

VOLUME • 70

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# THE WITNESS



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time  
to  
Plant  
and  
a time  
to  
harvest  
ECC.

**On having an ethical baby**  
LESLEY A. NORTHUP

**In praise of mothers**  
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**Blessing gay relationships**  
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# Letters

## Many in 'wilderness'

Marianne H. Micks speaks for so many women in the July/August issue when she recounts her 40 years in the wilderness. Her loneliness, frustration, anger and pain have been shared by countless women down through the ages and to this day. It should help to know that even someone of Dr. Micks' stature suffers under the cruelty of sexism, but it doesn't.

I marvel at her willingness to continue to hope. Legislation, such as the many General Convention resolutions concerned with affirmative action, institutional sexism and racism, should have changed the proportion of women and minorities on commissions and committees, on faculties and boards of trustees, but it hasn't.

The real question is how to change attitudes such as those evidenced by the choice of that particular reading from I Timothy and the lector's willingness to read the passage. Perhaps the reason to hope is in believing that time is on our side.

**Marge Christie**  
Franklin Lakes, N.J

## Seminarians take note

I was delighted with the article by Marianne Micks. It should be required reading for women (and men) in seminary. Many thanks for THE WITNESS. We are prepared to do further education around sexism during the Pope's visit.

**Mary E. Hunt, Co-director**  
**WATER**  
Silver Spring, Md.

## Clericalism dies hard

My thanks to THE WITNESS for Prof. Marianne H. Micks' "40 years in the wilderness" which I found powerful, profound and graciously restrained.

I gasped, however, when you described her as a "lay theologian!" Would you routinely introduce her colleague Charles Price, for example, as an "ordained theologian?" Clericalism, as Dr.

Micks' story so abundantly illustrates, is an insidious component of patriarchal Christianity.

You also omitted to record the significant fact that Dr. Micks is an author of several excellent books. One of her recent books, *Search for Identity: Humanity in the Image of God* (Fortress Press, 1982) provides contemporary theological wisdom on human wholeness and sexuality. I am very grateful this theologian continues to work in the wilderness of the Episcopal Church.

**Dr. Frederica Harris Thompsett**  
Episcopal Divinity School  
Cambridge, Mass.

## Staying the course

Thank you for staying the course. We need you. In my opinion supporting THE WITNESS is the perfect local action to support global thinking. May your fundraising be a great success.

**Vernon Powell Woodward**  
Cambridge, Mass

## Melishes still activists

Thank you so much for the article about my late husband, William Howard, reprinted from the April 7, 1949 issue in your 70th anniversary section (July/August).

How well I remember Bill Spofford, Sr.'s contribution to our struggle. He and Joe Fletcher and many others would come and preach when Howard was enjoined by the courts from preaching because of his work in the interest of peace with the Soviet people.

Thanks to Skip Vilas, David Hunter, and Bill Persell, Howard was able to come back to our beautiful Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn, after he retired (It's now St. Ann and the Holy Trinity.) He took part in the services every Sunday and rejoiced that the emphasis was once again on the Social Gospel.

Needless to say, our three boys and I are very proud of John Howard and William Howard and we try to carry on their work for peace and social justice.

**Mary Jane Melish**  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

## Translates death article

THE WITNESS is very much present among us in Cuernavaca. We circulate the magazine with success as far as reader interest goes. Unfortunately, things are different when it comes to soliciting subscriptions. Mexico's terrible economic crisis explains this.

Our organization — *Vejez en Mexico Estudio y Accion* — is a social advocacy group for the elderly, and our newsletter, *VEMEA INFORMA*, is constantly seeking good material on death and dying. We translated the excellent article by the Rev. Charles Meyer, "Eleven myths about death," (March WITNESS) into Spanish, in view of the discussion it engendered among our staff. We wonder if the author would permit us to quote from it. Feel free to use the translation if you have a public that would appreciate it.

**Betsie Hollants,**  
VEMEA Coordinator  
Cuernavaca, Mexico

*(Chuck Meyer enthusiastically granted permission for VEMEA to quote from his article and is looking for ways to circulate their translation in Texas. THE WITNESS will also make a copy of the Spanish version available to anyone upon request. Thus does love reach out across international boundaries. — Ed.)*

## Latins can teach U.S.

I loved Mary Lou Suhor's articles on Nicaragua, about taking Marjorie Tuite's ashes to rest there (June, July/August issue). She captured the spirit of those brave, faith-filled people so well. I have come to believe that the hope of the U.S. church depends on our ability to learn from the

Latin American church in revolution as well as the liberation movements in other Third World countries.

We will be canceling the Fall term of the Nicaragua Mobile Education Project of Witness for Peace to answer Brian Willson's call for volunteers to take his place on the train tracks to stop arms shipments to Central America. All of us here are deeply saddened by the tragedy.

**Dorothy Granada**  
Santa Cruz, Cal.

## High esteem for Tuite

Mary Lou Suhor's article about her pilgrimage to Nicaragua to deposit Marjorie Tuite's ashes was very moving. My wife, Maxine, and I have always had a high esteem for Margie, although we did not know her well. Thank you for sharing the experiences with the readers of THE WITNESS.

It was also good to read the "Celebrating 70 years" reflection about the 1937-41 period. I was 13 years of age and in the 8th grade in 1937 and was beginning to be aware politically of the labor issues in the United States and the Spanish Civil War, thanks to my parents who were great world thinkers in a small Kansas town of 1800 souls. We lived on the state line between Kansas and Oklahoma, so "The Grapes of Wrath" story took place in our backyard!

Blessings on you in your ministry "through pen and paper."

**John M. Sinclair**  
Roseville, Minn.

## Marable article helpful

Thank you for printing the picture of the Pauli Murray luncheon panelists (July/August WITNESS). The event, sponsored by the Ethnic Labor Coalition and OPEN at the ILGWU headquarters, was especially moving for all of us.

I also appreciated the article on minimum wage by Manning Marable in the May issue. It was particularly timely to me in

efforts to build a coalition in support of that legislation.

The bill is facing strong opposition from the Reagan administration, the business lobby's Minimum Wage Coalition to Save Jobs, and the Chamber of Commerce, who are arguing that it is not in the interest of minimum wage workers to get a raise. In the past six years, programs to aid the unemployed have been cut, prices have risen 27% and the value of the minimum wage is about \$2.50 in 1981 dollars. Recently the Jewish Labor Committee threw its support behind initiatives to increase the minimum wage, pointing out that at this moment, the minimum wage is not enough to support a family of three with one full-time worker.

Marable's article provided background and valuable data for all of us concerned with the minimum wage struggle.

**Rosalind Spigel, Area Director**  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Philadelphia, Pa.

## Church a convenience?

I have been witnessing, for the past several days, a most interesting national live television "play": John Poindexter before a Congressional committee and his wife, a recently ordained priest in the Episcopal Church sitting behind.

John is much that I do not value. He is highly educated and, yet, out of ignorance, irrationally in the grip of fears of imagined "communist threats." I have yet to hear from John, or any of his crowd, the sense of value expressed in "love your enemies" when referring to so-called "communists." Certainly, the Soviet peoples have very little of the self-destructive, nation-hate religion for us that many U.S. citizens collectively have for them! As a sensitive Christian, does this fact disturb you? I have yet to see how it disturbs John.

Yes, I wonder, what influence does his wife have on him? So far, I conclude, very little. Then I think historically how, in part,

the Episcopal Church was established for the convenience of King Henry VIII. Is the church just a convenience for John now?

**Carter Rose**  
Fairfax, Cal.

## Age salutes 'youth'

We want all of you — editor, manager, writers — to know that you are a wonderful part of our being able to "keep the faith."

We are older — in our 70s — but not really physically disabled yet — just slower and dependent on "youngsters" for "fighting the good fight" for Christ. We went to Glenside, Pa., as bride and groom in 1942. We pray with deep Christian love and thanks to God for all of you as you work so hard and beautifully and inspiringly (if "controversially" to some). Gertrude's mother in the Bethlehem Diocese received the earlier WITNESS, so Gertrude heard of "controversies" in the 1920s. Continued love, through Christ.

**Gertrude and Ambrose Miller**  
Middletown, R.I.

## Is, too, Christian

This comes in response to the charge that THE WITNESS is not Christian (July/August Letters section).

To begin with, Jesus Christ is decidedly the center and number one topic in *all* issues of THE WITNESS, maybe not so much as an individual but for what he stood for. To sum it up in a few words: Love and good will to all God's people. If this is not the true meaning of Christianity I don't know what is.

THE WITNESS does *not* pamper or congratulate homosexuals or lesbians as so asserted. What is asked is that they have equal opportunity in housing, employment, etc. As for "sin," may I suggest that the person who made these charges do a thorough searching of his own conscience to see if he is qualified to cast the first stone.

**Cliff Nyberg**  
Seattle, Wash

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# THE WITNESS



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## The other side of the tracks



Brian Willson

Last month THE WITNESS ran a photo of 7-year-old Elda Sanchez, a Nicaraguan girl whose leg was blown off by a landmine planted by the Contras.

This month we carry in the same place a picture of Brian Willson, who became a bilateral amputee Sept. 1 when a munitions train from the Concord (Cal.) Naval Weapons Station ran over him during a peace demonstration. The act raised nightmarish memories of Kent State: Are the hawks and arms merchants who support barbaric U.S. policies now ready to kill and maim protesters on American soil?

Willson, a war veteran and longtime "peace agitator," has a poignant analysis, if this is the case. Shortly before he sat on the train tracks, he wrote: "Once the train carrying the munitions moves past our human blockade, if it does, other human beings in other parts of the world will be killed and maimed. We are not worth more, they are not worth less."

Such persons are dangerous. A recent book, *Troublesome People — the Warriors of Pacifism*, by Caroline Moorehead, suggests why. The foreword says, "This is the story of a number of people who have found war unacceptable, and tried to push the world a little in the direction of peace. As part of a mass movement they have been singularly unsuccessful. But they have been necessary as custodians of freedom, and their refusal to conform has proved subtly threatening to the states whose citizens they are; and they may become more so, as the machinery of war be-

comes more lethal."

Each day as folks like Brian Willson join the roster of troublesome people, the government will counter by suppressing dissent. Consider the recent example in Philadelphia, center of activities commemorating the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. Local activists had to fight a court case to peacefully leaflet, carry protest signs, and wear dissent buttons and T-shirts; in other words, to recapture rights already granted by the Constitution.

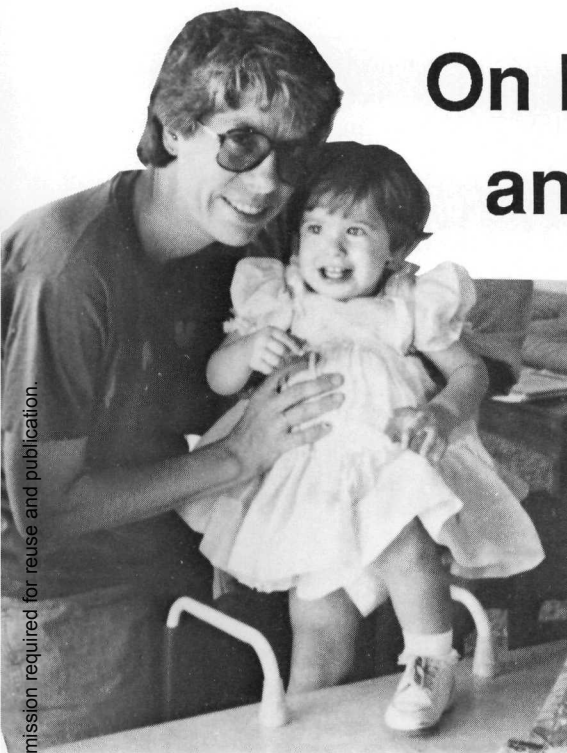
During a Vice Presidential visit on Memorial Day, police had turned demonstrators back from a public area, one giving as his reason, "Reagan people only." One park ranger ripped an anti-war sign from the hands of a medical student and tore it. Meanwhile non-dis-senters were allowed to pass through police barriers and circulate on the Mall.

A month later, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported the infiltration and surveillance of local activists groups by police. Officials believed that the groups might engage in "terrorist" activities during the bicentennial celebrations. Deja vu of the '60s.

Almost a generation after anti-war and other social activists had successfully defended their rights to protest imperialism during the Vietnam war years, the system remains unrepentant and unchanged. It is once again time to "be sober, be watchful," and to resist, steadfast in the faith. It is also time to thank God for the Brian Willsons of this world, and to take his place *somewhere* on the peace track. ■

# On having an ethical baby

by Lesley Northup



*"Evan has had the bad taste but good sense to resemble a small clone of her mother, so both donor anonymity and my exclusive parental rights have been protected."*

Last summer, I had a baby. This event, while joyous, should not have aroused more than the usual congratulatory interest associated with new arrivals. And yet, after "What is it?" the remark I heard most frequently — and in lowered voices — was, "But what does the church have to say about that?"

This is a strange question. For one thing, it implies that the church might want to have something to say about my daughter's birth. For another, it hints that what the church has to say might not be very positive . . . an inauspicious start for such a fledgling little life like Evan's.

Of course, the reasoning behind the question hinges on three facts: I am a priest. I am not married. And Evan has no father.

To be more specific — two years ago I decided for a variety of personal reasons, including the noisy ticking of my biological clock, that I was ready, anxious, and able to have a child. This was not a hasty decision, nor a purely selfish one; Evan has been brought into a loving, supportive home where she is flourishing and ebullient. Getting her there was the hard part.

I had no plans to marry. Research into overseas adoptions produced the sobering

information that following that route to parenthood could cost from \$5,000 to \$15,000. Working with a fertility center — a sperm bank — could also be expensive and chancy. I finally decided to bear the child myself via artificial insemination by chosen donors. Getting the "chosen donors" proved to be a major undertaking in itself, raising numerous ethical questions — but that is another story.

Evan was conceived through the services of three carefully chosen, understanding men of my acquaintance (two of them Episcopal priests). The donors were picked on the basis of health and other personal factors, as well as for their disinterest in making claims of paternity. Neither the donors nor I know which of the three is Evan's biological father. Evan has had the bad taste but good sense to resemble a small clone of her mother, so both donor anonymity and my exclusive parental rights have been protected. Aside from initial difficulties in finding committed donors, the private insemination, the pregnancy, and the childbirth went very smoothly. I have a happy, healthy baby girl (and she has me). I wouldn't change my decision for all the incense at Smoky Mary's.

Why would people assume that the church might find fault with this process? Is there perhaps a question of morality here? If so, I cannot think what the offense might be. Adultery? Hardly — even if artificial insemination could be

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**The Rev. Lesley A. Northup** is an Episcopal priest who is associated with Christ Church, Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. She is working on her Ph.D. in Liturgics at the Catholic University of America.

considered adulterous (an imaginative leap, at best), none of the parties involved was married. Extramarital sex? No sexual act occurred. Masturbation? Well, yes, if you are of a mind to consider that sinful, I suppose you could make a case, albeit a very silly one, against the donor on those grounds. But onanism is biblically condemned specifically because it does not lead to conception, quite the opposite of what happened here, so even that argument is not very effective. From a strictly moral point of view, the fact is that no such standards, either biblical or cultural, were violated.

Perhaps there is a concern with ecclesiastical discipline. No doubt a lay person in the same situation would not have been asked this question: Have I scandalized the priesthood? I am not the first woman priest to have a baby. I have done nothing illegal or immoral in having this child. Nothing in my ordination vows or the canons of the church mitigates against it. I even turned down requests to officiate during the latter portion of my pregnancy so as not to create an "ungraceful" spectacle at the altar. Somehow, however, I keep hearing the vague message that, because of my clerical status, this was not an acceptable option for me.

This raises the matter of whether clergy should realistically be expected to live differently from lay people. Are we, as priests, something less than human? Is it really desirable, from the church's point of view, for us to pretend to a sort of moral superiority denied the "person in the pew"? Is there justification for scrutinizing the private lives of the ordained? Such questions remain unresolved, despite their frequent surfacing in such controversial matters as the ordination of homosexuals and the remarriage of divorced clergy. And those of us in the priesthood are still considered somehow wanting whenever we cut across unexpected norms.

What, then, of the more cultural ethical questions that might be involved? What of the familiar arguments that have arisen in opposition to alternative reproduction methods? No one can claim that this baby was "purchased"; the donors were all unpaid volunteers, the pregnancy was all mine. (Such an accusation leveled against alternative conception is, in any case, often ill-informed.) No extraordinary medical measures were employed, no biological norms were violated.

There were no losers in this situation — all the participants were cheerfully willing; no outside parties were affected negatively. And it would be foolish to perceive Evan as a victim. Well cared for, deeply loved, happily surrounded by other children and role models of both sexes, she stands as good a chance as any child to be physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.

The real issue, I suppose, is that I have done something "different." I know many other single mothers. And I know many other clergy mothers. But possibly I am the first to fit both these categories. This is not the first time I have broken new ground, nor the first time that I have sensed a negative judgment for doing so. As many of us have learned, walking the point makes one more vulnerable to the snipers.

Yet there must be something more going on here than mere fear of the new. I would suggest that the core issues in this case are not moral or ethical at all. They embrace emotional, social, and power issues. Underneath the veneer of ethical concern which characterizes not only the questions directed to me but the whole range of vocal opposition to alternative reproduction is a familiar attitude which seeks to deny personal needs in deference to societal comfort.

Let us not mistake this for a nobler aim — we are not talking here of the need to sacrifice individualism to the greater

good of the community. We are talking, rather, about the price of non-conformity, which remains as high today as at any time in the '60s. We are talking about the risks of becoming an embarrassment to the system. We are talking about the acute discomfort caused by asking the social order to think a new thought. These are old themes, and well understood by most of us; they have merely been applied to a new subject.

The Vatican statement on alternative reproduction is perhaps a prime example of how faulty theology and distorted biblical scholarship can be applied in desperate support of the status quo. One cannot help but question what the underlying agenda might be for such a sweeping condemnation of so many possibilities for bringing happiness into human lives. For a denomination which prides itself on being "pro-life," Roman Catholicism has taken a peculiarly negative stance toward the propagation of life by any but the most limited, conventional, and primitive means. The statement is almost entirely negativist.

In rejecting the use of scientific and medical advances as unnatural, it joins forces with those fundamentalist elements which would deny that the Creator might work more slowly than instantaneously, or that any creative good might evolve as the human race explores its God-given abilities. By rejecting sexual activity as an expression of affection or instrument of pleasure, it posits the human person as a mere animal which needs to be tricked by pleasure into reproducing itself, and casts doubt on the wisdom of God in so obviously endowing sex with elements of supreme enjoyment. And in rejecting all alternative forms of reproduction, even those long held to be benign in our society, it denies the possibility of a vocation to parenthood, thus making procreation purely accidental, and depriving God of the ability to call individuals as God wills to this

most demanding and loving of all commitments. Where, in all of this, is a recognition of the New Testament message of love, of acceptance, of created good?

The fact is that such a frantic recourse to “tradition” merely evades the real ethical issues involved. What we have avoided doing, like almost all errors of omission, now confronts us with unanticipated urgency and force. Medical advances, high divorce rates, decreased fear of overpopulation, increased social acceptance of single parenthood, and the disappearance of illegitimacy as demeaning — all have combined to alter drastically our traditional views of parenthood.

What is needed from the churches, before indulging our inexhaustible capacity to pass judgment on others, is the development of an ethics of parenthood. Until recent years, we have casually assumed that: (1) Babies, in any quantity, were a gift of God to those who had the equipment and luck (sometimes good, sometimes bad) to engender them; (2) Those not similarly blessed with issue were simply not intended by God for this role; (3) The person giving birth to a child was naturally its best parent; (4) Once conceived, a child belonged to its biological parents, particularly the mother, absolutely and could only be taken away under the direst circumstances (blood has been almost universally considered a stronger factor in establishing parenthood than love).

It is time not only to reexamine these assumptions, but to forge ahead to devise a positive ethical basis upon which decisions about reproduction can be made realistically and faithfully. This is a prior task to the adoption of new laws and regulations.

We must start by dumping our biologically-oriented assumptions and asking a new set of hard questions:

- Who is a parent?
- Who should be a parent, and who should not?

• What is real parenthood? What establishes it? When does it begin and end?

• Whose interests are uppermost, and at what stage — the embryo/fetus/baby/child? the mother? the father? the state? Who can get hurt?

• What is the relative importance of love, the nuclear family, financial and other support resources, upbringing, parental ability?

• What principles can we develop to support such an ethics? What value do we place on life? love? scripture? tradition? culture? pragmatics? human needs?

• To what extent are we free to act on the decisions we make in this regard, and what means can we use to enforce those decisions? Can we deny or ensure parenthood to anyone? Should we?

• How do we assess our decisions in light of the New Testament (not the Old)?

• Whose business is it anyway?

Clearly, evolving a truly Christian response to these matters will entail a careful, often painful, look at where we have come from and where we are now in the real world. We must also look ahead without panicking about what we foresee. Careful balances will need to be struck. But we can no longer shirk our responsibility to reappraise our historical Christian attitudes in light of these realities all around us: Rampant child abuse, homeless, hungry and neglected children, the demise of marriage as the normative adult social pattern, the pain of the childless, the frenzied stress of the overproductive, the birth of innumerable children who will live only brief, pain-filled, twisted lives. To what extent have children — and parents, too — become pawns in the political games we play among ourselves to determine whose standards will rule? To what extent have we failed to consider what Jesus might have said about all of this?

These, I suggest, are the issues we must grapple with in defining an ethics of parenthood. These are the overriding concerns which make pabulum of the naive and voyeuristic moral questions so often cited in attacks on alternative reproduction. Ultimately, I want to believe that the church will have the courage and integrity to put aside reactionary judgment in favor of a radical reexamination of this most central of anthropological questions.

My experience so far gives strength to that hope. Because, in fact, the church has had something to say about the arrival of Evan into the world, and what it has said has been very positive. My bishop, a man of extensive parental experience, has expressed some surprise and a little uneasiness, but unqualified support and respect. Members of my parish — including the rector — threw a baby shower for me, resoundingly welcomed Evan into the church at her baptism (at which I officiated), and have given all of us vast quantities of love and affirmation.

Even clergy of other faiths with whom I have worked have been enthusiastic and sincere in their support. No doubt there is much whispering in the corners here and there. Perhaps some day I will be denied a committee appointment, passed over for a job — but on the whole, “the church” has quite loudly asked to share in my maternal happiness.

And then of course there is Evan. If there is a *raison d’être* for engaging in the ethical task at hand, then surely she is it. It is really quite unthinkable that this small person should not have been allowed to grace the world. It is equally unthinkable that others seeking parenthood as ardently as I should be denied the ready means to achieve it. There is too much potential for happiness here, too much opportunity for the love of God to shine through the love of human beings. Surely the church cannot allow this treasure to be squandered. ■





## Potpourri: Reflections on trying times

There used to be a popular piano bar in Greenwich Village called Marie's Crisis Cafe where you could slip out of your wet coat and into a dry martini and hear some good jazz in an historic setting. Marie's was supposedly on the site where Thomas Paine penned those immortal words, "These are the times that try men's souls."

If ole Tom thought he was on to something in the chaotic days of 1776, he should be around to see some of the flagrant abuses of civil liberties during these waning months of the U.S. Constitution's Bicentennial. Makes me want to skip the whole "We the People 200" farce.

For example, in the small town of Homestead, Pa., just outside Pittsburgh, police ended a four-year search for a particular rapist after employing an extreme and questionable approach. None of the elderly victims (all but one were White) had seen their attacker, but several reported "he spoke like a Black man." Homestead police last month asked that every Black male in town between the ages of 16 and 60 submit to a blood test and fingerprinting. When not many initially availed themselves of the opportunity to "enroll" in police files, officers began going door-to-door, even suggesting that an 81-year-old gentleman be tested. (I guess old stereotypes about the sexual prowess of Black men die hard.) Their theory: If you didn't submit voluntarily, you must have something to hide. Reportedly, 80% of the town's Black male population "volunteered." So much for innocent until proven guilty.

Some new federal regulations give us pause as well. Federally funded family planning clinics can no longer offer information or even answer questions concern-

ing abortion. This effectively denies poor women, forced to use these facilities, access to the same information available to their more affluent sisters. Also, all new immigrants must now pass an AIDS test before admission to this country. As we have noted before, there is no diagnostic test on the public market for AIDS, and 70 to 90% of those who test positively for HIV, which causes AIDS, will not get the disease. Three guesses who's most likely to be affected by these rulings. So much for equal access and those warm words of welcome emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty.

Under the rubric The Beat Goes On, we learned last month of the death of the Rev. Tollie L. Caution, stalwart Black priest and one-time Secretary of Negro Work for the national Episcopal Church. Dr. Caution's cavalier treatment at the hands of national church officials was the catalyst that in 1968 brought into being the Union of Black Clergy and Laity, now the Union of Black Episcopalians. The all-White inner circle (management team) at the national church center and on many diocesan staffs as well, reminds us why we needed a Tollie Caution on the national church staff then, why we need a watchdog organization such as the UBE now, and why we cannot let the present Ethnic Desks (Office of Black Ministries, etc.) be placed on anybody's "sunset list" of programs to be phased out in a time of budget belt-tightening.

Lastly, two recent issues of *The Living Church* provided us with a couple of real "gems." An Aug. 30 editorial titled "The Perils of Sincerity" likens good ole boys Ollie North and Admiral John Poindexter's breaking of the law to that of Civil Rights activists two decades ago, asking the ques-

tion, "What difference is there, other than one's personal sympathy with one cause rather than the other?" *TLC* does go on to say that it feels there is a difference but wishes it were more clearly stated or defined. Indeed there is a difference between covert, deceitful attempts to circumvent legislation and openly challenging unjust, immoral and discriminatory statutes—and being willing to accept the legal consequences of one's actions. Jesus made a few clear statements about obedience to a higher principle and authority. Two that come to mind are *Mark 2:23-28* and *Luke 14:1-6*. They're worth looking up.

In a Sept. 6 piece, "A Matter of Timing," the Suffragan Bishop of Texas regretfully urges "patience" in the matter of consecrating women bishops, suggesting that if within a decade (a short time in the life of the church, he notes) the Church of England and the rest of the Anglican Communion are not on board with the idea, that's time enough for the American Church to get on with it and do what is right. After all, he reasons in a poor analogy, the framers of the Constitution — many of whom were opposed to slavery — failed to abolish that evil in the document, but in the long run (which I suppose is a "short time" in the life of a race of people) that failure made possible the creation of a USA, "for which even the enslaved portion of the population and their descendants have had reason to be grateful." Thanks a bunch, but I don't see a helluva lot to celebrate. Like Paine said, "These are the times. . ."

# In praise of mothers: Chicken wings 'n things

by Roberta Nobleman

I remember one particular sermon when the kids were little. The preacher was holding up his mother as a shining example of selfless devotion to her family. Her ultimate sacrifice: "She always took the wing of the chicken." He further extolled her maternal devotion by describing how his father always took the breast, the two sons took the legs and his younger sister had one wing, his mother, the other. The whole chicken had obviously been made to conform to a patriarchal family lifestyle. I consoled myself, also a chicken wing-eater, with the thought that at least mother and daughter can pick on the chicken (after they have done the dishes, of course).

In those days, going to church was in itself a supreme test of the Martyr Mother Syndrome. At least, when the kids were little, they went. Now I have the pleasure of a 16-year-old who is asleep on Sunday mornings, an occasional scowling 14-year-old sitting next to me with something unprintable on her T-shirt, and a pair of the most ripped and torn cut-off jeans she can find muttering "Mom, this is boring." With all kinds of bribery I can induce my 11-year-old son to come to church, but as he stated plainly several times, "I've got nothing against Jesus, Mom, but church. . ."

Way back 10 years ago there was the ordeal of Getting Everyone Ready to Go to Church. The baby of course had to be

changed out of the eight-zippered snow-suit two minutes before the already late departure time, and I remember arriving at church one day to find that I was wearing my sweater inside out and that I had a nice bit of baby throw-up adorning the shoulder. (The ushers wore flowers; I wore throw-up.) Finally, we'd hustle in, and three elderly ladies would take one look at us and change pews. I don't blame them; I do the same myself now.

Then it would begin: The baby refused to stay with the baby-sitting service in the parish hall and could be heard screaming lustily (you know it's yours); the 4-year-old has already ripped out Hymns 233 and 234 from the Hymn Book and is busy with the magic marker scribbling on the Welcome Cards; the 6-year-old has to be excused for the third time to go to the bathroom and stays there for a half hour (you pray for missing children). During the hymn "Once to Every Man and Nation" which you are manfully singing with baby perched on one hip, and 4-year-old clutching the other crying, "Mommy, I want to go home"; the 6-year-old crawls all the way under the pews to annoy the three elderly ladies. During the exchange of the peace (?) before communion, you give up and go home. This is called Worship.

Of course there are moments of respite, and sometimes our children can teach us more about God than the church. I remember one occasion when Paul, my son, was about 8 years old, and we were into a heavy theological discussion on the nature of eternal life. At Communion, Paul refused to eat his wafer, and kept it clasped in his none too clean little boy's hand all the way back

to the pew. Heated discussion between mother and child:

"Paul, you have to eat it; it's Christ's Body."

"I know, Mom, but I don't want to die, so I'm going to keep it, in case Chris Carl beats me up again."

"That's using Jesus like Popeye's spinach. . ."

"What's wrong with that? It helped Popeye beat up. . ."

"Paul, EAT IT!"

Meanwhile the whole conversation had been earnestly observed by a 2-year-old in the pew in front of us. Suddenly Paul looked the little girl straight in the eye, broke the wafer in half, and popped it into her mouth and his own, singing, "Fame! We're gonna live forever!" The 2-year-old's first Communion.

Apart from the church, I am leaving readers to fill in all the other 4,759 arrows of martyrdom that we mothers endure — St. Sebastian style — every day of the week. The church's saints, of course, include many martyrs. There's a whole gang of virgins that were martyred in Germany with St. Ursula to escape the fate worse than death. Very few genuine mothers make it to be saints, although a cursory glance at any old graveyard will reveal that half of the inhabitants died in childbirth and were immediately replaced with wife (and mother) number two, three, or four — but that's not martyrdom.

The two great Feminine Role Models are the Virgin Mary, who had a child but no sex, and Mary Magdalene who had sex but no children (everyone knows prostitutes don't get pregnant). What is a mother to do? There are all those moth-

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ers in the New Testament with their pregnant wombs and breasts full of milk — but Jesus isn't nearly as impressed with them as is St. Paul ("women redeemed only through childbearing"). Then there's the sword that Simeon saw piercing Mary's heart at the Presentation in the Temple. All the stories I've ever read said Mary loved her sword — and polished it daily — or is that a piece of male propaganda? I decided to interview Mary to hear what she had to say about the Martyr Mother Syndrome. . .

In her freshly laundered blue robe, head decently covered, Our Blessed Mother stepped down off her pedestal for a quick conversation. (Do you know of any mother who ever had a *long* conversation?):

"Well — Hail, Mary, full of grace. . ."

"It's all right, dear, I know the rest. What would you like to know?"

"Mary, please, what was mothering like for you?"

"It wasn't easy, especially my oldest; as I described it to another journalist, nearly 2,000 years ago, it often felt like a sword going straight through my heart."

"That bad? Even in church?"

"Synagogue. You forget, I'm Jewish. They often do. Synagogue was the worst of all. You've never heard all those stories about what He did in synagogue? And as for the Temple. . . Right after the Bar Mitzvah we lost Him for three days and three nights. I don't think I slept a wink those nights. Then pushing past all those men in the Temple — only to find Him sitting there like He owned the place."

"Mary, you sound upset."

"I was upset. Not just for myself, but for Joe too. We'd done our best, brought Him up with as much wisdom as we could muster, but all that anxiety, and having the rest of the children in tow. James was a terrible two, Anna. . ."

"Wait a minute. The church I go to teaches that the sisters and brothers were

Jesus' cousins. Or else St. Joseph's children by a former marriage."

"Let me ask you a question. You've read the Gospels. Does Jesus strike you as an only child?"

"I'll have to ponder that in my heart. You see, I'm the first born in my family, too. Oh, I'd love to know about the brothers and sisters — especially the sisters. Didn't anyone ever write their story? You should have written it down, Mary."

"Write? Nobody ever taught me to read or write — and even if I could, you tell me, how many interruptions did it take for you to get this article finished?"

"Point taken. Now, you're also considered Mother of the Church. After 2,000 years, could you say something about this?"

"In a hazelnut shell, as Mother Julian would say, my first child (we call him R.C. for short), ADORES me."

"Oh, come now, Mary, doesn't all that Mariology thrill you to pieces?"

"My dear, it's all too much, and a lot of what it hides underneath! How can I explain? Let's move on. Then there's the twins — Greek and Russian Orthodox; they adore me too — icons, incense, candles. I have a real soft spot for them, but just ask them about women priests, and all the boys get hernias! Next, there was my little Anglican. . ."

"Oh, that's me. I'm Episcopalian."

"I love Anglicans, too, dear. A mother's love is boundless, in spite of everything they do. Excuse me, dear. Since we've been talking there have been at least 3,000 petitions to be dealt with. I intercede, you see."

"Explain for my Protestant friends, please."

"All right. Remember when you were little and you wanted something from your father? The only way to get it was to ask mom to ask him? Must fly. Shalom, shalom."

"Goodbye, Mary. Pray for us!" ■

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# The Woman's Creed

by Rachel Conrad-Wahlberg

*(Upon pondering The Apostles' Creed and wondering  
what it would have been like had women written it.)*

I believe in God  
who created woman and man  
in God's own image  
and gave both sexes  
the care of the earth.

I believe in Jesus  
child of God  
chosen of God  
born of the woman Mary  
who listened to women and liked them  
who stayed in their homes  
who discussed the Kingdom with them  
who was followed and financed  
by women disciples.

I believe in Jesus  
who discussed theology  
with a woman at a well  
and first confided in her  
his messiahship  
who motivated her to go and tell  
her great news to the city

I believe in Jesus who received anointing  
from a woman at Simon's house  
who rebuked the men guests  
who scorned her  
I believe in Jesus  
who said this woman  
will be remembered  
for what she did --  
minister to Jesus

I believe in Jesus  
who acted boldly  
to reject the blood taboo  
of ancient societies

by healing the audacious woman  
who touched him

I believe in Jesus who healed  
a woman on the sabbath  
and made her straight  
because she was  
a human being

I believe in Jesus  
who spoke of God  
as a woman seeking the lost coin  
as a woman who swept  
seeking the lost

I believe in Jesus  
who thought of pregnancy and birth  
with reverence  
not as punishment -- but  
as wrenching event  
a metaphor for transformation  
born again  
anguish-into-joy

I believe in Jesus  
who spoke of himself  
as a mother hen  
who would gather her chicks  
under her wings

I believe in Jesus who appeared  
first to Mary Magdalene  
who sent her with the bursting message  
GO AND TELL . . .

I believe in the wholeness  
of the Savior  
in whom there is neither  
Jew nor Greek  
slave nor free  
male nor female  
for we are all one  
in salvation

I believe in the Holy Spirit  
as she moves over the waters  
of creation  
and over the earth.

I believe in the Holy Spirit  
as she yearns within us to  
pray for those things  
too deep for words

I believe in the Holy Spirit  
the woman spirit of God  
who like a hen  
created us  
and gave us birth  
and covers us

"The Woman's Creed" from *Jesus and the  
Freed Woman* by Rachel Conrad-Wahlberg.  
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# Women clergy double over 5 years

**T**he Episcopal Church now has nearly 1200 ordained clergywomen — approximately 800 of whom are priests — and statistics over recent years evidence a steady growth.

Only 15 dioceses, several of these newly created, refuse to ordain women, compared to double that number in 1977. In general, the figures reflect a consistent pattern of acceptance of ordained women.

These facts were revealed recently in an updated study by the Rev. Sandra Boyd and the Rev. Suzanne Hiatt, who have kept a computer list of women clergy since 1980. The two women priests gather data through

clerical directories, journals, diocesan newsletters and papers, and through information supplied by the women themselves. Their statistics are "reliable, though unofficial," they said, since the Episcopal Church does not keep statistics on women clergy and their assignments per se.

Figures reveal an impressive number of women in leadership posts. Parish calls have more than doubled over the past five years, and one woman, the Rev. Geralyn Wolf, serves as dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Louisville, Ky.

The first woman to become an Episcopal priest was Jeannette Pic-

card (1895-1981), who along with 10 others was ordained July 29, 1974, in the so-called "irregular ordinations" of the Philadelphia Eleven in the Church of the Advocate. Four more women were ordained Sept. 19, 1975 in Washington, D.C., and the Episcopal Church finally officially recognized women's ordination at General Convention in 1976.

Since then, barriers to women's ordination have steadily diminished, as the women go about their business with dedication and professional skill, Boyd and Hiatt said. A table showing growth from 1982 to June 1, 1987 follows:

|                              | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1987    |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Parish Rectors               | 24   | 34   | 47   | 70   | 110     |
| Parish Vicars                | 34   | 44   | 60   | 66   | 81      |
| Parish Interims              | 7    | 9    | 11   | 10   | 24      |
| Parish In Charge             | 11   | 11   | 15   | 24   | 29      |
| Parish Co-Pastors            | 7    | 6    | 8    | 11   | 11      |
| Parish Assoc./Assistants     | 222  | 266  | 363  | 434  | 497     |
| Parish Non-Stipendiary       | 55   | 55   | 57   | 56   | 28      |
| Cathedral Deans              | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1       |
| Cathedral Canons             | 5    | 7    | 7    | 7    | 16      |
| Cathedral Assistants         | *    | *    | *    | *    | 11      |
| Diocesan Staff/Consultant    | 40   | 35   | 50   | 57   | 41      |
| Seminary/College Fac., Staff | 15   | 17   | 13   | 11   | 21      |
| College/School Chaplain      | 33   | 35   | 36   | 37   | 39      |
| Hospital/Prison Chaplain     | 22   | 26   | 36   | 42   | 44      |
| Nursing Home Chaplain        | *    | *    | *    | *    | 11      |
| Pastoral Counselor           | *    | *    | *    | *    | 6       |
| Alcoholism Counselor         | *    | *    | *    | *    | 3       |
| Religious Order              | 8    | 8    | 7    | 7    | 9       |
| Retired                      | 36   | 32   | 29   | 27   | 32      |
| Unemployed                   | 6    | 11   | 10   | 5    | 2       |
| Other/Unknown                | 78   | 117  | 104  | 104  | 151     |
| TOTALS                       | 603  | 713  | 853  | 968  | ** 1167 |

\* Unknown: Statistics were not broken down in this category in year indicated.

\*\* No statistics listed for 1986.

# Blessing gay relationships

by Malcolm Boyd

Ray and Jim stood before me, a priest, at the altar of our parish church late on a Sunday afternoon. Gay men, they had invited members of their nuclear families and close friends to participate in and witness their exchange of vows as lovers and life partners.

Devout Roman Catholics, but unwelcome in their own church as an openly gay couple, they had lived together in close commitment for three years. Ray had phoned eight months before, asked me to lunch and raised the possibility of having a church blessing of their union. The next week I spent an evening with both men in their home. Our meeting lasted six hours. They had lots of questions to ask, not only about the church and its teaching and ritual, but also about themselves: Where were they to go from here in their relationship?

In the ensuing weeks I met with Ray and Jim individually. Many more questions surfaced about meanings of commitment, fidelity, mutuality, loving. Our preparation for the ritual inside the church required far more time and energy than I assumed it would.

Now, they felt the moment had come to strengthen and test their bonding in the shared, public Christian ceremony of union. Support systems for gay and lesbian couples are tenuous at best; *this* would be a beneficial, nurturing kind of support, and a shared prayer to God.

At the moment in the liturgy when the two men faced each other to recite the vows they had written (and shared with me privately, but not with each other until this moment), Ray said: "This laurel of olive is a symbol of peace, and is fashioned as laurels worn in ancient Greece. As their culture recognized and celebrated diverse types of love, today I share this noble gesture of bonding with you.

"Father and Mother God, we ask you to bless and strengthen this bond we share . . . to nurture this union and allow it to grow: not as one force, but as two columns supporting the building's roof, reaching upward to the sky with each its own solid base.

"I am committed to strive for this equality and to look upon

you as my brother — lover — partner — friend."

Then Jim, facing his partner in front of the altar addressed Ray with his vows: "Today I look upon you and say: I love you, like I've said it a thousand times before. But this is different, it's after passion and anger and longing, doubt and anxiety; alongside caring and respect and gratitude, imagining the possibilities of us together. I want to be with you."

Secure, long-range, committed relationships between gay men have taken on a new significance since the emergence of AIDS. A major way to prevent AIDS is to practice safe sex; a major way to practice safe sex is to contain one's sexual activity within a loving relationship.

When the church refuses to bless committed gay relationships, it attacks their stability by refusing at least one measure of societal-religious support. It also denies a sign of the love of God to those who need and ask for it.

Psychotherapist Nina Fields, author of *The Well-Seasoned Marriage*, says that the best, most satisfying, liberating and exciting state in which to live one's life is in a happy long-term marriage. Her study shows that people in such a relationship tend to be very independent; whole people with lives and interests of their own. "Traditionally, women are more seeking of intimacy than men," according to Fields, "but these couples prove that quality can be learned by men too. Real intimacy is one of the perks of well-seasoned marriages."

Intimacy is also a perk of well-seasoned gay and lesbian relationships. Gay men have a need to seek genuine, deep intimacy with a partner because a gay relationship/extended family quite often has to provide most of the nurture for itself. It is frequently denied sanction and warm, loving support from the partners' nuclear families, their local church, their business associates, and immediate neighbors.

*You balance my frenzy  
and left-brain thinking  
my discomfort with myself.  
You make me laugh, feel tender and strong  
glow with happiness  
help me to remember who I am.*

A gay couple celebrates certain sacramental-and-ordinary moments that take on considerable significance. I know, because I share my life with a gay male partner, Mark Thompson. I find that our sacramental-and-ordinary times

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together are not unlike those of many others who live in long-term, committed, loving relationships — in both nuclear and extended families. In such moments non-verbal as well as verbal vows are expressed, repeated, and strengthened.

One such moment we spend together is when we sit down quietly and share conversation and a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) at the end of a work-filled, stressful day. It is a moment of communion. We meet each other once again in a fresh, open, vulnerable, sharing way. I hear about Mark's day at his office — on the phone, dealing with lots of people, situations, sometimes crises; and he hears about mine. It is a brief but psychologically valuable unloading time when the day's luggage gets put away.

I remember once, after Mark had recounted a particularly hectic incident from his day's work, he looked at me and said: "If I can't tell you about it, whom can I tell?" Precisely. I feel the same way.

Another sacramental-and-ordinary time shared by us is Saturday mornings when we shop at the neighborhood supermarket. Getting ready for the expedition can conjure up a vision of Marco Polo preparing to go to China: Several stray shopping lists need to be correlated, a clear decision must be made concerning the moment to depart, windows secured, doors locked, get into a sweater on a cold day or a raincoat if it's pouring. And then, get started.

Inside the supermarket a half-hour of unique intimacy unfolds during the shopping ritual. If I push the shopping cart, Mark is the navigator and carries the shopping list, or vice versa. Don't forget the sourdough bread! Ground round for barbecued hamburgers (our Saturday night staple)! Toilet paper, trash bags, fresh mushrooms, bath-size soap for the shower, mayonnaise, avocados, tomato sauce, the giant-size laundry detergent.

*I want you to be with me  
to share all that lies ahead  
to experience family  
to share success and failure  
divide grief, savor friendship  
learn about life  
serve our community and friends  
to know love.*

Saturday afternoon, unless we choose to go out, can easily become another sacramental-and-ordinary time. Mark stretches out on a blanket in the yard and takes a luxurious nap. I am in a mood to putter around the house: Place sheets and towels in the washer, even run the vacuum. In a short while Mark will weed the garden while I sit down to read the latest issue of *The New Yorker* or *Opera News*. Being quiet together, respecting each other's quiet time, is a well-earned delight after a busy week in the fast lane of hard, long work

hours.

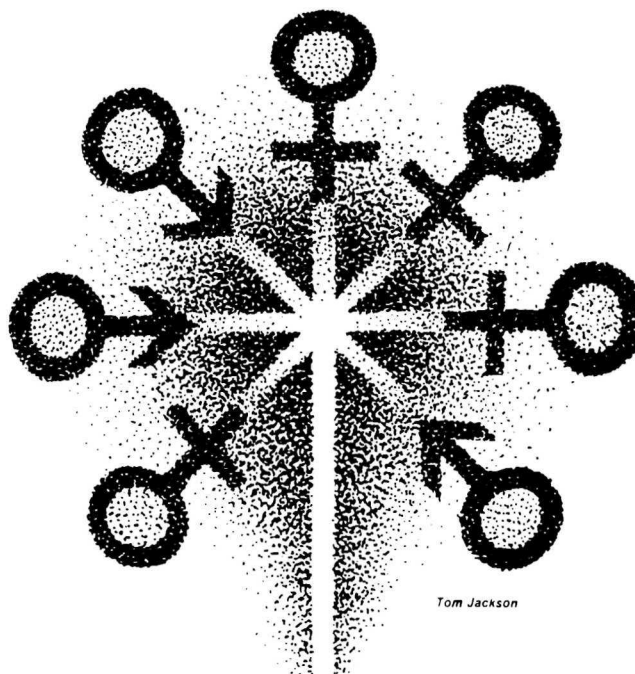
A special sacramental-and-ordinary moment is that of hugging and holding each other in bed just before falling to sleep. It is nurturing and healing beyond words.

There is also the morning ritual. The alarm clock emits a sharp sound rather like that of a crash accompanying a seven-point quake. I reach out, push the button, turn it off. I reflect a moment, look through the large window over our bed at the brightening sky. Mark stirs at the alarm but does not wake up. His face wears its usual early morning expression of angelic, peaceful innocence.

I get up, unlock the front door, grab the morning paper, walk into the kitchen, start the coffee, sit down in the breakfast nook to read about political scandals, terrorists, basketball scores and new movies. Mark cheerfully appears, pours a cup of coffee, gives me a brush of his lips against mine, and picks up a section of the paper.

So, a new day has begun. I am grateful that Mark shares it with me — casually chatting about some stories in the news, making future plans, just being here. We are partners. God knows, it is a form of grace for us to be happily and creatively together instead of solitary; a rich blessing to be sharers of a common road that intersects our individual paths.

*I commit myself to being your partner  
to help when I can, give as I am able  
struggle with when we need to  
share what I am  
return to when I am angry  
cherish, freely, as a friend,  
lover, and gift of my life.* ■



Tom Jackson

**T**he 1950s were difficult years for THE WITNESS. The brief fling the world had with idealism and international solidarity during World War II had degenerated as the big powers frantically began grabbing as much territory as possible and becoming more and more paranoid about each other. Then, hanging over the increasingly tense world situation was the shadow of the Bomb.

The Bomb was the motif of the decade. The destruction it had wrought on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been well documented. But the Bomb meant power, and U.S. leaders rapidly became locked into an arms race with the Soviet Union. In 1952, the United States conducted its first peacetime nuclear bomb test, obliterating Eniwetok atoll in the Pacific Ocean. The following year, the Soviets exploded their bomb and the contest was on in earnest.

It was a hard time to be a peacemaker. The decade started with the Korean War and finished with Vietnam. Senator Joe McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) were busy hunting for Communists and if a person believed, or had ever believed, in reconciliation and cooperation with the Russians, he or she was a “dangerous Red,” out to destroy America. THE WITNESS chronicled the trials of Episcopal clergy and laypeople hounded out of jobs, dragged before government inquisitions, and even imprisoned, because of their beliefs. Arthur Miller’s play “The Crucible” about the witch trials and executions in colonial New England debuted in 1953, the same year that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sent to the electric chair, condemned to die on questionable evidence that they had sold atomic secrets to the Soviets.

In 1954, the McCarthy era ended when defense attorney Joseph Welch, crying, “Have you no shame, no sense of decency, sir?” stripped McCarthy of his pretenses and revealed a power-mad despot to an audience which numbered in the millions, thanks to the new miracle of TV.

But there were those who refused to be intimidated. William B. Spofford, Sr. proudly owned up to his “subversive” activities in the ‘30s and ‘40s when called before an investigating committee. He had been named by Louis Budenz, a former Communist Party activist turned informer. It was an ungrateful act on Budenz’s part, because when he was an impoverished Party organizer in the 1920s, Spofford had given him money and a pair of pants.

Only a few years before, a world war had been fought for freedom, and the fever of independence was in the air. THE WITNESS deplored the violence but supported the aims of the Mau-Mau rebellion against the British in Kenya. The magazine was also a strong voice against the construction of the inhumane and brutal system of apartheid in South Africa. And the editors did not join the general hysteria against the start of the Cuban revolution in 1956, figuring the United States had never had the right to treat the island nation as if it were our backyard.

But, as always, the cause dearest to the heart of THE WITNESS was civil rights. The magazine was outraged and disgusted when the National Council of Churches, including its Episcopalian member, Bishop Frank Sterrett, timidly refused to ratify a resolution condemning segregation.

The dream of racial equality, however, could not be stopped. Black people were willing to fight, and sometimes die, for freedom. One day in 1955 in Montgomery, Ala., Mrs. Rosa Parks, a quiet, hard-working seamstress, refused to give her bus seat up to a White person and started a revolution.

No Black person rode a bus in Montgomery for nearly a year, until segregation on buses ended. In 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that unsegregated transportation was the law of the land. Two years before, the Court had issued the historic ruling that school segregation was illegal. But reaction from the White ruling class in the South was swift and harsh. White Citizens’ Councils, thinly disguised vigilante groups, sprang up all over the South. The Councils, along with the Ku Klux Klan, tried to keep Black people and their White supporters “in their place,” through intimidation, violence and even murder. A courageous young preacher from Georgia, the Rev. Martin Luther King, began to emerge as the voice and conscience of the civil rights movement. For his boldness and courage, he was constantly jailed, his house fire-bombed, and he and his family repeatedly threatened.

In 1957, when Black students showed up at Central High School in Little Rock, Ark., they were accompanied by the National Guard. Gov. Orval Faubus had defied U.S. government orders to desegregate the state’s schools and refused to do anything about the violent demonstrations against the Black students.

While the Civil Rights movement gained momentum, the



# The inquisition and H-bomb

by Susan Pierce

Cold War continued to heat up. THE WITNESS condemned the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, but felt that the world wouldn't end because the U.S.S.R. had managed to launch its first space satellite — Sputnik — before the United States. And the magazine worried about how young President Kennedy, elected in 1960, was squaring off for a confrontation with the Soviets over Cuba. THE WITNESS also deplored a meddling foreign policy that resulted in the CIA-backed overthrow of Iran's socialist government in 1953, the bungled U-2

spy plane mission shot down over the U.S.S.R. in 1960 and the Bay of Pigs debacle in Cuba in 1961.

The world breathed a cautious sigh of relief as the new decade dawned, having avoided a nuclear holocaust. Americans weren't aware of their government's growing role in some obscure Asian civil war. The New Frontier under a young, energetic President looked limitless. But THE WITNESS continued to remind its readers that the struggle had hardly begun. Excerpts from the years 1952 - 1961 follow.

## Editor gets F.B.I file

For the past year the National Council for American-Soviet Friendship has been put through a gruelling investigation by the Subversive Activities Control Board, with the Rev. Richard Morford, its exec, standing the brunt of it. When the time came for the defense to have its say, I asked Dick if it would help if I appeared as a volunteer witness. The answer was yes, so last July 9 I was on the stand, under oath, for a day.

The official report of the proceedings I now have. The two government attorneys started with where I was born in New Hampshire and ended the session when I returned to Tunkhannock, Pa., where I now live. About everything that happened between those two events was brought out during the hearings — and quite a lot of stuff that never did happen.

I rather enjoyed the day after the first half hour when I sat on the edge of my chair wondering what sort of trick questions would be pulled. But, after I got the feeling that I could take care of myself, I enjoyed saying "yes" to questions about past deeds designed to show me up as a bad character. That's where we are today in the United States. Things that most of us did in the 30-40 decades of which we were proud, and still should be proud, are

brought out today to prove that you are "subversive."

After it was all over, the attorney for the National Council, David Rein, said to me, "Well, there it is." So I said, "There what is?" And he replied, "The F.B.I. file on one Rev. William Benjamin Spofford."

So you can be sure that the gentlemen in Washington have their own file on you — certainly if you have done anything in the past 30 years that could be remotely called Christian Social Action. (William B. Spofford, Sr., 2/24/55)

## How low is low

Our "Low Sunday" text is the gutlessness of American Protestant Christianity. The illustration is the recent meeting of the general board of the National Council of Churches in New York. In the shadow of Holy Week, they were unable to find against racial segregation within Christianity. Under discussion was a report, "The Churches and Segregation."

The head of the Protestant Episcopal delegation, Bishop Frank Sterrett of the Diocese of Bethlehem, led off by saying: "I could be more confident in voting for this document if it did not state that we cannot be true to our Christian faith and practice segregation at the same time.

Does this mean that if segregation is practiced in certain grade schools in the deep South, the people who practice it are not Christian? I know people who are as good Christians as myself, if not better, who do this. I wish that we might amend part of the report, to express the idea that we do not consider the people who practice segregation in some circumstances as any less Christian."

The following type of supporter rallied to his cause. Mrs. James Wyker, Columbia, Mo., member of Disciples of Christ, pleaded for "going slowly, as we must go." The Rev. Eugene C. Blake, Presbyterian, wanted "different degrees of segregation. Another opined that "obeying the law cannot be called un-Christian."

There was protest, led by the Negro denominations who refused to be provoked into leaving the council. However, the force in favor of racial segregation won the day.

This affront to Christian brothers was flaunted as organized Christianity was preparing to celebrate Holy Week, when the Lord Jesus cleansed the temple of the money-changers who were more concerned with their own privilege and position than with righteousness; when the Scribes and Pharisees were plotting to

crucify the Lord because "it is expedient that one man should die and that the whole nation not perish;" when Jesus was choosing Jerusalem with its degradation, mocking and cruel crucifixion, instead of turning back to comfortable Galilee.

The point of spinelessness and double-tongued dishonesty is that, while re-enacting the Lord's Passion, they are saying: "Let's not do anything that may hurt our 'prestige' (usually meaning income.)" Or, "Let's put the state and its secular ideas above the word of God." (Nazi Germany rose because German Christians fell for this one.) Or, "A little sin is not so bad, if it is divisible into degrees," as though a person could be "a little bit" dead. And they pled for "unity," a unity with sin and the Devil.

Christ said, "And whosoever shall cause one of these little one that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him that a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." St Paul wrote to the Galatians, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free." And the first centuries of the Church are bright with the blood of martyrs who dared to flaunt their love of Christ and man in the face of an arrogant degenerate and sinfully pagan state . . .

But we suppose that giving God a White supremacy, Jim Crow mind fits the saying, "I know people who are as good Christians as myself . . . do this (i.e. practice segregation)." The question we would like to ask is this; "Is any man, or bishop for that matter, the proper criterion of Christian morality?" Isn't Christ's character the moral standard by which we live? (WITNESS editorial 4/24/52)

### What editors stand for

THE WITNESS has stood consistently for peace; for civil liberties — which

means that we are against loyalty oaths and other fascist legislation now on the books or before Congress; against racial discrimination in all forms, and a lot of other things that many of our critics once stood for but have now forsaken for one reason or another — mostly, I suspect, because of lack of guts.

I see no tendency on the part of any of our editors to run out on the tremendous issues before the nation and world. So it is likely that we will continue to prefer peace to war; brotherhood to racial divisions; liberty to repression. We are motivated by what we understand to be the Christian religion. The fact that the communists, differently motivated, often take similar positions hardly justifies us in forsaking what we believe to be the Christian faith and its application to issues of the day. (William B. Spofford, Sr., 3/20/52)

### Caesar outstrips us

Liberal-minded, peace-loving people had almost come to the point of wondering whether the country could shake off the chains that bind; the fear, dishonesty, and confusion which has brought compromise and paralysis in our government.

Then, like a clean wind sweeping in from the sea, came the Supreme Court decision on segregation in the schools. No compromise, no captiousness, no narrow legalism ties it to particular cases. The decision establishes on the ground of human dignity and sociological fact that "separate but equal" is a contradiction in terms.

We shout. "Hallelujah," but as we do, we realize with same that we use the language of the most segregated institution of its size in America, the Christian Church. Timid Christians, do you still hang back? You have broken the law of Christ these many years, for the law of Caesar excused the breaking of it. To whom do you now turn to justify yourselves? (WITNESS editorial 6/24/54)

### Protests H-bomb blasts

I wish to add my name to those who protest against our continued tests of atomic weapons, especially in the Pacific. As our press reports have now made plain, our March 1 H-bomb explosion burned and sickened and infected with radioactivity a group of Japanese fishermen; possibly poisoned the fishermen's catch, not only destroying essential food, but endangering the lives of the people who handled or ate it before the warning was given; and possibly poisoning other fish which may be caught in the future. It is not easy to understand how we can feel justified in risking the contamination of essential food supplies in areas far from our shores, and for people whose need for food is so desperate.

Doesn't this episode suggest that our conduct of foreign relations needs some prayerful reappraisal? Surely it was a terrible thing that our country — a democratic nation which calls itself Christian — should have been the first to use atomic weapons, even if during a war. But how immeasurably more terrible that we should, in a time of nominal peace, continue to "improve" and manufacture and stockpile these increasingly sinister weapons of destruction, sickness and terror. The excuse that they will "deter aggression" seems to be not only highly questionable, but anti-democratic since this concept is the equivalent of ordering all the governments and peoples of the world to accept our definitions and our policies or risk extermination. Surely this is a totalitarian rather than a democratic approach to foreign relations. (Helen Mears, 5/6/54)

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# The opportunity to love

by Nathan E. Williams

**“D**on’t get mad. Get even.” This popular maxim is more important than we like to admit. Getting even is accepted as an unpleasant, but unavoidable, fact of life. It has even become an element of foreign policy.

An incident reported by *Luke (9:51-62)* focuses on this attitude. It is so odd that one is tempted to by-pass it in favor of more memorable stories like The Prodigal Son and The Good Samaritan which are also unique to Luke.

Jesus and his disciples were in a pilgrim throng heading for Jerusalem. The pilgrims tried to take the central route through the highlands, only to be turned back by a village of hostile Samaritans. The rebuff did not sit well, and some disciples were ready for revenge. “Shall we call down fire from heaven to consume them?” they asked.

Elijah is said to have done this. He was at odds with the king of Israel. The king had been injured in an accident. Elijah predicted that the accident would lead to death, and proclaimed this God’s judgment on the monarch. When the king sent a detachment of troops to seize Elijah, the soldiers were destroyed by fire which he called down upon them.

Maybe the disciples thought they could duplicate this feat. Probably they were ready to join others in the group who wanted to burn the village that refused them hospitality. They might have called such destruction “fire from heaven,” the judgment of God.

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**The Rev. Nathan E. Williams, M. Div.,** is minister of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh.

One thing is clear: Jesus refused to embrace their attitude or their plans.

A leading commentator asserts that Luke is seeking in this section to develop “the thought of the contrast between the disciples and the outside world, including the hostile and unrepentant, and the half-hearted.” Jesus’ disciples are expected to be different. We have heard, since we were children, that believing in Jesus should affect how we act and think.

And the choices believers make are painful because they cut across the grain of popular wisdom. Popular wisdom holds, “If you are wronged, get even.” Jesus knew the popular mind. He admonished, “You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say unto you . . .”

Elijah embodied the spirit of popular wisdom — a real “blood and guts” guy whose mission in life was to foment rebellion and revolution in the name of God. When Elisha succeeded his mentor he prayed to receive a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. Elijah and his successor instigated a most violent and cruel coup.

Tradition held that Elijah did not die, but was taken to heaven in a whirlwind. Contemporary religious speculation looked for Elijah to return before the coming of the Messiah. The return of Elijah can only mean the revival of violence and revenge as political options. Zealots and sicarii (dagger-men/assassins, “terrorists” in modern parlance) were ready to put this methodology to the test. Some people regarded Jesus as Elijah returned, as the disciples reported to their master. (*Luke 9:19*). People

were prepared to welcome the leader who would restore the spirit of Elijah. Jesus rejected the spirit of Elijah,

The spirit of Elijah belongs to another age, a destructive and unproductive age, not the new age which God is seeking to bring about. Jesus rebuked those who were ready to give the “fire from heaven” treatment to the Samaritan villagers. “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (*Luke 9:55*). The second sentence, omitted in some English versions, is found in ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. This rebuke may be partially paraphrased, “You incline to the spirit of Elijah. I do not.” Jesus quietly went another way.

Faith should help to make human action truly free and responsible. We can give opportunity for the Spirit of God to influence our lives; or, we can remain captive to the spirit of Elijah.

Luke is teaching believers that hostility and rejection are not the opportunity to get even, but the opportunity to love. Faith demands active goodness towards those who reject us and hate us. That is the Spirit of Jesus.

Christians live out their calling in communities and groups that establish the matrix of their being. How should Christian citizens in a powerful nation respond when their nation says of other nations and people, “These fellows won’t receive us. They don’t do things our way, on our terms, or uphold our values.”

If we opt for “fire from heaven,” do we know what manner of spirit we are? ■

# AIDS public health policy

## Will church punish or heal?

by Reginald G. Blaxton

I want to reflect on some of the special social issues raised by the advent of a strange virus of unknown origins — specifically, the relationship of AIDS public health policy to religious life.

At first glance, it may be surprising that the religious community should be expected to make any contribution to the formulation of public health policy. Indeed, it is one of the continuing paradoxes of American life that in times of social crisis we invariably turn to the institutions of religious life — churches, synagogues and mosques — to help make sense of occurrences otherwise beyond our powers to explain.

It is a pastor's commonplace that human beings, to live lives of dignity and worth, must be able to make sense out of life. Our integrity, our sense of direction, require that we be able to piece together and comprehend the tangled and conflicting elements in our lives. Religious traditions — ancient and modern, Eastern and Western — claim to mediate a perspective which will provide both meaning and purpose to believers. Religious traditions help men and women to feel that they are in control, that they are not simply a bundle of molecules adrift in a cosmos indifferent to their deepest needs, hopes, concerns, and anxieties.

Religious traditions, of course, may also serve other purposes. Faith fulfills many functions, personal and social. But it is the quest for meaning that makes religious tradition such a potent social force, one that public health planners have considered mobilizing in the fight against AIDS. When human beings are suddenly subject to disease and death in the midst of a scientifically sophisticated, technologically-tooled secular society, a normal reaction is to turn to the richly storied sphere of religion and ask the reason why.

There is no consensus among religious authorities on either the theological significance of AIDS or what exactly would constitute a religious approach to this public health issue. In the absence of such consensus, officials must formulate policy on the basis of the best scientific data available, and should not be swayed by theological concerns. The legal and ethical justification for a non-theologically based policy is based on the first amendment to the Constitution, which advises, "No

law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion." The exclusion of religious beliefs goes against the grain of some public health planners who appreciate the stability of religious institutions, but again, these beliefs have no place in forming public health policy.

But one of the most problematic areas of AIDS policy concerns its ability to overcome the religiously-based biases that many people have about the disease, its origins and prevention. In spite of the rise of epidemiological science in the last century, many religious people still conceive of disease as a punishment from God. As political scientist Dennis Altman writes:

*It is not only individual transgressions that are seen as leading to illness; there is a powerful tradition of seeing epidemics as the result of social collapse and degeneracy. It was widely believed that the Black Death was a sign of God's displeasure at the flouting of his commands.*

We have witnessed, during the present health crisis, a re-emphasis on notions of personal sin and social degeneracy, which are especially strong in conservative religious traditions. If one believes, as many fundamentalists do, that "the wages of sin are death," it would follow that gay men and drug users, the two groups at highest statistical risk of contracting the HIV virus, are suffering the natural consequences of their "moral irresponsibility." In the absence of a hard scientific explanation of the genesis of the HIV virus, such a religious understanding of the disease represents an analysis of the problem that is not only logically coherent but emotionally satisfying as well.

Theologian James B. Nelson has proposed "four theological stances towards homosexuality that represent the range of current conviction." I want to draw your attention to his opening:

*The first [theological stance] can be called a rejecting-punitive orientation. The person who holds this unconditionally rejects homosexuality as Christianly legitimate and, at the same time, bears a punitive attitude toward gay persons.*

He concludes that although "no major contemporary theologian holds the rejecting-punitive position...in practice it may still be by far the most common orientation throughout the length and breadth of the church in our society."

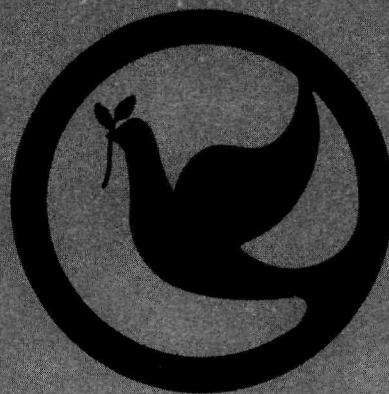
AIDS has provided the opportunity for conservative reli-

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**The Rev. Reginald G. Blaxton**, an Episcopal priest, is special assistant for religious affairs to Mayor Marion Barry, Jr. of Washington, D.C. This article is abridged from a longer paper by the author on the subject.



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# THE WITNESS

gious institutions to reassert their traditional authority over sexual ethics. For example, advice to prospective parents infected by the AIDS virus that they should consider abortion to prevent the birth of babies with the condition proved increasingly problematic to certain segments of the religious community.

Similarly, advocating condom use in sexual relations was viewed as an unwise intrusion of state authority in the area of sexual ethics. In my opinion, these conflicts between religious authority and public health measures cannot be avoided. Indeed, they should not be avoided, but the rationale for specific health policy measures should be clearly stated using the best scientific and medical data available.

It remains for the public, once educated about the risks of contracting the virus and unintentionally transmitting it to

others, to make free, informed and unbiased decisions during this health crisis.

Homosexual behavior and drug use are remarkably similar, from a religious perspective, in that both genital activity and drug use seem to center on pleasure. In the religious community, there is a profound ambivalence about the human body and feelings peculiar to it, which is manifested in the exaltation of reason, soul and spirit and devaluation of emotion, body and sensuality. I believe this ambivalence has been one of religion's legacies to contemporary culture.

For example, it is widely believed, particularly among more liberal religious traditions, that although God is not directly responsible for AIDS, in their exercise of free will homosexuals have chosen a particular and perverse lifestyle. God, the argument goes, cannot be blamed if the lifestyle leads to

death anymore than God can be blamed for the death of a cigarette smoker from lung cancer. This is a logically curious argument because the analogy is only superficially comparable.

A more reasonable comparison, which avoids the temptations of moralism, would be of a person who joins her friends for a summer picnic where she consumes a generous helping of potato salad which has gone bad. The picnicker leaves with an incipient case of ptomaine poisoning which, if not treated, will lead to disease and death.

The point is that ptomaine poisoning is not an argument against eating, and still less a reason never to go to a cookout. The comparison does highlight the degree of risk inherent in many human activities. I believe that public health education should avoid at all costs the pervasive moralism that is so much a part of Western religious tradition.

Similarly, in the religious community, drug users, instead of being treated as people with a medical problem of chemical dependence with psychological and social consequences, are seen instead as deficient in personal moral development. Moralistic attitudes also inform this kind of judgment.

I now want to make a few recommendations on how to deal with religious objections to certain public health initiatives. One of the ironies of the impact of AIDS on the religious community is that, despite religion's historic discomfort over issues of disease, it was the Christian church that spawned the hospital movement in the West. Religious institutions have traditionally been willing to provide pastoral care and comfort for the sick.

In Washington, for example, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese has turned over the former headquarters of Catholic Charities to the Missionaries of Charity, an order of women religious founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The building, dedicated as the Gift of Peace Convent, will be used as a hospice for indigent persons with AIDS and other terminal illnesses. The main concern is to provide a warm, loving environment where people can live their last days and die with dignity. The Convent has also become a place where community volunteers can exercise their ministries to the sick and dying, and increase their knowledge of the disease.

Public health policy ought to recognize that people with AIDS have needs and concerns that go beyond their physical illness. The establishment of direct pastoral care by religious persons and institutions for people with AIDS should be encouraged. As AIDS program coordinators establish community outreach, they should target the religious leadership and provide them with regular scientific updates.

Public health specialists should approach religious leaders with a clearly defined set of the community's needs. In some

communities, housing for people with AIDS may be more of a problem than, say, pastoral counseling; reducing the level of community fear and panic may be more important than AIDS prevention efforts. I believe that wise public health planning which seeks to utilize religious institutions for the implementation of policy, must endorse a range of measures. Religious institutions will find advocacy of sexual abstinence and abstinence from drug use the most attractive element of AIDS education and awareness. If sensitive to religious community concerns, an effective public health policy will continue to emphasize the role of abstinence in AIDS prevention.

AIDS public health policy planners, if they are to persuade the public that their plans are personally and socially beneficial, also need to be aware of some of the unspoken assumptions that guide their work. These assumptions entail value judgments that would be readily understood in the religious community.

The first assumption is that health is preferable to disease. Doubtless, we all believe this, but I would point out that this assumption is a belief based on our respect for the dignity and worth of individual persons.

Second, knowledge is preferable to ignorance. Public health policy must base its appeal to the broader community, understanding that knowledge about AIDS is not just the concern of scientists, but everyone's concern. One of the unfortunate effects of moralism on public policy is that it usually proceeds from the conclusion that ignorance is preferable to knowledge, particularly in matters of public sex education.

Finally, hope is preferable to despair. The religious community should be urged to return to and proclaim attitudes and beliefs that are also a part of its venerable heritage. The impetus toward health and wholeness, the goodness of created, embodied existence, the productive relationship of faith to knowledge, the sustaining power of hope have been, at one time or another, important elements in the Western religious tradition. Let us hope during this health crisis that the religious community will recover these parts of its heritage, so that people with AIDS and others will have a choice — and choosing, decide in favor of life. ■

## Resources

A new AIDS ministry which engages the religious community with state and civic groups was announced recently by the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. The program entails workshops, regional care teams and development of a "model" residence for AIDS patients. The Diocese donated \$15,000 as seed money.

The Parsonage and the AIDS Hope Help Center in San Francisco perhaps offers the most varied ministry to gays and lesbians (555A Castro St.). The Center has received telephone calls from 35 states on its hotline (1-800-AID-TALK). A summary of ways in which Episcopalians assist persons with AIDS appears in the September issue of *The Episcopalian*.

# Short Takes

## The face of faith

A joint Russian-American delegation recently visited Mount Desert Island. The group was made up of Soviet doctors and medical students and was guided in their journey by their American opposite numbers. They spent four days kayaking from Isleboro to Northeast Harbor and then continued to tour Maine before ending their trip. The project was sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility and coordinated locally by members of the Main Street Coalition and the Beyond War Movement.

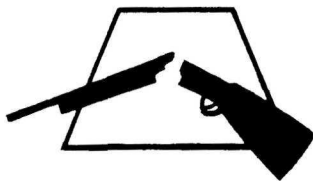
As the weary group paddled into the harbor and the faces of the participants became visible it was hard to tell who was whom, that is who were the Russians and who were the Americans. As they got out of their boats and lugged them ashore it was still difficult. Finally when some speeches were made, language became the evidence of identity: The Russians could speak no English. That fact seemed to matter very little to the assembled crowd and there were rounds of applause as good wishes for reduced political and military tension were exchanged and remarks about how friendly everyone was were shared. There was even a feeling of hopefulness about the future that resulted from this little gathering. We looked into their eyes and saw ourselves, concerned about politics, worried about the future, missing families, weary from traveling, and seeking a friendly word and handshake. It was an incarnational moment. Out of a sense of oneness and openness came friendship and trust.

**The Rev. Paul E. Gilbert, Rector  
St. Mary's and St. Jude's  
Northeast Harbor, Maine**

## Third World wisdom

When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. (Ethiopian proverb)

Once you have said, "Here I am," don't try to say that you're not there. (Haitian proverb)



## 'Christians & military' video

A 30-minute videotape, "Christian Conscience and Military Service," helps viewers make informed decisions about participation, objection, or resistance to conscription and military service.

The non-advocacy film presents a history of the draft and includes background information on traditional Christian views toward war and military service (Pacifism, the Just War, and the Crusade); minorities and the military; and things a Christian should consider in making a conscientious decision.

Purchase price, \$30: The Cathedral Bookstore, P. O. Box 2164, Los Angeles, CA 90051.

## Texans rout parasites

Armed with less than \$7,000, but with a wealth of donated equipment, medicine and talent, 42 volunteers sponsored by St. Andrew's Episcopal Church of Seguin, Tex. spent part of the summer in Honduras breaking a cycle of disease that has plagued people there for centuries. Two groups, including doctors, dentists, nurses, veterinarians — each spending a week — constructed a medical clinic from an existing brick building, treated over 2,000 animals for parasites and ministered to more than 2,000 people in Siguatepeque. Treatment of the animals was key, since the people are able to provide food for themselves but are often robbed of nutrition by intestinal parasites passed to humans from their domestic animals. More than 500 people a day were treated at the mission clinic.

The Texans carried with them a dentist's chair (in pieces); two centrifuges, 500 pairs of eyeglasses, and lightbulbs in 80 duffle bags. To save money, each traveler used his or her 100 pound baggage limit to transport the gear.

**Doreen Howard  
in *The Houston Post***

## Quote of Note

Martyrdom is the only way a person can become famous without ability.

**George Bernard Shaw**

## AIDS high in minorities

The disproportionate impact of AIDS among Blacks and Hispanics is leading Civil Rights groups and the Federal Government to shift resources to deal more directly with the threat the disease poses to minorities.

"The gravity of the disease has reached a point where the minority community is now moving faster than the majority community to mobilize to do something about it," said John E. Jacob, president of the National Urban League. The incidence of AIDS among Blacks and Hispanics is at least twice what it is among Whites.

White homosexual men still make up the largest share (49%) of the nation's 38,435 diagnosed AIDS cases, but Black and Hispanic people make up 39% of all cases even though they account for only 17% of the total U.S. adult population. Within the Hispanic community, leaders say, education and prevention efforts have been complicated by the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to the use of condoms. . .

And for a lot of minority women, "discussing safer sex is out of context of their role," said Suki Ports, the director of the Minority Task Force on AIDS for the New York Council of Churches. "they may risk losing their man or even risk physical abuse if they were to suggest using a condom."

**William E. Schmidt  
in *The New York Times***

## Creative Insecurity

Faith is a life of walking, teetering, always not quite sure whether you've made the right decision, but still enduring and calling out, "Where am I, Lord?" Christian faith is not meant to lead a life of security; rather it is meant to be a life of creative insecurity. If you are secure, you don't need grace, or prayer, or sisters and brothers. If you are secure you don't need the power of God.

**Vincent Harding in *Sojourners***



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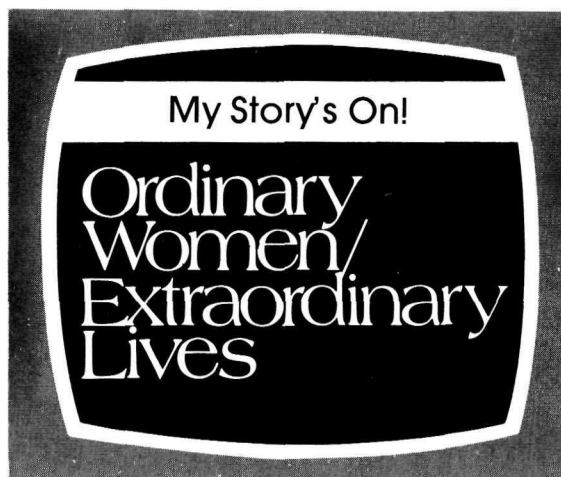
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