a touch of understatement no doubt, adds the comment "There was considerable discussion."

One must be careful not to interpret or read into something more than is there, but it does seem clear that this 1976 Convention intended (1) to say something positive, (2) to say it about homosexual persons specifically, and (3) not to imply that homosexual people per se have any more or any less to be forgiven for than anyone else.

At the same 1976 General Convention, Resolution A-71 was passed: "This General Convention expresses its conviction that homosexual persons are entitled to equal

protection of the laws with all other citizens, and calls upon our society to see that such protection is provided in actuality." This resolution seems to acknowledge that there is a gap between the equal protection provided in the law, and the equal enforcement of those laws.

This same 1976 General Convention put off the question of ordination of homosexuals until the Joint Commission on the Church in Human Affairs could study the matter and report back.

The 1979 General Convention (Denver) received the report of the Human Affairs Commission, and in response to the ordination question, passed a resolution, "That this General Convention recommend to Bishops, Pastors, Vestries, Commissions on Ministry and Standing Committees, the following considerations as they continue to exercise their proper canonical functions in the selection and approval of persons for ordination." The resolution goes on to say, "There should be no barrier to the ordination of qualified persons of either heterosexual or homosexual orientation whose behavior the Church considers wholesome," and, "We believe it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual, or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage." Later in the Convention, 21 bishops signed and entered into the minutes a statement expressing their inability to associate with the resolution and its implications, the position of the bishops being that implementation of the resolutions would make lesbian and gay lay persons second-class citizens of the Church. They noted further that, as "this action of the House is recommendatory and not prescriptive, we give notice as we are answerable before Almighty God that we cannot accept these recommendations or implement them in our Dioceses...."

The 1982 General Convention (New Orleans) resolved, "That the 67th General Convention reaffirms the actions taken by the General Conventions of 1976 and 1979 affirming that homosexual persons are children of God and are entitled to full civil rights." (Resolution B-61A.)

The 1985 General Convention (Anaheim) resolved, "That the 68th General Convention urge each diocese of this Church to find an effective way to foster a better understanding of homosexual persons, to dispel myths and prejudices about homosexuality, to provide pastoral support, and to give life to the claim of homosexual persons 'upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral care and concern of the Church' as recognized by the General Convention resolution in 1976."

The 1988 General Convention (Detroit) resolved, "That this 69th General Convention decries the increase of violence against homosexual persons and calls upon law enforcement officials across the land to be sensitive to this peril and to prosecute the perpetrators of these acts to the fullest extent of the law; and be it further Resolved, that the Executive Council be directed to communicate with the Attorney General of the United States, and the Attorneys General of the several States the expressed wishes of this General Convention that such violence be decreased markedly; and be it further Resolved, that all Bishops, and especially the Presiding Bishop, be encouraged to speak openly and publicly to repudiate the misconception that the Church encourages such violence, and to counter the public declarations of those who claim that AIDS is the punishment of God upon homosexual persons; and be it further Resolved, that the actions of the 65th General Convention, which declared that "...homosexual persons are children of God who have a

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full and equal claim with all others upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church" be re-emphasized to all members of this Church.

The 1991 General Convention finally acknowledged in Resolution A104sa a "discontinuity" between the traditional teachings of the Church and the experience of some of its members, acknowledging also the Church's failure to resolve these matters legislatively.

### *How well is the Church practicing what it preaches?*

This Standing Commission had originally intended to deal only with the civil and human rights of homosexual persons in the world, but once again it seems imperative that we get our own house in order first. These resolutions are recorded in the Journals of the General Conventions—but how well are they being lived out across the Church?

We have heard some good news across the Church. During the summer of 1992, at the national convention of Integrity, members of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs held a hearing and offered lesbian and gay Episcopalians (full members through baptism in the Body of Christ) an opportunity to offer testimony about what life is like for them in the Episcopal Church:

- In one diocese, over 50 congregations have asked to be listed in a brochure making it clear that lesbians and gay men are welcome in their faith communities.
- A lay man reported that his retired bishop, who had always been opposed to the gay community in his diocese, did an about face as the result of getting to know several lesbians and gay men one-on-one, and came to believe that their full inclusion in the Church was, among other things, an issue of justice.
- A lay woman said she had never been treated poorly in her parish, was asked to read a lesson at her diocesan convention, and appreciated her bishop's celebration of the eucharist at an Integrity meeting.
- A lay man spoke with pride about his bishop and diocese, and their support of lesbian and gay people, lay and ordained. Mostly, however, the news was not good:
- A lay woman and her partner of 27 years told of being asked by the rector of a parish to which they had moved to confess as sin their personal relationship, and they were denied communion.
- A lay man was told by his rector, to whom he had gone for counseling, that if he became a practicing homosexual, he would have his "blessings withdrawn by the Lord." He was devastated when the rector went on in sermons and articles to publicly denounce gays as people with emotional problems.
- A lay man told us that although he and his partner of many years are well accepted in their parish, the rector did not have the courage to include their names on the regular anniversary list in the intercessions. The man also wryly noted that the parish has not, on the other hand, had any problems accepting their financial pledge.
- A lay man spoke of the dangerous double message he experiences from the Church: on the one hand, he hears, "We love you," while on the other hand, he sees that "some people get squashed, wounded, rejected," and feels that "God is very distant." He also spoke of having been encouraged to undergo an exorcism to drive out the demons of homosexuality.
- A lay man told of a *heterosexual* woman who made a statement to the newspaper in support of gay rights. Her rector told her that she was a scandal to the Church,

revoked her lay reader's license, and told her she was no longer welcome in the parish. A gay man and member of Integrity received the same treatment from the same rector, but was reinstated on the condition that he never again speak about his sexuality or in support of gay rights.

*What does the testimony mean?*

It is clear to us on the Standing Commission for Human Affairs, and it comes as no real surprise, that the legislation of the past General Conventions has not changed all attitudes and behaviors. It does seem odd to us, however, that the very people who appeal to the 1979 General Convention resolution against the ordination of "practicing" homosexuals as if it were canon law, are sometimes the same people who ignore the resolutions upholding full civil rights for lesbians and gay men and which proclaim that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church." The recommendatory nature of the 1979 resolution on ordination must once again be pointed out: "That this General Convention recommend to Bishops, Pastors, Vestries, Commissions on Ministry and Standing Committees, the following considerations as they continue to exercise their proper canonical functions in the selection and approval of persons for ordination:..."

*More discontinuity*

What is clear is that we are not living up to the legislative stands we have already taken with respect to supporting full civil and human rights for homosexual persons. We must point out to the Episcopal Church, of which we are a part, that we are not "walking our talk."

There are other evidences of the discontinuity between what we say and what we do in the Episcopal Church today:

Virtually every congregation in this Church has a red, white and blue sign hanging nearby which proclaims, "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You." The truth of the matter is that if one is lesbian or gay, and especially if one is open and honest about it, many Episcopal churches do *not* welcome you. In fact, some Episcopal churches will not even tolerate you. Some will forbid you to be a lay reader; some believe you should be "healed"; a few will deny you communion or even exorcise you. It's time we seriously asked ourselves whether or not we are willing to live up to the welcome promised by our signs.

It is ironic that in this Decade of Evangelism, we seem intent on alienating and keeping out one of the few identifiable groups of people who want to be welcomed in.

*A Troubling Image*

For many lesbian and gay people, the Church has been like an abusive parent. Like many abusive parents, the Church sincerely professes love for all its children and is quick to deny wrongdoing. But in fact, the Church often heaps abuse on the heads of some of its children—sometimes denying them bread at the table, tearing away at their self-esteem with shouts of "abomination," and denying them the solace and comfort promised in the word "family." It is time for the Church to admit that it is not an innocent bystander in this abuse, but too often a perpetrator.

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In an abusive situation, we usually counsel people to get out, to remove themselves from harm's way. Many have already left the Church—the Episcopal Church and others. But many have stayed in our midst. Presiding Bishop Browning recently paid tribute to them for their perseverance in the struggle for acceptance in the church: "I thought about your origins. I thought about what it has cost you to be honest about who you are. I thought about how accustomed you must have become to having people, who have never met you, form judgments about you based upon what you are rather than who you are....And I wish with all my heart that you had never had to get used to that....Is it possible to know the pain of what you have known and still find it within yourself to remain in the body where so much of that pain has occurred?" Along with the Presiding Bishop, we on this Standing Commission sincerely hope so.

### *Our children are listening*

Some of our sons are gay, some of our daughters are lesbian. And they are listening to our debates and dialogues and pronouncements. But mostly they are watching—watching to see whether they are an abomination or a child of God in the eyes of their parents and their Church and their God.

What many of them are hearing from us, the Church and the culture, is hatred. For our lesbian and gay kids, who internalize this hatred, they learn that it is an awful thing to be who they are. Fear of discovery, rejection and violence becomes a part of their everyday lives. Our "straight" kids, on the other hand, often learn that it's okay to hate, ridicule, reject and bash their lesbian and gay peers. There is an even greater burden on lesbian and gay young people in communities of color, where homosexuality often carries an even greater stigma.

What kids see and hear from us will have an incalculable impact. If lesbian and gay youth hear hatred and condemnation, many will consider and some will attempt suicide. According to a U.S. Health and Human Services report, "gay adolescents were two to three times more likely than peers to attempt suicide, accounting for as many as 30% of completed youth suicides each year."<sup>18</sup> If they hear that their future is a disgusting lifestyle, many will end up in heterosexual marriages desperately trying to be someone they are not, often bringing untold pain to themselves and others. If they have no positive role models for how to put one's lesbian/gay sexuality together with one's Christianity, then they will assume it cannot be done.

As we learn to respect the dignity of every human being and seek to serve the Christ in all our children, we may save one gay boy from being thrown out of his home, forced to sell his body to provide for himself. We may save one lesbian girl from running away to drugs to ease the pain. We might even save some parents and their relationships with their lesbian and gay children, if we helped them understand rather than reject their children. We might save one girl or boy from suicide, another from AIDS. These lesbian and gay kids are our children too, and it's time we tried.

Whether the numbers of lesbian and gay people are ten percent or one percent or something in between, the same God who knows the number of hairs on our head does not want to lose one of God's children. There are *no* throwaways in God's kingdom—not one.

*Full membership in the Body of Christ*

This Standing Commission believes we would be taking a giant, positive step forward if we were to live up to the "full and equal claim...upon the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church" promised in the 1976 resolution. Inevitably though, the question of full membership in the Church also leads us to the questions of the ordination of lesbian and gay people and the blessing of their monogamous, committed, life-long-intentioned relationships.

This issue of full membership is at the heart of the question about ordination. "No Christian has a right to be ordained; but any Christian has, or ought to have, a right to be considered for ordination....Baptism does not merely confer church membership. Rather, it makes a statement about one's basic humanity. It speaks of one's relation to the Christ in and for whom one is created. However one is regarded by the standards of society, baptism is a gracious affirmation of worth and dignity. It grants the freedom of the City of God....These two things, ordination and baptism, are linked. What is said about redeemed humanity in baptism and in ordination should be congruent....To put the matter in terms of moral discipline, if lesbian or gay sexual orientation represents a flaw in one's humanity so basic as to prevent one from being considered for ordination, should it not also prevent one from being baptized?"<sup>19</sup> A similar thought was expressed in the debate over women's ordination: "If the Church is not ready to ordain women, then it should not baptize them."

The fifty bishops who have signed the 1979 minority view statement (the original 21 who signed in 1979, plus an additional 29 who added their signatures in 1988) recognized this issue when they wrote, "This action [of the majority] also speaks a word of condemning judgment against countless laypersons of homosexual orientation who are rendered by its implications second-class citizens in the Church of their baptism, fit to receive all other sacraments but the grace of Holy Order—unless, in a sacrifice not asked of heterosexual persons generally, they abandon all hope of finding human fulfillment, under God, in a sexual and supportive relationship. This action, thus, makes a mockery of the vow and commitment which the Church has made to them in that same sacrament of baptism, to 'do all in [its] power to support these persons in their life in Christ'—all of these persons, without exception—and calls into question the vows of us all to 'strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.'" What can we as a church do to facilitate a dialogue about how to widen the circle of Episcopalians who are supported in their committed relationships without devaluing the traditional teaching of the Church?

Those bishops who have permitted the blessing of same sex unions, and those priests who have performed them with the knowledge of their bishops, seem to have done so in an effort to respond to the "full and equal claim" resolution, and as an expression of full membership for those lesbian and gay members.

It is important, and perhaps instructive, to remind ourselves that the discussion about full membership and inclusion for lesbians and gay men is not only going on in the Episcopal Church. The question of full incorporation—involving such issues as ordination and the blessing of lesbians and gay men committed to mutual, life-long love and support—is being asked in virtually every denomination—from mainline Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans to the Southern Baptist Convention.

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### *What can be done?*

The Standing Commission on Human Affairs wants to suggest a hope-and-prayer list for how the Episcopal Church might proceed:

1. We hope the human sexuality dialogue begun in this triennium will continue. We hope that those who have not yet participated in that dialogue will join in. Even congregations with large lesbian and gay populations need to talk. There is a difference between acceptance as full members and mere tolerance. We need to keep listening and talking to one another, not with the goal of winning, but with the goal of learning from and understanding one another. In this manner, we hope the Church will use the upcoming Bishop's Pastoral Teaching as a resource in its continuing, serious, thoughtful dialogue.

2. We hope lesbians and gay men, single and partnered, will be increasingly welcomed into all levels of our Church's life. We hope that those in authority, both clergy and laity, will use their moral and personal authority to help ensure that the Church is a safe place for everyone, and especially the vulnerable. And if it is that same lay or ordained leadership who is making it unsafe, then we hope that others—not unlike the prophets of old, who told the kings what they didn't want to hear—will call them to task and hold them accountable.

3. We hope lesbian and gay members of this Church will continue to seek the courage to take *appropriate* risks "coming out" to the rest of us. Without your faces and lives before us, we can still treat you as an issue, rather than as human beings. Many of us will value you for being you. We also want to acknowledge the painful reality that it is not safe, appropriate or prudent for some to take such a risk.

4. We hope more members of this Church will consider taking public stands against local initiatives that would deprive lesbians and gay men of their civil rights. We encourage our membership to be skeptical of those who claim that homosexuals want extra, rather than equal, rights.

5. We hope all of us, no matter what our other positions, can at least agree to speak out and deplore the increasing violence against lesbians and gay men and those "thought to be" gay.

6. Finally, we hope the members of the Episcopal Church will continue to pray—for the Church, for God's guidance, for understanding, and for an end to the walls that separate us.

### **Part III: A Vision of Unity**

We have raised difficult and complex issues for the culture and for the Church. They will not be resolved easily or quickly. But we must continue to address them, and we must "hang in there" with one another while we are discerning where our journey is taking us.

For Christians, how we treat each other is not a matter of opinion. Christ reveals to us the truth about all relationships. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us—an act of sacrificial love. Jesus mounted the cross in obedience to the Father's will. The Gospel of John declares this act as one which glorifies the Father. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, when we are enabled, however imperfectly, to live with each other in sacrificial love, we glorify both the Father and the Son. We see here a glimpse of the living reality of the Trinity, the three persons in perfect relationship which is the vision of all relationships.

The Baptismal Covenant offers us a glorious vision of what the Christian life can and should be. These promises call us to ministry with all of God's people, within and beyond the Church. The verbs in the baptismal promises are full of forward movement and longing for completion: continue, persevere, proclaim, seek, serve, strive. Like Abraham, we long for the "city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." We will not enter that city until we are reunited with God in heaven. Until then, we live with the vision.

"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?"

*I will with God's help.*

"Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?"

*I will with God's help.*

"Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?"

*I will with God's help.*

## RESOLUTIONS

### Resolution #A060

1 *Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That this 71st General Convention request the  
2 Church Center staff to disseminate the materials and resources that the Standing  
3 Commission on Human Affairs has assembled and this report to the Bishops and  
4 youth ministries of this Church.

#### EXPLANATION

The Standing Commission acknowledges the great value it places upon the resources provided them by their sister in Christ, Sheryl Kujawa. Comprising the basis for many statements and recommendations contained within the report of the Commission, it will be helpful to the larger church for youth ministers in every diocese to know of and utilize these materials for their own programs, thus bringing them into the diocese as available resources for all groups engaging themselves in issues dealing with children and youth at risk.

### Resolution #A061

1 *Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That Canon I.17.5 be amended to read as  
2 follows:

3       No one shall be denied ~~rights or status in this Church because of race, color, or~~  
4 ~~ethnic origin a place in the life, worship, and governance of this Church except as~~  
5 ~~otherwise specified by Canon.~~

#### EXPLANATION

This resolution is the result of the findings and report of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs for the 1992-1994 triennium.

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### E. PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE COMING TRIENNIUM

#### Standing Commission on Human Affairs 1995-1997 Proposed Budget

<i>Income</i>	1995	1996	1997
Appropriated by General Convention	\$17,500	\$20,250	\$14,700
<i>Expenses</i>			
Commission Meetings	\$17,500	\$20,250	\$14,700

### F. RESOLUTION FOR THE BUDGET APPROPRIATION

#### Resolution #A062

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That there be appropriated from the  
2 Assessment Budget of the General Convention for the expense of the Standing  
3 Commission on Human Affairs the sum of \$52,450 for the triennium 1995-1997.
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#### ENDNOTES:

1. "Single-Parent Families," Search Institute SOURCE, Vol. IX, Number 2, June, 1993, pp. 1-2.
2. "FACTFILE," Hetrick-Martin Institute, New York, 1992, pp. 1-2.
3. *Fateful Choices: Healthy Youth for the 21st Century*, by Fred M. Hechinger, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992, pg. 30.
4. *Fateful Choices: Healthy Youth for the 21st Century*, by Fred M. Hechinger, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992, p. 34.
5. *The Adolescent and Young Adult Fact Book*, Janet M. Simons, Belva Finlay, and Alice Yang, Children's Defense Fund, 1991, pg. 1.
6. *The Adolescent and Young Adult Fact Book*, Janet M. Simons, Belva Finlay, and Alice Yang, Children's Defense Fund, 1991, pp. 94-95.
7. *The Adolescent and Young Adult Fact Book*, by Janet M. Simons, Belva Finlay, and Alice Yang, Children's Defense Fund, 1991, p. ix.

8. *Fateful Choices: Healthy Youth for the 21st Century*, by Fred M. Hechinger, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992, pp. 25-26.
9. "Deadly Consequences: Stopping Youth Violence," by Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., taken from a conference presentation to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America 86th Annual National Conference.
10. *Fateful Choices: Healthy Youth for the 21st Century*, by Fred M. Hechinger, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992, p. 27.
11. Taken from a Diocesan Convention address by the Rt. Rev. Frederick H. Borsch, Bishop of Los Angeles, December 5, 1992.
12. "Youth Ministry: An Experience in Relationship and Creation," unpublished article by Robert L. Burchell, 1979.
13. Data from *Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th-12th Grade Youth*, by Peter L. Benson, Lutheran Brotherhood, 1990, quoted in Search Institute SOURCE, February, 1992, Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 1.
14. "The Faith Factor," Search Institute SOURCE, February, 1992, Volume VIII, No. 1, p. 1.
15. "Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations," quoted in Search Institute SOURCE, February, 1992, Volume VIII, No. 1, p. 2.
16. "The Faith Factor," Search Institute SOURCE, February, 1992, Volume VIII, No. 1, p. 3.
17. The Standing Commission is very aware that there is a wide diversity of sexualities expressed across the human spectrum-even among heterosexuals. It is beyond the scope of this report and the work of this Commission to attempt to cover them all. There is much about sexuality that we are still learning. In this report we will limit ourselves to responding to the same issue addressed by several previous General Convention resolutions: homosexuality.
18. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide, Volume 3: Prevention and Interventions in Youth Suicide*, Rockville, MD, 1989, as reported in "PEDIATRICS," a publication of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The official suppression of this report by the Executive Branch of the Federal Government and some members of Congress, is testimony to the denial which goes on related to these issues.
19. "Ordaining and Baptizing: The Case for Gays and Lesbians," a paper by Daniel B. Stevick, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

**APPENDIX**  
**REPORT OF THE EPISCOPAL SOCIETY FOR MINISTRY ON AGING, INC.**  
**(ESMA)**

The following report is submitted by the Commission on Human Affairs on behalf of and as a courtesy to the Episcopal Society for Ministry on Aging, Inc. (ESMA).

ESMA's mission statement is to be an advocate and national resource on aging, and to develop, strengthen and enable leadership at all levels of the Church in order to empower God's people for ministry throughout the entire life span.

ESMA's mission includes counteracting ageism, the notion that ". . . people cease to be people, cease to be the same people or become people of a distinct and inferior kind, by virtue of having lived a specified number of years. The 18th century French naturalist Georges Buffon said, "To the philosopher, old age must be considered a prejudice." *Ageism* is that prejudice. Like racism, which it resembles, it is based on fear, folklore and the hang-ups of a few unlovable people who propagate these. Like racism, it needs to be met by information, contradiction and, when necessary, confrontation. And the people who are being victimized have to stand up for themselves in order to put it down" (Comfort, p.35).

Henri Nouwen and Walter Gaffney, in *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life*, suggest that in this culture we fear aging more than death: "In a society where the basic interest is in profit, old age in general cannot be honored because real honor would undermine the system of priorities that keep this society running." (Editorial, *The Witness*, January/February, 1993)

This negative societal image comes across even in our prayers. In the prayer for "The Poor and Neglected" in the Prayer Book, it speaks of "the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick." In the Prayer for the Aged, we pray for "all whose increasing years bring weakness, distress or isolation."

Our experience from Scripture show us:

- Psalm 103:1,5 - aging is our life span
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-8 - treasure in clay jars
- Psalm 92:14 - still bear fruit in old age
- 1 Corinthians 15:53-56 - death swallowed up in victory

Aging is the time we have here on earth to prepare for and live into eternity. Aging is pre-ordained by God. There is nothing magic about it. Aging is becoming—preparing for the end—not the beginning of the end. Aging is a process of drawing toward rather than running from. The Church's obligation is to be proactive throughout the entire life span; to prepare youth for life and the aging for transition. These are the Church's tasks on both ends of the spectrum. It is not a matter of either/or. Aging is the process of living, moving and having our being.

ESMA's priorities are:

- Spirituality and Aging
- Continuing Education on Aging
- Intergenerational Approach
- Aging/Social Justice

Aging is God's Gift . . . aging is becoming aware of God's Grace, Gifts and Time. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "For age is opportunity no less than youth itself, though in another dress. And as the evening twilight fades away, the sky is filled with stars, invisible by day."

As ESMA celebrates its 30th anniversary, we affirm our commitment made when created by General Convention in 1964 and reaffirmed by subsequent General Conventions as the nationally affiliated agency of the Episcopal Church responsible for development and support of ministries on aging.

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