

WITNESS MAGAZINE

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GETTING A LIFE!

Younger adults and the callings of conscience



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Since 1917, *The Witness* has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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Effective politics

I agree almost entirely with Paul Winters' letter to the editor about the 2000 election and its nightmare results ("Rewarding conscience with nightmare," TW 3/2001). The "almost" refers to his key statement about "such a poorly designed electoral system that rewards people who vote their conscience with their worst nightmare." But it is not the electoral system which is at fault (although it could be improved) but rather the "conscience." Voting your conscience apparently means voting for the candidate whose views on the issues most closely reflect your own. This, I believe, is a seriously misinformed conscience, since it omits a critical factor, namely, whether or not the candidate has a real chance of being elected. It is the lack of this factor which always produces the nightmare. It may be good Puritan moralism in the sense that it gives one a sense of moral purity, but it is not effective politics, which is always incremental, never ideal.

Finally, Ralph Nader is not stupid. He knew what the consequences of his campaign would be (97,000 votes in Florida). And he has recently admitted that there were five major differences between Bush and Gore. If he keeps at it rather than running in the Democratic primaries where he belongs — and if the moralists follow him again — then he will give us the real nightmare of eight years of Bush.

Owen C. Thomas
Berkeley, CA

Gifts of the spirit

I must write to tell you how much we appreciate your magazine, which was given to us by Sara Owen from Atlanta, one of your faithful readers. You certainly take the lead in the gifts of the spirit — how to appreciate them and use them. You're also on the cutting edge of many concerns, even guiding us into a new and better future.

Marilyn and Lamar Clements
Clearwater, FL

A word of caution

The article, "Rehabilitation? Fighting to free 'the poster boy for punishment'" by Robert Lowenstein in your March issue was fascinating, persuasive and even inspiring. However, I have to raise a question about one point. Mr. Lowenstein baldly asserts that Falco, Trantino's partner in the murder of the policemen in Lodi, New Jersey, was "executed" by New York policemen. It may well be that he was; the circumstances certainly suggested it.

But I am writing to caution your readers against accepting Mr. Lowenstein's assertion that Frankie Falco was "executed" on Mr. Lowenstein's word alone.

About ten years before the murder in Lodi, while I was on the staff of what was then St. Augustine's Chapel on Henry Street in Manhattan, I knew Frankie Falco. Our work at St. Augustine's was mostly with African-American and Hispanic-American young people, but a group of white boys known as the Mae Rose gang used to hang out on a corner opposite our church and we came to know them. Frankie Falco was a Mae Rose, like his older brother Eddie.

Eddie Falco was scary enough, but Frankie was the most terrifyingly violent human being I have ever encountered. Common talk in the neighborhood was that Frankie Falco put somebody in the hospital about every six weeks.

Nothing I ever knew about Frankie Falco permits me to believe that he would, if suddenly awakened by policemen with drawn weapons, have submitted peacefully to arrest, unarmed or not.

Perhaps subsequent investigations unknown to me have shown that Frankie Falco's death was indeed a case of premeditated police murder. However, I do not pretend to prove Mr. Lowenstein wrong — merely to remind your readers that things are not always as clear-cut as they may seem, even when the apparent villains are police.

Merrill Orne Young
Surry, VA

Embracing the strangers within?

by Julie A. Wortman

This issue is the product of a workshop The Witness offered at the National Gathering of College and University Students over New Year's weekend in Estes Park, Colo. (NatGat 2000, for short, an event sponsored biennially by the Episcopal Church's national Office of Ministries with Young Persons). The workshop group included eight NatGat 2000 participants — Josh Thomas, Erika von Haaren, Jamie Tester, Ruth Monette, Philip Schaffner, David D'Andrea and Rachel Orville. Two experienced college chaplains, Jacqueline Schmitt and Samson Gitau, and Phyllis Amenda, a second-career graduate student and NatGat workshop leader, also participated. In addition to contributing their ideas, a number of those attending the workshop also wrote articles for the issue. We are deeply grateful for everyone's help.

I recently heard a priest speak of a life-changing sabbatical experience in an Alaskan village church. A stranger to the community, he was not only warmly welcomed, but also invited into the life of the place in ways that tapped into his deepest, truest self as never before.

"They welcomed me with no thought of how I should fit in or how I might best serve some plan or program," the priest reflected. "Instead, they embraced me with the unstated expectation that my inclusion in the congregation's life would most certainly change not only me, but them."

Here was an instance, in other words, of radical hospitality. The stranger at the door welcomed as precious, transforming gift.

I found myself thinking of this Alaskan anecdote frequently as we put the finishing touches on this issue about younger adults and their desire to live lives of faith and meaning. Although the vast majority of the young people I encountered at NatGat 2000 had been brought up in the Episcopal Church or some other mainline denomination, most seemed to see themselves as church outsiders — not as strangers at the sanctuary door, exactly, but certainly as newcomers. Perhaps as strangers within: people raised in the church, but now too old to be programmed as "youth," too young to have worked their way up the church-leadership pecking order and too culturally enigmatic to make meaningful conversation easy.

Not surprising, then, that much of this issue revolves around younger adults' search for sacrament and solidarity in an atmosphere where they feel fully welcomed and valued.

In the institutional church, such places are in short supply. We bemoan the graying of the church with head-scratching confusion about how to change the trend. We believe ourselves welcoming, but resist the requirements of radical hospitality.

I saw it in myself during NatGat and then in working on this issue with our NatGat editorial planning group. I wanted fewer theological clichés. I hoped for more radical activism. I was disappointed by recurring generalities and I yearned for more nuance.

In other words, I was looking for a level of maturity and experience I imagined necessary to meet *The Witness*' standards. These younger folks were not who I expected — or, perhaps, hoped for.

Luckily, I hung in, uncomfortable as that proved to be. I was at first tempted to write off their desire for congruence between professed belief and lived reality as a *déjà vu* task of the young. But, as I listened to them speak of their struggle to weigh lifestyle and career choices against a Gospel of liberating love, radical justice and simple living — and in light of the difficult-to-ignore influence of parental and societal expectations — I had to admit that by no stretch of the imagination could I say that I've "arrived." In fact, I frequently felt humbled by these younger adults' honesty and commitment. And envious of their deep understanding that, although there's a politics to everything, life is primarily about imagination. I also could see that in some ways they understand today's world much better than people my age do. I found myself wanting to hear more, not less, of what they had to say.

How often we ignore that respectful mutual relationships require self-effacing presence. The gathering's organizers recognized this and asked that participants — especially the most likely offenders, the elders — agree to not arrive late or leave early. I confess that I arrived in Estes Park wishing I could do just that. If I had, I'd have preserved the self-deception that I had the busier and more important schedule, but lost any genuine idea of what NatGat 2000 and its participants were about — and risked losing my own credibility.

And so, this issue of *The Witness* has turned out differently than I thought. My NatGat encounter has opened up possibilities and offered challenges — gifts for which I am truly grateful.

My hope is that truly embracing her "strangers within" will do as much for the church. ●

Julie A. Wortman is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

Love of God

by Joyce Nalunga



Joshua M. Thomas (Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina — see page 12)

(Chorus)

Love of God, love of God
You are all we ever wanted
Love of God, love of God
Fill our hearts on this yo' day.

(Chorus)

Kwagala, Kwagala,
Gwe wekka gwe twetaaga waano
Kwagala, Kwagala,
Tujjuzze emyoyo gyaffe.

Jesus, Sweet Jesus,
There's none on earth like You.
How we really love you.
Fill us with yo' anointing,
Oh the king of our hearts
Fill our lives on this yo' day.

(Chorus repeats)

Yesu, oh Yesu
Tewali nomee akenwkanna
Tukwegayiridde
Tukwateeko nikisa kyo
Tukwegayiridde
Otujjuzze nomioyo gwe.

(Chorus repeats)

This song appeared on *New Voices, New Songs: Give Him a Call*, produced by the Ministries with Young People Cluster, Episcopal Church USA, 2001 (see page 16 for review). Joyce Nalunga lives in Kampala, Uganda.

Juneteenth

by Katie Sherrod



JUNE 19 IS CELEBRATED in Texas as Juneteenth. It marks the anniversary of the day in 1865 when Union General Gordon Granger read the Emancipation Proclamation at the Port of Galveston.

It is a date marked in Texas by parades, festivals in parks, church services, family reunions, speeches, songfests and all manner of other celebrations. While most of these celebrations occur among predominately African-American communities, increasingly members of the Anglo community are starting to participate also.

For Juneteenth marks the day of the arrival of the first word of freedom for the 250,000 slaves in Texas, even though Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation two-and-a-half years earlier, on January 1, 1863.

The glad tidings of freedom filtered gradu-

ally through our giant state as, one by one, individual plantation owners, business owners, farmers and other slave owners read the proclamation to the women, men and children they had owned until that day.

The *Handbook of Texas* reports, "the first broader celebrations of Juneteenth were used as political rallies and to teach freed African Americans about their voting rights. Within a short time, however, Juneteenth was marked by festivities throughout the state, some of which were organized by official Juneteenth committees.

"Some of the early emancipation festivities were relegated by city authorities to a town's outskirts; in time, however, black groups collected funds to purchase tracts of land for their celebrations, including Juneteenth. A common name for these sites was Emancipation Park." The first Juneteenth celebration

in Austin was in 1867 and was under the direction of the Freedman's Bureau.

In the early 1900s blacks and whites often joined together for Juneteenth celebrations. But as the freed blacks began to prosper — in some Texas cities, within a generation after slavery, they had their own physicians, lawyers, business owners, bankers — many in the white community began to feel economically threatened. In the 1920s, the first of the infamous Jim Crow laws began to appear in Texas, and in the rest of the South.

By the late 1940s, early 1950s, Juneteenth was the only day on which African Americans in Texas could play in public city parks, swim in public pools, enter city-owned zoos, read in libraries and otherwise enjoy the civic fruits of the taxes they paid.

I was about seven or eight when I began to understand what was happening. I remember even as a child feeling ashamed. My parents tried to explain Jim Crow laws to us, and made clear their disagreement with such laws. We lived in West Texas, where the largest group targeted for racism was Mexicans and Mexican Americans, but the very few African Americans were treated no better. My father, a physician, caused an uproar in our small community in the early 1950s when he built a clinic with only one waiting room. When a wealthy rancher announced that he wasn't sitting in the same room with those [racist name for Hispanics and blacks], my father calmly said that he was welcome to wait in his pickup truck. Since my father was the only physician in three very large counties, the rancher decided to wait in the waiting room. It was my first lesson in witnessing. It was also my first lesson in the power of pragmatism. That rancher wasn't willing to suffer from his very painful sore throat just for the sake of a racist stance.

Ironically, in the early 1960s, the Civil

Rights Movement had the effect of diminishing the popularity of Juneteenth celebrations, in part because of the push for integration. But in the 1970s, as African Americans began to explore their cultural heritage, the holiday was reborn as a symbol of pride in accomplishment in the face of unbelievable oppression.

One of my proudest days as reporter was in 1979, watching as my state legislature, which is not marked by progressive ideas, to say the least, passed a law declaring Juneteenth a state holiday.

The holiday has migrated as Black Texans have moved to other states, Louisiana and Oklahoma especially.

For Texans, and I hope for others, Juneteenth increasingly has provided people of all races an opportunity to recall the milestone in human rights the day represents for African Americans — and thus for all of us.

I remember interviewing David Newton, the African-American sculptor creating the Freedman's Cemetery Memorial in Dallas. He was showing me the figure grouping that would represent freed African Americans. It represents the moment this man and woman hear the news of their freedom.

A shirtless muscular black man in rough

homespun trousers with a rope belt and bare feet stands looking down at the woman beside him. One of his arms rests protectively across her shoulders. His back is crisscrossed with old scars from the master's whip.

She is kneeling; her torso slightly turned so that her arms are around the man's waist and her head is leaning against his hip. She is wearing a simple cotton blouse and skirt. Her feet also are bare. The blouse has slipped slightly off one shoulder where her arm is raised to embrace the man, just enough to reveal scars on her back also.

It is the moment after the initial burst of joy, David said. Both faces are somber, as they struggle to absorb the incredible news they have just heard. It is the moment they remember all those who died as slaves, all those who never reached the promised land of liberty. It is the moment when they wonder what will happen to them now. For even as they face the rising sun, one can still see the marks of the whip imprinted permanently on their backs. David said, "The scars are there to symbolize that scars don't just go away with the signing of a piece of paper. They are handed down from generation to generation. That's why I want this monument to be a healing place. We have a scarred land."

And so the two figures in the group comfort one another, turning as they always have to their own and to prayer, for the strength to move into freedom with grace, courage, and love.

And I turn to David and say, "The marks of the whip are also on the ones who did the whipping."

I believe that until the white population of the United States recognizes and acknowledges that reality, we will never bridge the divide between blacks and whites. Whether we like it or not, we whites are scarred by the hand that wielded that whip. Even though none of us, or perhaps even none of our ancestors, ever owned slaves, we all are the beneficiaries of a racist society in which we sit at the top. Being white gives us a daily advantage that we might deny, but that our black brothers and sisters see clearly. We all are caught in the bondage of racism.

And so as we sing together "Lift Every Voice" I pray we can one day stand in freedom together, acknowledging our blended histories and our common salvation. ●

Katie Sherrod is a longtime reporter and public television producer who lives in Fort Worth, Tex. She is editor of Ruach, the publication of the Episcopal Women's Caucus.

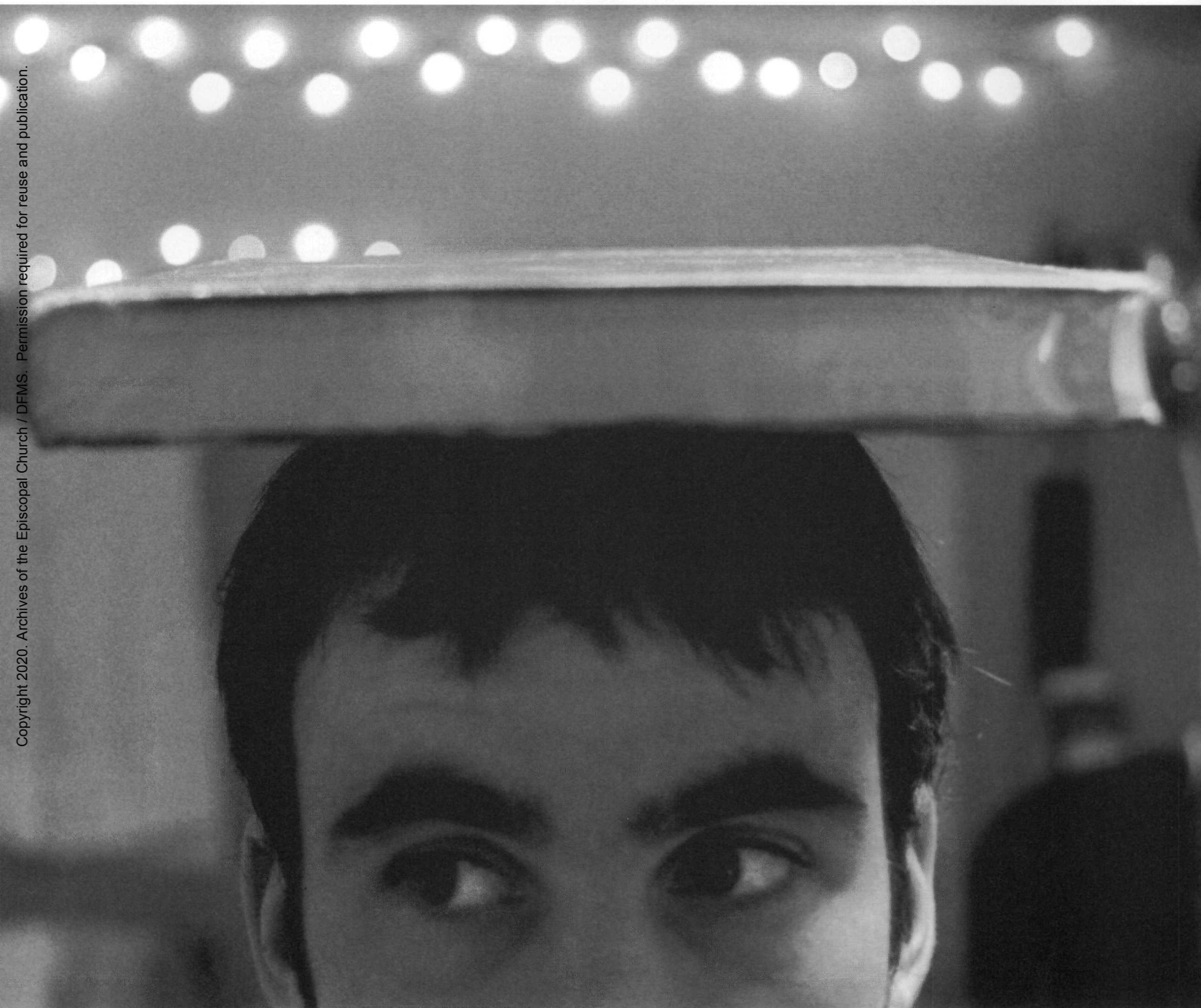


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Through this section of our website we are offering analysis and commentary from around the U.S. church and the global Anglican Communion. Our aim is to encourage a reclaiming of the Anglican vocation of "public theology" — and to expand awareness of the issues and struggles occupying the hearts and minds of progressive Anglicans and other persons of faith worldwide.

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LOOKING FOR A VIABLE



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FAITHFUL ‘LIFE DREAM’

— and craving a little respect

by Camille Colatosti

“STUDENTS ARE BUSIER NOW than they used to be,” says Ruth Monette, a 24-year old lay minister at the University of Southern California (see sidebar). Having graduated from Hobart and William Smith Colleges just two years ago, she knows first-hand how busy college students are. “I was overextended as a student,” she says, “just taking a normal course load, working 10 hours a week, and taking a leadership role in different campus organizations.” At the University of Southern California, Monette mentors a student leadership team for campus ministries.

“There is only about one hour a week when I can get all four students in my leadership team together. They are just too busy.”

As Monette explains, “All of my students work. One is in ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps), so he gets up when some of the other students are just going to bed. Being employed has made a big difference in how busy students are. But there are also lots of options in terms of how to get involved on campus. A lot of students volunteer in different ways. Of course, classes take a lot of time and it’s easy to forget that part.”

Jamie Tester, a 20-year-old sophomore at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minn., exemplifies busyness. In addition to taking 16 to 18 credit hours (four to five classes) each term, she works as a resident advisor in her dorm, “maintaining order among 32 women — it’s a 24-hour job!”

Tester is also a student senator and chair of the senate’s academic affairs committee.

“All student grievances go through me and my committee,” she explains. She tutors students in English, reading papers and helping with writing. And she babysits off campus for a family with two children for about eight hours a week.

“Sometimes I just sit in my room at my desk and feel overwhelmed,” Tester admits. “Last week, I was checking my e-mail — I had a book in front of me so that I could read while my e-mail downloaded — and I was eating lunch.”

Tester’s goal is to become a lawyer so that she can advocate for the welfare of children.

Despite the fullness of her life — or perhaps because of it — Tester attends church every Wednesday evening and at least two Sunday mornings a month.

“This is my only down time that I allow myself,” she explains. “It’s a time for quiet, with no books, a time to think about something besides class stuff. It helps when I’m there. It forces me to slow down. It puts my mind at ease. If I’m worried that everything won’t get done, I leave there feeling like ‘of course it will.’ I feel better, less panicky, when I leave. That’s why I love going on Wednesday nights — in the middle of the week. This helps me deal with everything. I let God take everything I have and not worry about it.”

Monette says she found similar comfort in a church connection when she was a student at Hobart and William Smith. “The college’s chaplain was an Episcopal priest so it was easy for me, as an Episcopalian, to relate to her. I think that this was an outlet for social friendship for me. I went to school without knowing anyone on campus. The chaplain helped provide a safe community to be a part of and to fit in. She also pushed me to grow into an adult faith.”

What is my work? Who will be my partners?

For Tester and Monette, as for many young people, the spiritual nurturing that is part of their college and post-college lives is essential. As Sharon Daloz Parks explains in her book, *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*, young adults face two central questions: What is my work? Who will be my partners? By “work,” Parks explains, “we do not mean simply a job or a career but rather a sense of one’s calling — born from some reflection on life’s purpose. Whether or not one is college-bound, the task of young adulthood is to find and be found by a viable ‘life dream’ — and to go to work on it.”

The church could play a crucial role in helping young peo-

Making a home for 'Doubters Anonymous'

"Hi, my name is Ruth Monette and I'm the Lay Minister for Episcopal Campus Ministry at the University of Southern California." So begin the 20 or so e-mails I send out over the summer to incoming freshmen who have identified themselves as Episcopalians. I go on to tell them about Canterbury (the common name of Episcopal campus ministries across the nation), about religious life at USC, and hope that some of them will actually respond. In college, even the most active youth sometimes fail to find room, in an ever-increasingly busy schedule, to maintain their connections to church. Many of them will feel they are maintaining their personal relationships with God, without the clutter of the institutional church and all its problems. Others will find that the faith that made so much sense in their childhood and teenage years no longer makes sense — sometimes it happens slowly and other times all in a rush. Classes and friends from a diversity of religious backgrounds (and no religious background at all) can shake a student's certainty about their own faith.

I know all this not only because the students tell me so, but also because I lived it. I was raised as an Episcopalian and began to make my home in the church as a youth. As a teenager in the Diocese of Indianapolis, I traveled to Mexico and Ecuador with mission trips, participated in the national Episcopal Youth Event, and worked on leadership teams for annual diocesan youth conferences and Happenings. I chose a college where I could continue my involvement with the Episcopal Church — Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y.

I credit my college chaplain with the fact that I'm still here, still a part of the Episcopal Church. I had the moments when none of what I grew up believing made any sense, when I could not say the creeds with honesty. I spent the fall of my junior year in Bath, England, and only went inside churches for tours. When I could not believe, when I had more doubt than faith, I still found comfort in the rituals of liturgy. Because my chaplain had already introduced me to The Center for Progressive Christianity (in Cambridge, Mass.), I knew she took my doubt seriously. I also knew it was all right for me to participate in chapel services, even with all my questions still unanswered.

After my graduation in June of 1999, I came to the University of Southern California as the Assistant Chaplain (as part of the Episcopal Urban Internship program, see page 28). In August of 2000, I was promoted to Lay Minister. I work with an ordained priest who is completing a Ph.D. program while working half-time with the chaplaincy and half-time with two local parishes.

With a student leadership team of four to five students, we run a very active campus ministry. Religious life at USC is overseen by a Dean of Religious Life who formally recognizes student religious groups and religious directors. The Episcopal Campus Ministry is one of nearly 50 student religious groups — including Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Taoist, Pagan and many Christian groups. Within the context of all that diversity, making a home for "seekers" is a special part of what Canterbury USC does. In one-on-one conversations, we affirm students' questions and challenge them to think through them. In groups — such as the Lenten series "Doubters Anonymous" — we nurture students' need to apply their academic critical thinking skills to their spiritual lives.

— Ruth Monette

ple, many of whom are on college campuses, grow up into a competent adulthood, says Jackie Schmitt, the Episcopal chaplain at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

"The pressures of this culture and this time and what is going on with young people," Schmitt says, "underscore why it is so important for the church to be involved with people 18 to 25. With the fractured lives people lead, with economic pressures and pressures from the Internet, this is even more important now than ever."

Helping young people figure out who they will be also determines what the church will be. For without younger voices, the church loses. Says Schmitt, "Those who are 18 to 25 are on the cusp of cultural change. They lead the way. Merchandisers know this. Without young adults, we are stuck in the past, rather than being in today."

'I am not my parents'

David Gortner, a doctoral candidate in psychology and human development at the University of Chicago, and an adult minister at St. Marks in Evanston, directs a research project in clergy leadership at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. "Young adults," he says, "have a tendency to distantiate — to put up a hand and say that I am not that, to identify as distinct from something else. For instance, a young person might say, 'I am not my parents,' or 'I am not the community where I grew up.' But young adults are also searching for a place where they do belong. They are trying to figure out 'Who am I?' and 'What am I called to do?' and 'What is my life purpose?' Unfortunately, religion — mainline religion — has often failed to provide an avenue for young adults to explore."

For over five years, Gortner has studied models of young adult ministry. He researched 12 communities that offer young adult ministry and he conducted interviews with 60 to 70 others. The research was interdenominational — Episcopal as well as other protestant denominations, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim. Gortner explains, "Young adults in most mainline denominations simply aren't coming to church and the



Phyllis Amanda

reasons they cite are these: 'I don't feel welcome' and 'it doesn't seem relevant.' This reflects on the institutional church.

"The communities I looked at are in the denomination but they are on the fringes of those denominations, not at the center. For instance, in Walnut Creek, California, there was a failure on the part of the university chaplaincy to reach out to young adults. Young adults, then, took things into their own hands and formed a community called Mosaic. The diocese supports this but Mosaic is on the fringes of the work that the diocese does.

"Mosaic was given backing and space by the church even though many of the young adults who attend are not members of the church or even of the denomination. They gather on Tuesday evenings. The worship is non-prayerbook. Discussion is frank and honest about life issues and how those meet their faith.

"For many, this was their only faith community, their only church. Others belonged to different churches."

Gortner has identified models or patterns for successful young adult ministry. He notes that "they differ depending on what is being emphasized, but each is viable and each is viable within the Episcopal Church.

"One approach involves teaching and life application of belief and values. Another approach emphasizes relationships. Yet another approach uses more modern media. Some approaches are ultra-traditional. Others are not. There are a wide variety of ministries to which young adults are drawn.

"The majority," says Gortner, "entered through relationships with other people. For the most part, in almost every case, young adults came to worship through interactions with others."

Most important, continues Gortner, "is that people are welcomed with open arms and not expected to sign on the dotted line to join the church. These communities are offering something relevant, experiential and welcoming that leads people to find them, leads people to come back, to convert, and to discover a new depth of faith."

Adult, not 'young adult'

Younger adults seek a great deal of independence and freedom in their faith experiences. They also make it clear that they do not want to be treated as youth and that they do not want a youth group. That is, they do not want activities that are run by staff people. Nor do they want activities at all. They do not want to be entertained or to be programmed. Instead, they want to find each other.

Rachel Roberson, a 27-year old college graduate who now lives in San Francisco, spent two years with the Peace Corps in Cameroon. Active in Northwestern's Canterbury House when she was a journalism student there, she was ready to join a parish when she returned to the states.

"I chose to focus on ministry on the parish level and to do what everyone else does." She works as a lay preacher, helps to lead a youth group and volunteers to teach English as a Second Language at a school run by San Francisco's Church of the Incarnation.

"As an adult, I didn't feel like I needed 'young adult activities.' I wondered, when does this 'young adult' label end? When you marry, have kids, are 40? As a young person, I do sometimes feel that I have a credibility problem — not only in church but everywhere. Still, I want to be seen as an adult. For me, the decision to remain at church is a personal one that is related to the community I am in right now. My faith, my relationship with God, remains very personal. These aren't things I talk a lot about even at church. These are almost separate from my church community. But I love my community."

Ultimately, the shape of a worship community needs to be determined by the community itself. If younger adults are to be part of the community, they must help shape it. This is something that Mary Hileman has learned during her 11-and-a-half years as a campus minister at the Canterbury Center at Oklahoma University in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Her work involves, as she puts it, "developing communities where students can plug

in. This means providing communities for people who are at a similar spot in their lives. We need to always ask, what would you like to do? How can I as a chaplain help you reach out to the community and facilitate your spiritual growth?"

For instance, after asking students what they needed, the Canterbury Center at Oklahoma began offering a course on Christian meditation. The center also provides opportunities for fellowship and community building, from a weekly soup-and-noonday-prayer gathering — for faculty, staff and students — to graduate-student and undergraduate fellowship and potluck dinners.

"Our work," Hileman explains, "is a collaboration between student interests and my commitment to spiritual formation, to helping young adults learn what it means to live an involved life.

"I don't do a lot of programming anymore but I facilitate students taking a leadership role. This is crucial. Programming for students doesn't work. Empowering students to be Christ's presence in the world is the purpose for chaplaincy these days."

NatGat

The belief that young adults need to lead their own spiritual development underlies the National Student Gathering (NatGat) sponsored every two years by the Episcopal Church's national office of ministries with young people.

"The gathering, which is organized by young people, is a place for questing, for looking and listening to God," explains Thom Chu, director of the national young adult ministries office. "We design an opportunity for people to know each other in a deep way. People make new soul friends from faraway — and that really last."

Chu recalls the first NatGat gathering he attended in 1985. "I was a first-year student at Columbia, and I got a really deep understanding of what baptism means. To be in that space with so many other young people who wanted to know God changed my life. I've worked for the Episcopal Church almost since then."

Looking for life beyond this 'best of all possible worlds'

Work hard, play hard. At Dartmouth, that's the ticket to success, exactly what I was looking for when I came here four years ago. Though initially hoping for an Ivy League utopia of learning, I soon was caught up in the myth that success equaled "the good life." Investment bankers, management consultants, corporate lawyers — these were the successful alumni, earning plenty of money to be comfortable, with the right house and clothes and car, exotic vacations and plenty leftover to donate back to their alma mater!

It seemed great, and I went on working hard in the classroom, earning A's and academic citations, stressing out to prove myself good enough, smart enough. Others were working hard to play hard, dying to perform in the social sphere where beer pong and random hookups and the humiliation of Greek pledge rituals masked a deep yearning for community, connection and true friends.

Still confused about everything, I spent sophomore fall at the university in St. Petersburg, Russia. On my daily walk downtown after classes, I passed by old women with cardboard signs around their necks, beggars on the streets crying out, "Pomogite!" Help. I thought of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain: "Give to those who beg from you." Simple enough, I was making excuses. When I realized that my lunch at the Russian edition of Pizza Hut could have fed a family for a week, I began to confront the elitism, entitlement, and exclusivity which Dartmouth had bred in me. Isolated in the hills of New Hampshire, everything from movie tickets to late-night pizza, health care to mocha lattes were instantly available with the swipe of an ID card, and I'd begun to see that as normal and to lose sight of life beyond this "best of all possible worlds."

The face of the homeless beggars had become too much to bear, and so one day I detoured from my usual route to avoid them, crossing the street through an underground tunnel and "passing by on the other side." I instantly saw myself as the Levite and priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Things changed forever.

From then on I resolved to take some risks, to listen and look for God more closely in what Mother Teresa called "distressing disguises." In Petersburg, it was an old woman who, upon my small gift of money and a bit of time, held my hand and cried, praying for me. On the streets of Boston, during an immersion program on street ministry, it was Matthew, a man homeless after losing his job for standing up to injustice in the workplace. "I asked myself," he said, "What would Rosa Parks do? What would Dietrich Bonhoeffer do? What would Martin Luther King, Jr. do? What would Jesus do?"

This past December, during a research trip in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the children of this multi-ethnic city recovering from civil war and genocide painted a series of murals on what was the front line. Some were impressionistic nature scenes, the Simpsons or Beavis and Butthead. But in the center, right below the window opening of a high school out of which women were publicly raped during the war was an image of the Crucifixion. The text in English

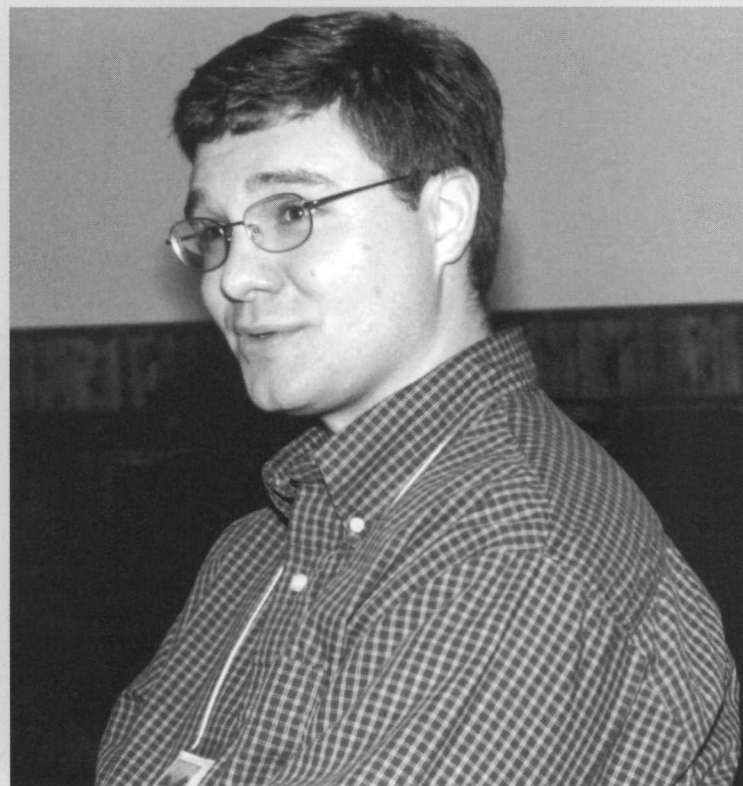
reads: "Jesus, come back, please!" [See photo, page 5.]

I find that plea for life back on the Dartmouth campus, too, where I work now as lay chaplain to The Edge, our Episcopal campus ministry. A wonderful job far from the "success" I expected four years ago. Here I meet Jesus in students struggling to "get a life" of their own in a place where conformity is often the cost of acceptance. Our work at The Edge to create an alternative, open community, with true common prayer and common table, is marked and shaped by these kinds of experiences of God outside the traditional boundaries of church.

Each week students from The Edge tutor kids at a low-income housing project. One afternoon, when I was playing outside with a bunch of the boys and getting frustrated by the chaos of yelling profanities, the re-enactment of WWF wrestling, and bikes crashing into each other, one of the fourth-graders came up to me and said, clear as day: "Come, follow me."

Leaving behind the pressures of academic and social performance, I've come to find life by finding God in unexpected places. I can follow that fourth-grader into the wonder and horror of his world. I can follow Matthew into the streets of his Boston. Nourished by the prayers of that beggar in St. Petersburg, in the midst of injustice and hopelessness I can cry out with the anonymous painter in Bosnia. Come, Lord Jesus.

—Joshua M. Thomas



Phyllis Amanda

'These four years I have experienced community like I never have before'

Chu sees NatGat as a place that “gives young adults a chance to develop their own sense of what it means to be in community. They learn to express that in an indigenous way that is true to who they are. Of course, it's a temporary experience, set in a particular time and when it's over, it's over. Yet it builds new relationships and important memories.”

Amber York, a 22-year old college junior taking time off from college as she transfers from the University of Maryland to a school in Michigan, where she lives with her family, was one of the 10 or 12 young adults on the NatGat planning committee. The theme, based on a passage from Isaiah, was “Behold! I'm about to do a new thing.”

Wanting to address the spiritual needs of 18 to 25 year olds, York says the NatGat planning committee made sure the gathering, which took place in Estes Park, Colo., would provide an opportunity for participants to get away from home and to become clearer about who they are and how to make their own place in the world. The gathering, says York, was “anything you wanted it to be. There were resources for spiritual guidance and resources about doing campus ministry or information about jobs you could get working with the church after college. There were so many resources and you could grab whatever you wanted. Or you could chill out and look at the mountains and realize how wonderful creation is.

“It was a wonderful experience — literally mountaintop, you know?” ●

Camille Colatosti is The Witness' staff writer. She teaches English at Detroit's Hampton University and lives in Hamtramck, Mich.

This spring I am graduating from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), having majored for a few years in International Agriculture and finishing with Justice, Peace, and Conflict Studies (JPCS). I came to Virginia's Shenandoah Valley looking forward to living with Mennonites who were pacifists, lived simply, and strove for justice — all according to Jesus' example. I came looking for a home that I had not found as a transient military kid, nor as an Episcopalian. I came looking for people like me — passionate about treating everyone fairly, no matter what their economic or social status, nationality, gender, or any other characteristics, and passionate about living a real relationship with God. I expected Mennonite anti-nationalism and a desire for social justice to coincide with broad liberal ideas. I found most of what I came looking for, but my learning curve has been steep to correct my rosy view of reality.

Nonviolence, simplicity and justice only matter in relationships. These four years I have experienced community like I never have before. The word has become cliché, but I have begun to learn the deep complexity of the reality within “community.” It has been excruciatingly painful, exhausting, comforting, joyous and energizing. And the times I have learned the most about what it means to live in community — within relationships that really matter — have been when my growing community has failed my expectations. Not all Mennonites take their pacifism seriously or have conscientiously thought it through. And the same with living simply. Discovering this was disappointing, but not earthshaking. However, living in the reality of a community of people who do not view justice the same has radically changed my idealistic view of “living in community.”

While very focused on justice for the poor, hungry and imprisoned (see Matt. 25:35-36), the general EMU community has been on the conservative end of justice issues that are close to me. Using inclusive language and images of God, ordaining women as full ministers in God's church and seeking justice for people of diverse sexual identities have been crucial parts of my spiritual formation. Studying, learning, playing and worshiping with people who believe that God is masculine because that is what the Bible says, or women should not be ordained to ministry, or that LGBT people should not be full members of churches has been very difficult. Sitting with people who know and love me, but who do not believe that I should be a full member in their church because I love women, has challenged my concept of how a healthy community functions. However, I cannot simply write these people off as uncaring because I experience their love for me in a very real way. I know that their questions are part of their own deep search for God's Way.

As in every community, there are those who advocate for me as well as those who question me. I have found a community of people who are like-minded, but they do not comprise the entire community as I had naively thought they would when I entered college. Living and interacting honestly amongst ALL these different people who have become so dear to me has become my working definition of true community. It is both harder and more life-giving than anything I imagined.

After graduation, I am leaving this place and this time in my life to join the community of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. I'm looking forward to getting away from the definitions this beloved EMU community has placed on me, and to start fresh where no one knows me. But I'm still moving on to build a new community that is sure to be complete with its own definitions and boxes. I find that even with the mess and pain, my life's meaning is in walking with people as they question and live, and knowing that people are walking with me.

— Rachel Orville



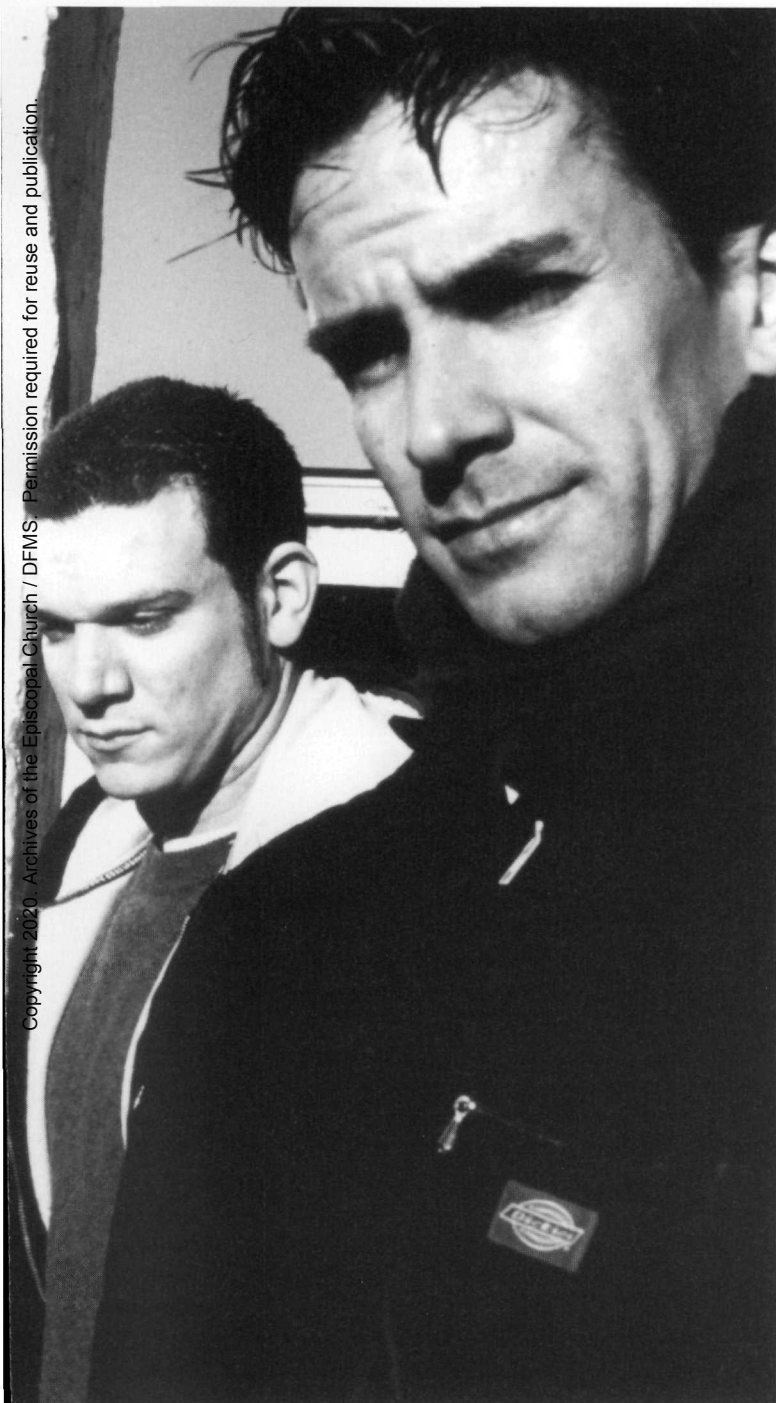
'FANS LIKE THAT WE'RE



New West Kojak

NOT A PARTY BAND'

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An interview with Johnny Temple

by Camille Colatosti

JOHNNY TEMPLE is a 34-year-old musician living in Brooklyn. He plays the bass in two rock bands, New Wet Kojak (Temple is at right in facing photo) and Girls Against Boys. Collectively, the bands have seven albums to their credit. Temple also runs Akashic Books, a Brooklyn-based independent publishing company that, he explains, is "dedicated to publishing urban literary fiction and political non-fiction by authors who are either ignored by the mainstream, or who have no interest in working within the ever-consolidating ranks of the major corporate publishers."

We asked Temple to talk with us about the important role that music plays for young adults as they work to figure out their values, their politics and their spirituality.

Camille Colatosti: Could you describe your bands?

Johnny Temple: New Wet Kojak is a strictly creative project. The music is avant-garde. It is rock, but the saxophone is a strong instrument in the mix. The rock is a little jazzy and moody.

Girls Against Boys is both a creative and a social or political project. The music is discordant as far as loud rock music goes. Our musical roots are in the punk rock tradition, but we are not a punk rock band. Still, the passion and aggressiveness of punk informs the band. Girls Against Boys is rhythm-based; we don't focus so much on melodies the way a lot of bands do. We like a wide variety of music, including funk



In search of peace

by Ruth Monette

NEW VOICES, NEW SONGS: Give Him a Call

Produced by the Ministries with Young People Cluster, Episcopal Church USA, 2001

NEW VOICES, NEW SONGS: *Give Him A Call* was a project undertaken by the Ministries with Young People Cluster at the national office of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. The Cluster brought together young adults — ranging in age from 16 to 26 — to write, record, and perform their own music for 72 hours. The CD that this weekend of intense musical expression produced is an eclectic mix of styles ranging from the spoken word to gospel to R&B to country to pop-like tunes reminiscent of such popular artists as Jewel. While some of the songs could be described as “praise” songs (a style of music that some young adults find more meaningful than traditional hymns), many others sound more like music that might be found on the more successful Christian rock stations.

The songs are described as “reflecting the feelings, experiences, and passion of the composers in their quest for God.” And, indeed, the lyrics of these 13 songs do tell a remarkable story of the faith of their authors. For example, Mary Bragg’s “See the Rain Fall” chronicles the presence of God in the pain that follows a friend’s death:

It’s the dawning of a brand new day
It’ll be the day you took your last breath.
The future slowly fades away.
Seventeen and you face your own death
Why did this have to happen this way?

I see the rain fall.
I hear your voice call.
I feel your breath on me.
Holy Spirit.

In “What’s So Amazing About Grace,” Seth Pearson pointedly explores the challenge of maintaining faith when God seems out of reach:

I have goals I never realized
And my innocence compromised.
I have fears that haunt me from my past
My relationships — they never last
All my dreams never came true
And you know what? I blame You!
So tell me, what’s so amazing about grace?

His ending is perhaps too simple — the singer turns from God only to be immediately reminded of God’s presence in his life — however what is not always so simple in life can become so in song.

Songs such as “Love of God,” “Give Him a Call,” and “I Want to Walk with You” are best described as praise music — appropriate for worship in a contemporary setting. The lyrics are simple and express the joy Christians find in their relationships with God:

Love of God, Love of God
You are all we ever wanted
Love of God, Love of God
Fill our hearts on this yo’ day.

Overall, this collection of music presents a wide spectrum of the music that young adults find meaningful. Listening closely, it also provides insight into this generation’s spiritual quests. First, the CD as a whole clearly communicates the strength of the composers’ faith. In each of these songs, a deep trust is being placed in God. A trust that God is present in their lives, knows them personally, and will provide comfort in times of pain, stress and doubt.

Consistently, these songs equate a relationship with God to a sense of peace. This overwhelming need for peace speaks directly to the peace that is so hard to find within the hectic lives of young adults. Like all of the population, young adults have embraced the drive to overcrowd their schedules, leaving very little time for quiet, peace and even themselves. Additionally, this music points to the challenges of being a young adult — the sense of having no voice, the sense of having more questions than answers, the sense of an unknown future, the desire for guidance on the journey.

New Voices, New Songs: Give Him a Call is available from Episcopal Parish Services (800-903-5544) in sets of five CDs for \$15.00. Additionally, the CD liner promises that lyrics, songsheets, MP3 files and additional information is available at <http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/myp/musiclab.htm>.



music and hip-hop and rhythm-and-blues.

We have a guitarist, a bass player, a drummer, a keyboard player and a vocalist. We write the music collaboratively. The singer writes the lyrics.

C.C.: Why Girls Against Boys?

J.T.: When the band started in the early 1990s — our first album was in 1991 — there was a boys' club mentality in rock music. There are so many more women in rock now than there were 10 years ago, and this is good. But back then we wanted to make a statement about the boys' club. We wanted to say that, even though the band is all men, we aren't part of the boys' club. We are Girls Against Boys.

C.C.: How does your music challenge the boys' club of rock 'n' roll?

J.T.: We put out our first three records on Touch & Goan independent label in Chicago. There is a wonderful community of musicians in the independent music world. Now we've signed a contract with Geffen Records. This is not an independent company. It is a major recording corporation. This has helped us get some things that we couldn't get before, like more money so that we can all afford health insurance. But now we have to struggle to stay part of the independent music community. Geffen, and other major corporations, aren't really part of a music community. They are just trying to make money. Working with them means that we are associated with a business that focuses on the bottom line, and not with an independent label that is interested just in producing good music.

The music industry is corrupt, market-driven and it is getting worse. It is disillusioning to work with a company that should be about promoting creativity but isn't. This is not what major record companies are about.

C.C.: This issue of *The Witness* looks at

young people as they make a transition into adulthood. What role do you think music plays for young people?

J.T.: I want first to talk about myself. I've always been inspired by music, but it was really important to me when I was a teenager. When I was a teen, and also when I was in college, music was important in helping me understand issues of social justice. Both my parents were liberals and activists, and I felt fortunate to grow up in Washington, D.C. The bands there saw a connection between music and social justice. The bands would speak out. They would play at rallies or organize rallies.

In D.C., there is a strong underground music scene. This influenced me as a musician. It taught me that if you have a platform, you need to use it responsibly for the greater good.

In college, I was involved in political activism, but I felt that there was a social component missing. You see this throughout the left in America. Since the 1960s, politics and culture seem to have gone on divergent paths. Lots of political movements have become unexciting to young people, who have so much creativity and energy. But this needs to be channeled.

Music can be a wonderful tool to channel young peoples' energy in a constructive direction. This is what Girls Against Boys tries to do in our music.

The left has been very ignorant about what is important to young people. We saw this in the last presidential election where Gore and Lieberman blew the young peoples' vote by this overt moralizing. While moral issues are important, morality has to be expressed in an inclusive manner. Clinton won the 18–25-year-old voting block by 18 points, but Gore won this group by only two points because he didn't extend himself to young people.

Young people need to be engaged in political issues. If they were, then we might not have such an apathetic country. Music can help accomplish this.

C.C.: How does music help create a connection between young people and politics?

J.T.: Music can foster community where values are taught and reinforced and acted upon, so that certain issues, such as domestic violence against women or the AIDS epidemic, can be couched in a way that makes them seem relevant and vital to young people.

C.C.: We hear a lot of reporting on the way that popular music fosters negative values and violence, but we don't hear much about music promoting positive values or a sense of social conscience.

J.T.: If you have a sick society that promotes violence, you will have sick expressions. I don't so much blame the Eminems out there for promoting violence. I blame the politicians and the economy that has created a society that is morally bankrupt, where only the bottom line matters.

Don't misunderstand. I do think that music can inspire violence and abuse, so I don't hold up Eminem as a sort of hero, but I don't think that the solution is to encroach on his freedom of speech. We need instead a society where notions of respect and justice are made real, rather than a society where these are presented just as shallow concepts.

The main critics of the violence in popular music are these politicians who are just grandstanding. They have no higher moral message.

C.C.: How does music help foster a connection between young people and what is positive? Do you see a spiritual component in music?

J.T.: When I was a young adult, music was my own personal religion. I think that a lot of young people feel this way. Music fueled me and made me feel more fulfilled. It drove me to get involved in causes.

There is also a strong spiritual component in music — perhaps because music allows

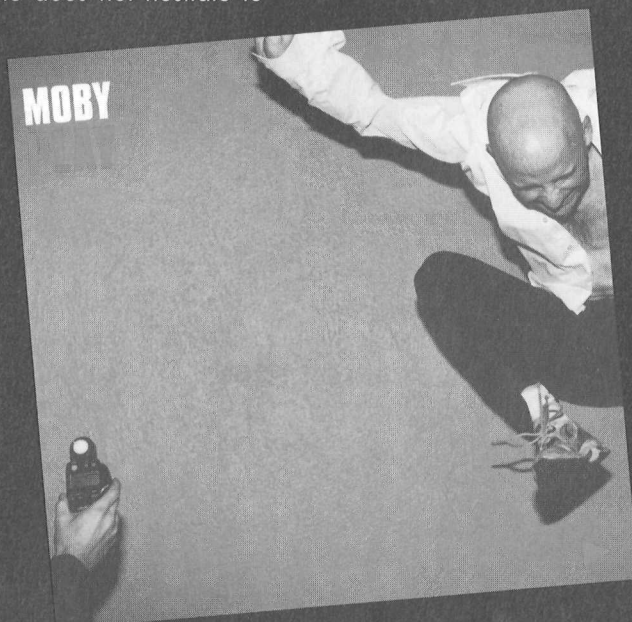
A new and spiritual form of music

by Erika von Haaren

Moby. He's a man that seems to be an enigma, but is actually quite clear. A musician that has broken the bonds of traditional genres, expectations and musicality, he has created a new and spiritual form of music that has appealed to the masses. He declares himself a devout Christian and many have said that he could be considered a bit radical in his love for Christ. His music is hard to describe. He has used everything from techno to punk to Negro spirituals to create his unique sound. He refuses to fit into a Top-40 box — which may, ironically, account for his popularity. He is seeking a more global understanding of sound and relationships and so he has experimented with everything and anything that may touch people's hearts and touches his own heart as well. There is an almost ethereal quality to his musical masterpieces, but then there is also the low bass beat that makes your feet come alive when you hear it. It is a liberating experience in music.

He came onto the scene about 10 years ago, but didn't see much recognition until around 1994–1995. Moby was unique because he was the very first person to put a face on dance music. Most dance remixes are done in a studio by technicians who are not necessarily performers. Moby got out there, mixed his music and played the club scene. Lately, though, he has been considered a contradiction in terms. He seems to be a firm believer in the “both/and” syndrome and, in truth, all parties are getting their share. For instance, on his latest album, Moby sold all of the tracks to commercial creators. His justification was that he wanted the music to get out there in any way it could. At the same time, he declared his distaste for commercialism by donating money from one of the tracks that had been used in a car commercial to an organization that was working to reduce cars in America.

Whatever his politics, his music is a new and thrilling expression of joy and love in Christ. And the fact that he does not hesitate to make himself and his faith heard is also a very emancipating idea. He includes passionately written essays in his liner notes for his albums that express his opinions on everything from drug use to weaponry. In a time when we are struggling to find great new role models, it is thrilling to have this man who has beaten the odds with his faith by his side.



people to let go of this world, the reality in which we live. Music can be like a dream. It can free you from the drudgery of everyday life. It can provide catharsis. It can provide hope and inspiration. Music can elevate someone's consciousness.

C.C.: How do you see yourself inspiring others?

J.T.: I do this through my music and also through my publishing company, Akashic Books.

All of the members of Girls Against Boys have active lives outside of the band. This is important because rock 'n' roll is not inherently this wonderful thing. Fans come to us to say that it is so cool that we do other things besides play music, that we are active in other aspects of life, that we are all doing things that we think are constructive. We aren't hedonist and music is often portrayed this way. The media shows musicians to be these partiers. Fans like that we're not a party band. Our music is feeling-based and intellectual. We use rock 'n' roll as a vehicle of engagement, to engage fans beyond the music itself.

I play bass but I also publish books. So I read a lot and edit and put out great works. Literature is a wonderful tool to raise consciousness.

Akashic Books publishes mostly novels — we've put out 11 so far, but we are also branching into nonfiction. We just published *Falun Gong's Challenge to China: Spiritual Practice or 'Evil Cult'?* by Danny Schechter. Falun Gong is a meditation-based spiritual movement that the Chinese government branded as counter-revolutionary and has vowed to crush. Danny Schechter is a human rights journalist and working with him, and people like him, is the direction I want to take the book company.

Falun Gong has very few advocates in America because the mainstream media has embraced the U.S. government's view of them. Schechter's book has been widely reviewed, so its message is getting out. My

dream is to publish books and play music that has an impact on public policy.

Fiction has been the mainstay of Akashic Books so far. I love novels. As editor-in-chief, founder and publisher, I find it exciting to work on novels and to work on non-fiction. One of my goals is to challenge readers, and to take on stereotypes or misconceptions.

For instance, take the idea of political correctness. Some people feel that this has evolved into a kind of censorship. I have always felt funny about this since political correctness comes from notions of social justice. I publish African-American authors, Latin authors, women and gay authors — those who open up language and dialogue so that you can talk about wanting to end racism without having to fit your language into how someone else wants you to express yourself.

Most of our books — novels — are provocative on a number of levels. Being provocative does not have to be heavy-handed. You have a whole book — 300 pages or so — to provide a lot of nuanced discussion and dialogue on a topic.

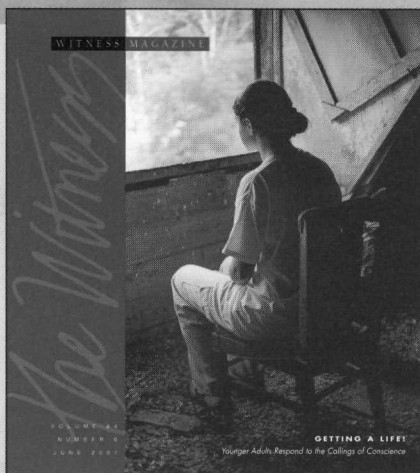
C.C.: Why is this nuanced look at politics important?

J.T.: Sometimes, for young people especially, the nuances of politics can get lost in political dogma. I saw this in college campus activism when I was younger. People can get so vehement in what they believe that they shut others out, or cut themselves off, from others.

We need to allow for differences of opinion, for real discussion and dialogue. This is the only way that we can figure things out. This is especially true for young people. Music helps them look at an issue or topic in a nuanced way. This is for the greater good and it's the way to get something done — and to try to make the world a better place. ●

Camille Colatosti is The Witness' staff writer. She lives in Hamtramck, Mich.

'All that we are, all that we have, comes from God and will one day return to God.'



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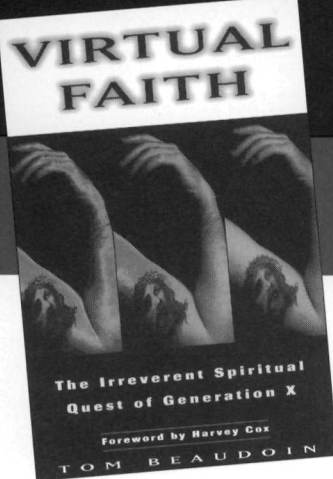
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SPIRITUALITY

Virtual faith and the NetGeneration

by Joshua M. Thomas

“**G**OLDEN-HAIRED, blue-eyed Jesus seeks loving young woman (22–29), preferably of recent Norse-Germanic heritage, who wishes to live in the spirit of the eternal. This is a legitimate ad. I am highly spiritual, though not religious, and have often been called Jesus because of my appearance and powerful spirituality that I attempt to share with others.”

Where else could you find this personal ad but at www.jesus.com? This web site, which contains both a contest to win a shower with Jesus and a series of sermons that offer searching cultural commentary on GenX, is a perfect example of what Tom Beaudoin calls “The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X,” the subtitle of his book *Virtual Faith*.

The Vatican’s naming of St. Isidore of Seville, a 7th-century author of one of the world’s first databases, as patron saint of computers and the internet is a canonical recognition of the growing importance of the online world. E-mail, e-commerce, web pages, instant message services, streaming audio and video, newsgroups and chat rooms increasingly shape our culture, especially that of young people. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 73 percent of those between ages 12 and 17, and 75 percent of those between ages 18 and 29, and 29 percent of those under 12 have been online (www.pewinternet.org). So at ease in the cyberspace of our post-modern culture, it should be no surprise that youth and young adults look online to form spiritual connections.

Virtual Faith

Full of examples from music videos, fashion and cyberspace, and drawing on research in coffeehouses, jazz clubs and chat rooms, Tom Beaudoin’s *Virtual Faith* (1998) is what he calls “the first sustained attempt to develop a theology about, by and for Generation X by attending to popular culture.” A Roman Catholic young adult himself, Beaudoin uses theological methods to identify and comment on the often “irreverent” spiritual expressions of GenX — things like pierced navels, Goth clothing and Pearl Jam’s “Jeremy.” GenXers grew up with Madonna, Kurt Cobain, divorce, AIDS, rap, E.T., and Tammy Faye Baker, and so Beaudoin’s chapter subtitles like “Sinister Ministers” and “Subversive Sacramentals” capture the paradox of a simultaneous yearning for authentic faith and deep suspicion of its traditional manifestations.

The “virtual faith” of GenXers present in pop culture is both real and artificial, in the same way as cyberspace both does and does not “exist.” Their “religiosity,” the word Beaudoin uses, is highly ambivalent, at once valuing the cyber world of virtual selves, where screen names of any gender, age, sexuality or ethnicity can experiment boldly in online communities. At the same time, they see the cardinal sin of institutions as hypocrisy, a lack of correspondence between what one is and what one pretends to be.

But GenX is a culture of “both/and,” where posturing and authenticity meet. “If virtual faith is to have any significant value,” Beaudoin writes, “it must help clarify the real, and it must make our authentic lived

practice more truly religious.” In fact, he sees irreverence as a spiritual gift, responding to an institutional Church gone awry, and inviting a return to a living tradition of a more radical Jesus.

In the anonymous freedom of cyberspace, people can both criticize the institutions, create parallel communities and gain access to religious knowledge which will, at its best, reshape religion in the “real” world. Thus, when explored and appreciated, the chief characteristics of young adult “irreverent” religiosity — suspicion of institutions, desire for an experience of living faith, religious dimensions of suffering, and ambiguity in faith — become gifts to the institutions that are being criticized.

Voices of the NetGeneration

For as much as the church is beginning to talk about GenX spirituality, we need to realize that high schools and college campuses are now populated by a different group of people. Various known as GenY, Bridgers, or Millennials, it is the designation “The NetGeneration” that captures the crucial importance of technology, computers and especially the internet in forming how they approach and think about the world. Though some studies are beginning to systematize our understanding of this generation (www.millennials.com, www.growingupdigital.com, www.millennialsrising.com), for most of its members postmodernism and the internet (whose use is beginning to cut across economic, racial and ethnic divides) are taken for granted.

They have grown up to expect that, with a

click of the mouse, they can access information and people from every imaginable religious group, spiritual practice, political theology, traditional and alternative. Beaudoin writes in *Virtual Faith* that "Cyberspace threatens the stability of religious institutions because it is a radically pluralistic space." Institutional power is thus leveled and each presence on the web assumes a "relative equality."

Rather than theorize about the spiritual connections youth and young adults are making, I sent a survey (by e-mail of course!) to high-school and college students I know asking for their insights. Since this is a generation for which truth is captured in stories, within a particular context and experience, I offer a sampling of the responses I received. They represent the varied and sometimes conflicting attitudes this NetGeneration has to the notion of spiritual connections with the technology that helped form them:

- "The internet provides spiritual resources to individuals who might not have access to the same information or support from their home congregations. I refer specifically to LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] people who, although they may face stigma from their home congregations, can assuage spiritual doubt and find strength from on-line reconciling ministries based in their same faith tradition, or one similar. More generally, it can serve as a sounding board to experiment with and discuss ideas one might not feel comfortable examining with their own pastors or youth leaders. Such an experience can create a second 'virtual church' where one communes in an entirely different way within an electronic faith community."

- "Being a non-practicing Methodist attending a Jesuit university, one would think I am force-fed religion on a daily basis.

On the contrary, I commonly find myself in deep discussion regarding aspects and beliefs of different religions. Like many of my fellow students, we are being taught about a religion with which we don't necessarily agree. When we come together we discuss what we are looking for in religion. This is where the internet comes to play. Rather than receiving misguided information from a slightly prejudiced source (i.e. priests) about a different religion, we can 'easily' research the topic for ourselves quickly and anonymously. I believe this takes away a lot of the fear or shame a person may experience when deciding to change religions."

- "I've been a part of a couple of discussion listserves that have addressed all sorts of things like the role of young people in the church, the nature of God, Post-modern theory."

- "Cyberspace? Religion? Interesting. I don't put much stock personally in what I see on TV or the internet for that matter. There is a whole slew of false information and any number of ways you could think of to send people off on life-size tangents if they actually listened. I continually find that the internet, or something so cold and unfeeling can offer me no comfort spiritually."

- "I've never connected cyberspace/internet and religion before. Now that I am thinking about it, the idea doesn't sound great. It makes me think of weird sects."

- "The internet has been my vehicle for learning about my church, religion in general, and the Church in general. Websites like those for our church and www.anglican-online.org have given me a way to answer questions that I had quickly and easily when they came up, without having to go find someone to ask and risk feeling stupid for asking a question to which I 'should' have known the answer."

Online resources

In an age when having a web page is becoming an essential marker of existence both for individuals and organizations, nearly everything imaginable is available online. You'll find cyberchurch communities by and for GenXers, like The Ooze (www.theooze.com). Other more traditional churches are using the internet to reach out to younger generations. St. Hillary's Anglican Church in Kew, Australia, goes by the name SHACK (www.shack.org.au) and has age-specific programs like Solace, Eleven50, Wipeout, Revolution and Community @ 5. An outreach of Bethesda Lutheran Church in South Minneapolis, Spirit Garage (www.spiritgarage.org), known as "The Church with a Really Big Door" has become an important model for young adult ministry in the U.S. Nearly every campus ministry has its own web site and uses e-mail as a central means of building community and sharing information.

Spiritual Connections

Any discussion of spirituality online opens the door (or the portal, to use net language) to something infinitely diverse and complicated. From the impact of multiple screen names and virtual personalities on identity formation, to the popularization of alternative spiritualities, to the irreverent expressions of pop culture, to the democratization of the knowledge and, thus, the power of institutional faith traditions, the internet and cyberspace are radically changing how we think about religion. One college freshman said it this way on his instant messenger profile: "God is a DJ." ●

Joshua M. Thomas is a Class of 2000 graduate of Dartmouth College who is lay chaplain at The Edge, Dartmouth's parish-based Episcopal campus ministry.



MENTORING

— peers who care about your soul

by Jacqueline Schmitt

THE FIRST TIME Marla came to church, the door was locked. It was the first Sunday in Advent, and our congregation had gone to a local church for Lessons and Carols. I got a scribbled note from the seminary dean, who happened to be in his office near the chapel when she tried to get in.

"Here's a student for you," he wrote. "Marla Johnson," and he gave me her dorm and e-mail addresses.

Despite that inauspicious beginning, Marla persevered. We contacted her, invited her to church, assured her we would be there this time, and included her in our Canterbury student community.

One day I had lunch with Marla. It turned out she had been thinking for some time that God was calling her to ordained ministry.

"I remember being very young the first time it occurred to me that I should be a priest," she said. "I was in church listening to the sermon, and I thought, 'God gave me all the right gifts to do what that man does.' I realized that God had blessed me with an incredible intuition, good speaking skills, intelligence, creativity and compassion. I felt then that God gave me those gifts so that I could use them to serve as a leader in the church."

Marla had grown up in the Episcopal Church and her family were active members of the parish to which she still belonged and attended when at home. In spite of that predisposition to find the Episcopal Church a friendly place (an experience by no means shared by all young adults), she did not come looking for us until the last service of the fall quarter during her freshman year. She kept her Episcopal identity to herself on a campus of students either blatantly secular or conservatively faithful.

"It has been very difficult for me to embrace a Christian identity in the presence of members of my own generation," Marla told me. "The majority of those whom I associate with consider organized religion to be the Antichrist. So many people have been hurt by the judgment dictated by the rigid rules of the church. It has taken time for me to

Rachel Tobie, Colby College

COMMUNITIES

understand that the more verbal I am about my beliefs, the easier it is for people to see that not all Christians fall into the same category, and that there can be a place for free-thinking people in the church.”

Community member, then minister

Marla became an active member of the Northwestern Canterbury community. She attended services regularly, went on retreats, worked with our seminarian on outreach projects, began hanging out at Canterbury House. The students wanted to make Canterbury House more open to the community, to be a place where students could feel comfortable to drop in and stay to talk with friends, study or hang out. As we talked about who would live at Canterbury House the next year, which would be Marla's senior year, it became clear to the community that these two student residents should take some leadership roles. At other campus ministries, these students are often called “peer ministers.”

Marla and another student, Teresa, were interested in living at Canterbury House, but they were definitely not interested in being called “peer ministers.”

“Just what would you want us to do?” they asked. My reply was that they should do the things I could not do: Plan the social events that students would want to come to, organize the outreach projects that students would be interested in, contact and invite new students to join our community.

“Oh, we can do that,” they said. “We just don't want to be peer ministers.”

In the beginning of the year, Marla and Teresa were tentative about their evangelistic duties. They had no interest in thinking of themselves as evangelists, but they wrote the welcoming letter that we sent to the new students who identified themselves as Episcopalian and we planned how we would

advertise our community as the school year began. The day after the new students moved into their dorms, Marla visited everyone whose name we had received, invited them to church the next day, left them some candy and a magnet that told who we were and where we were. The next day, most of them showed up — and stayed throughout the year.

Marla and Teresa quickly moved from being shy about organizing our community activities to being very imaginative and bold. They sent out weekly e-mail messages, they planned parties, they cajoled students into going on service projects, they joined the planning team for our provincial retreat.

“My friends thought I was crazy,” Marla later reflected. “Even the people at Canterbury were thrown off a little. Although I had always participated, I had kept to myself most of my first three years and suddenly I was everywhere, doing everything. I don't think anyone understood how much I was loving it.”

Asking for discernment

But it was soon no surprise to the community when both Marla and Teresa said, “We need a discernment group.”

“Discernment” has become a buzz word for those in the “ordination process,” and yes, Marla and Teresa were both exploring calls to ministry. But vocational questions are larger than trying to decide what one wants to do to make a living. The eight students in the group were looking at all aspects of what God might be calling them to do, looking at patterns of how their communities had recognized these callings over the years.

“In junior high,” Marla said, “I took a career quiz which dictated that I should be a photographer, a dental hygienist, or a priest. My friends thought that the idea of my being a priest was hysterical, and they teased me

for a long time. My teacher looked at the list, and said, ‘You'd be a good priest.’ However, it was the words of my peers and not my teacher that mattered the most to me. I dismissed the idea, saying that I could never do something like that.”

What the Canterbury community gave to Marla that year was the chance to try out what it might mean to answer God's call to be a minister and to try it out among a community of peers who wouldn't laugh at her. Far from it — the community thrived with Marla as one of the leaders. She is lively and fun, and she grew comfortable with her role as organizer and evangelist.

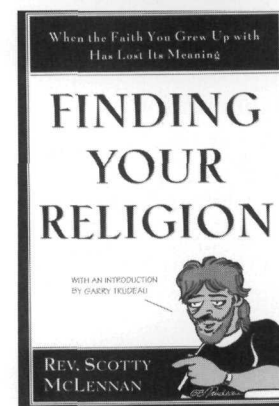
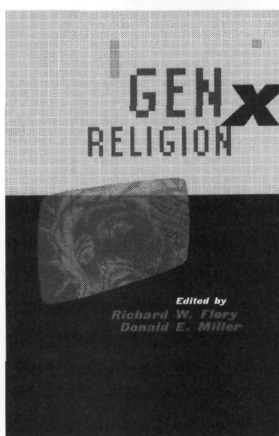
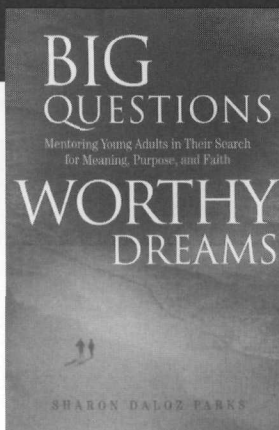
“I know that this is the right thing for me. Even when I am unhappy or stressed, I find myself passing people on campus whose lives I have touched or been touched by through Canterbury, and I know that this is what my life should be about.”

A ‘true’ mentoring community

Marla's vocational search was more meaningful for her because it took place in the context of a community that mentored her. To have her junior-high-school teacher affirm what she saw in Marla's vocation was not enough, nor was it enough for me, as the chaplain, to say, “Marla, be our peer minister.” The role elders play in the mentoring community is important, but the process is enriched by peers who see in you your exciting potential and affirm who you are and hope with you about who you may become.

During the young adult years, when we move from adolescence into adulthood, mentors play important roles in our lives. They serve as guideposts into the grown-up world, they answer our questions, they help us imagine who we might become. Most importantly, they take us seriously. They affirm who we are and encourage us along the way we need to go. A mentor, above all,

Finding religion in the young-adult years



WE IN CAMPUS MINISTRY credit the work of Sharon Daloz Parks and her colleagues in giving us a theoretical underpinning to our work with younger adults. In *Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Beacon Press, 1996), Parks and her colleagues looked at 100 people, not “superstars,” but people who had lived lifetimes of conscious work on behalf of a larger world. They wanted to find out what these folk had in common, what experiences led to their commitments and beliefs, who supported and challenged them. They discovered that what happens during the young adult years is, indeed, critical to their development into “good” adults. A mentoring environment and opportunities to engage constructively outside their home communities are two marks in that development.

Recently, Parks has reworked an earlier book, *The Critical Years* (in which she identified “young adulthood” apart from adolescence and older adulthood as an era of life with its own challenges and advantages) into *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith* (Jossey-Bass, 2000). In the process of this reworking, Parks discovered several critical social changes which have impacted development in the young-adult years. Economic changes, lengthening life span and increasing religious and demographic pluralism are among the background patterns against which we understand “faith in its broadest, most inclusive form as the activity of making meaning that all human beings share.”

“This book,” Parks writes, “describes primary features of the development of meaning and faith in the young adult years, during which ways of thinking, forms of authority and patterns of belonging may be recast.”

Parks underscores the importance of gaining this understanding when we work with young adults. “If we are to mentor the next generations well,” she says, “it has become a matter of considerable urgency that we more adequately understand the formation of the young adult imagination and its implications for forming meaning, purpose and faith.”

A new book by sociologists Richard W. Flory and Donald E. Miller, *Gen X Religion* (Routledge, 2000), examines a variety of religious expressions among younger adults. The communities described in the book demonstrate the range of religious pluralism in America, from Christian tattoo parlors to the International Church of Christ movement to a Gen X shabbat. In this study of non-traditional religious communities, the authors raise questions about what Gen Xers have in common with baby boomers and what lasting impact their tendency toward flu-

idity and distrust of hierarchies may have on the American religious landscape.

Finally, *Finding Your Religion: When the Faith You Grew Up With Has Lost Its Meaning* (HarperCollins, 1999) is a book campus ministers are reading with their students. The author, Scotty McLennan, now Dean of Religious Life at Stanford, walks the reader through, says one colleague who bought 20 copies to give to students, “the process of entering into the stream of a religious tradition.” McLennan was Garry Trudeau’s college roommate, and was the inspiration for Doonesbury’s “fighting young priest,” Rev. Scott Sloan (the cartoon character graces the book’s cover).

McLennan tells the stories of young adults looking for meaning and wondering if they will ever find a place for themselves, and affirms that it is part of the religious quest to struggle, to be confused or alienated, and to be surprised at finding meaning in unexpected ways.

— Jacqueline Schmitt

is someone who cares about our souls.

The term “mentor” has connotations in the business world, where young employees are assigned mentors to guide them through the corporate structure. Such mentors are especially helpful, we hope, to women or members of minority groups new to the corporate culture. Yet one cannot always say that these mentors care about the souls of the trainees under their care. The business is, of course, interested in what the new employee will produce and how it will affect the bottom line, but a true mentor plays an important role in our growing up, and is someone who is interested in who we may become. A mentor in one profession may well recognize that the young person under his or her care may leave and do something else.

Mentoring communities are places where this process extends beyond a relationship with one older (and, one hopes, wiser) person, but includes a community of peers. Students know that classes that operate like this are the most exciting, filled with learning both for teacher and students. Indeed, surveys of students here at Northwestern often reveal their yearning for both significant connections with faculty who can both teach them and get to know them and for time for significant conversations with their peers. They know that being part of a community of learners helps them really learn, helps them integrate what they learn into their lives.

Campus ministries are, at their best, mentoring communities. They are located at places where younger adults wrestle with questions of vocation, identity, intimacy, loyalty to institutions and where they test the trustworthiness of authority. The

What can a church do for us without being pushy or apathetic?

more intentional these ministries are at keeping the concerns of students at their core, the more successful they are in supporting the faith development of the younger adults in these congregations.

Church mentoring beyond the campus?

The church beyond the campus, however, demonstrates less commitment to younger adults. Last February, Charles N. Fulton, of the Episcopal Church Building Fund, wrote, "The average age of a person in the U.S. is estimated to be 34.6 years old. The average age of an Episcopalian is estimated to be 57 years old." A new Alban Institute study found under 4 percent of Episcopal clergy are under age 35, compared with just over 19 percent in 1974.

Young adults want to connect. They want to make a difference in the world and in their lives. They live in a society with fewer and fewer of the markers which traditionally have guided the way toward a responsible, healthy and committed adulthood.

The way some professions recruit young adults is instructive. I knew a student who decided by her senior year that, after two years in the Peace Corps, she wanted to go to graduate school in geology. Each summer of her undergraduate years, she participated in significant internships at university-related research facilities. She was invited to professional conferences where undergraduates presented papers on their research and graduate schools sought them out to apply to their programs. She was accepted at a graduate school, which was happy to defer her admission until after her stint in the Peace Corps, because it recognized the importance of the experience. As a 22-year-old she was valued for her abilities and her potential.

There are parallels in other graduate and professional fields, as well as in the trades and the workforce. There are few opportunities in the Episcopal Church for young adults to be encouraged to try out lay or ordained ministry, to be recognized for the contributions they make now or for the potential they have for leadership in the future. As an institution, we cut our adolescents and younger adults off after confirmation, where they drift in the sea of culture until we hope they come back with their children as a pledging unit for a suburban parish.

Alarming as they are, church membership statistics should not be the only impetus to care about younger adults. We should care about them because they are valuable people. We should take seriously the vows we took for them at baptism and care enough to provide mentors, mentoring communities and mentoring experiences that support their growing into the adults they hope and dream they will be. ●

Jacqueline Schmitt is Episcopal Chaplain at Northwestern University and editor of Plumline, the now on-line journal of the Episcopal Society for Ministry in Higher Education, <www.esmhe.org/Plumline/>.

PEOPLE MY AGE (24) are an interesting bunch. We are a potpourri of college students, working people, married, single, atheists and faithful all tossed into one big group commonly referred to as Young Adults. We are the folks who keep landlords in business. We are the ones who have made "Ramen Noodles" a household staple. We are the ones who will probably buy that beat-up old VW for \$350 because we need to be able to get around. We are struggling for independence — we need to begin careers and learn what our parents meant by the phrase, "making ends meet" — but oftentimes don't know where to start. We are also struggling to define our own beliefs, morals, and priorities as our own, without the influence of parents, teachers or siblings.

Each of us is an individual and, while our challenges are much the same, we each have our own story when it comes to where we are coming from and where we hope to go.

Most churches don't really have a solid idea of what to do with us. There are few, if any, programs that are solely designed to help 18–30 year-olds learn about their faith in the context of all the massive changes and upheavals in our lives. That is no one's fault, of course, but simply a truth. We are hard to figure out. Many of us are already over-committed and the very thought of having to commit to one more thing is terrifying. At the same time, we are seeking community and that one consistent aspect of our lives in the midst of the maelstrom.

So what can a church do for us without being pushy or apathetic?

The ministry we are developing in the Diocese of Minnesota is one that allows a commitment, but also allows for flexibility. Based on a strategic vision which we developed in September 2000, we decided that the most important aspects of our mission would be: (1) putting down roots within the church, (2) discovering our identities in Christ with community and (3) living joyfully in our day. To that end, we have created four core teams to focus on the different aspects of making this program happen, including a team in charge of finding creative ways to fund events and our general operating costs as a whole.

Currently there are about 60 people who have taken an active interest in what we are creating. We have an average of six people per team who meet monthly to form new ideas and brainstorm possibilities that would allow us to grow spiritually — because spiritual growth is at the center of what we are doing. We are seeking to learn more about the love of God and how we can live into that love.

It's an exciting time. At age 24, I find myself thrilled that even though I am headed for a time of great change, I will have this community upon which I can lean when I need to. And when someone else goes through a similar situation, I will be able to provide a shoulder for them as well. It is that which holds us together during a time when we often feel as though we are coming unglued. We ask for your prayers as we continue to strive to make this a reality in Minnesota.

— Erika von Haaren

SERVING AND



DISCERNING

— on \$100 a month

by Alison Witty, Jon Erdman and Jeff Huston

IN THE SUMMER OF 2000 the first class of interns arrived at Resurrection House, a ministry that the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection created to provide recent college graduates with the opportunity to spend a year living in community and working on personal discernment issues. With the help of the Diocese of Nebraska, the Hitchcock Foundation, and lots of dedicated parishioners, the people of Church of the Resurrection had turned their old church rectory into a home for three or four interns. The hope was to bring talented young people to serve in an urban setting where help was needed, and to enable those same people to get a first-hand look at Christian ministry from different perspectives. We tried to find folks who sensed at least the possibility of a calling to serve in ordered ministry, hoping that some might decide to become priests in the church.

There are three parts to the intern's work-week. Twenty hours a week of service in a local church — doing church-based ministry in an Episcopal setting. Then 10 hours a week working in some kind of gritty, urban outreach ministry. And finally, 10 hours a week of community building, including personal spiritual direction, worship, personal prayer and community meetings.

Spiritual direction is a key part of the program. It is a wonderful help that our spiritual director is a veteran of community living herself and so knows the kinds of issues that the interns are facing. The whole program is set against a backdrop of very simple living. The interns get less than a \$100 a month on which to live, plus a modest food allowance for the whole house. We knew that simple living was a hallmark of most successful Christian communities and so we asked the interns to sign a covenant before they came to Omaha: no monetary gifts, no loans, no jobs on the side. They were challenged to live for nine months as simply and lightly as possible, even to the extent of depending upon the church members to help provide some meals and transportation.

My impression is that the simple living aspect of the program has been one of the great challenges — and great blessings — for the interns. They are consistently declining financial help from well-meaning family members, friends and even church mem-

bers. And they have made very intentional decisions to keep their lives uncluttered. They have no TV; they use the local library for computer access; at Christmas, most of the gifts they gave they crafted themselves. The simple living has focused their prayer-life and their community life in a powerful way. And I know it has enabled them to experience how doing ministry has many rewards, even if they are not necessarily financial in nature.

— Scott Barker, Vicar, Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, Omaha, Neb.

Alison Witty: Simple living is more than our poverty

Simple living is not always easy. There are some days I would like nothing more than to come home, put on my pajamas, and watch television all night long, but we don't have a TV. ...

There are some days that I would like nothing better than a treat from Dairy Queen, but I don't have the money. ...

Some days I wonder if I'll have enough money to buy the essentials, but I always do.

I have learned that there is a lot more to simple living than our poverty. Living simply means putting our priorities straight. It means feeling the reward of loving Christ in all persons.

As we were developing guidelines for our community at the beginning of our year here, we agreed to celebrate the Eucharist together once a week with our director. We have all found a certain pleasure in gathering around our own dining room table to celebrate Christ's last meal. Since we are celebrating in our own home, we use whatever bread we have in the cupboard. Our source of the Body of Christ always has a bit more flavor than the wafer normally used on Sundays. We have used wheat, sun-dried tomato, even cinnamon raisin on occasion. What this has really come to symbolize for me is the diversity of the Body of Christ. Mother Teresa has been quoted as feeling lucky to serve Christ in his "distressing disguise" as the poorest of the poor. Our communion bread reminds me that Jesus is in all of us — in fact, could be any of the people I serve.

Volunteering in a homeless shelter sure affords me the oppor-

Not looking for the 'normal thing'

by Ruth Monette

ENVISION THE MOTHER OF ALL REALITY TELEVISION, MTV's *The Real World*. Take away the cameras, the glitz, and the large paychecks. Shift the work assigned the housemates from media-based productions to social-service-related positions with local non-profits. Assume that those responsible for choosing participants actually look for people who will get along together and avoid those likely to cause significant problems. Do all this and you have the Episcopal Urban Intern Program (EUIP). The EUIP is a year-long internship program located in Los Angeles where young adults live in Christian community and work full-time with populations such as the homeless, abused children, at-risk youth, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

When I graduated from college in June of 1999, I had only three goals. The Episcopal Urban Intern Program allowed me to accomplish all three. In August of that year, I took a road trip, driving from upstate New York (where I had attended Hobart and William Smith Colleges) to California. I moved to a place I had never been before — Los Angeles. And I was guaranteed a year without snow. While accomplishing these three things was high on my “what to do after college list,” what really attracted me to the Episcopal Urban Intern Program was the chance to spend a year figuring out my life.

In one way or another, each of my fellow interns joined the EUIP for the same reason. Three were there with plans to attend graduate or professional schools in the near future (seminary, law school and medical school). The fourth was fairly sure that her passion was at-risk youth, but wanted to test that. And then there was me — a little less focused, but interested in exploring all the options.

Our year in the Episcopal Urban Intern Program had three foci: our worksites, our community life and our spiritual lives. Each of us was placed in a full-time social service-related position with a non-profit agency in the Los Angeles area. We worked with the homeless, people living with HIV/AIDS, abused children, at-risk youth and a campus ministry on an urban campus (my placement). The jobs were stressful — emotionally and spiritually and sometimes physically. They were also deeply rewarding.

At the end of our workdays, we returned to the former rectory at Holy Faith Episcopal Church in Inglewood for “community time.” We ate dinner together at least once a week. We met in a group with the program's coordinator. As I would explain to college friends who choose more traditional paths, one of the hardest things about moving to a new city is making friends ... but my new friends came built into my move.

That is not to say that it was easy. The struggle of living in community — honoring each person's uniqueness while establishing appropriate limits — was one of the most difficult aspects of the program. We had to look beyond each other's annoying traits, get past who didn't do their dishes or who hogged all the computer time. In truth, community life was particularly rough for us. We were not able to resolve all of our differences and we struggled until the last day to feel a sense of success about our community. However, each of us made lasting friendships during our year together and I think each of us learned a great deal about having healthy relationships with the people we live with.

Intertwined with our community life was our spiritual life — individually and collectively. The program asked us to become active members of our sponsoring parish — Holy Faith, a multicultural urban parish like no other any of us had attended. We sang in the choir, taught Sunday School and worshipped with the parish. Additionally, as a community we met regularly for “spiritual time,” alternating between Bible studies and prayer. We each met individually with the program's coordinator to discuss our worksites, the community life and our spiritual journeys.

I got more than I expected out of the EUIP — life-long friendships, a job I love, and a sense of direction for the next few years, at least. As a former intern from the first year of the program puts it, “If you don't know quite what you want to do with your life, but you know it ain't the normal thing ... this is the program for you.”

— For more information on the Episcopal Urban Internship Program contact <www.euip.org>.

tunity to see many distressing disguises. To me, living simply means being ready and willing to serve Christ in anyone, anywhere, as God calls us to do, not letting our own desires get in the way. For what we do for the least of these, we do for Christ Himself. It's that simple.

Jon Erdman: What is mine alone?

“All we are and all we have are not ours, but God's, and we are simply stewards of what we have been entrusted.” In my experience, this statement is at the heart of living simply. It also is one of the hardest to take to heart. So many of the things I have, I feel I have worked hard to get. I have put in many hours of work, care and thought, and I have looked on some of “my” belongings as rewards for the work I have done. But they are not mine. I alone could never have gotten any of them — or anything, for that matter. God has given me everything.

So how has that affected my life? For a start, my life has been less cluttered.

One of the first acts of letting go of my things was packing to come to the Resurrection House program. I was only able to take two carry-on bags and two tubs in baggage. So, to start out, I did not bring much. It was hard to choose what to bring. As I look back on it, it did help me set my priorities. Much of what frivolous things I had come to acquire during my life did not accompany me. Only what I needed, then a few Bibles, a chess board, a few pictures, a few CDs, a few books, and a few other items. What is important really changed when it all had to fit in two bags and two boxes. It was freeing to see how little I actually needed.



Packing was a great way of setting my priorities, but just cutting down on the amount I have is not, for me, the most important part of living simply. Fewer belongings is a way to an understanding, but it is not the only way to that understanding. That understanding, is the attitude that I have in my heart about what is "mine." What is mine alone? Nothing. Everything is God's. That understanding is, for me, the heart of living simply.

The change in heart is what is important to me. How I share what I have, instead of regarding it as "mine." That change in heart led me to the question, "Why did God give this to me, and how does God want me to use it?" Much of the way I used to act has changed because of asking myself that question. I have been more willing to give my time, my energy and my things to help other people. The largest blessing that I have been given by living simply has been becoming closer to God. After coming to the realization that all has been given to me in love and I should also give in love, I have grown closer to the Almighty God who is love, who said

"Love one another, as I have loved you. That my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

Jeff Huston: What you add, not deny

When I first found out that I had been accepted into the Resurrection House program my head started spinning in search of an explanation of simple living. I wondered if I could bring a personal CD player. I must have thought that bringing a discman might compromise my agreement to enter a simple community. In all honesty, I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

Upon arrival in Omaha, I remember thinking to myself as my roommates and I entered our unfurnished house, "This simple living thing is ridiculous!" However, when we returned from our opening retreat, our house was completely furnished — beds, two love seats, a coffee table and a full dining room set, not to mention the various knickknacks for the kitchen and a set of pots and pans. The gifts continued pouring in and we soon found ourselves with more than we ever

thought we could possibly need. Our initial abundance of household items spawned our favorite phrase, "It depends on your definition of simple!"

Fast-forward six months and I'm sitting here in Wahoo, Neb., in the middle of our six-day silent retreat. Here, in a very real way, I've come to the realization that living simply isn't entirely about my possessions or lack thereof. Granted, it feels great railing against the absurdity of our market-driven economy; simplicity, I've found, is not about what you deny but what you add. Of course we don't need that third TV or the new SUV; what we need more than anything is God. And not just the Sunday morning fix we're prone to accepting as our "end of the bargain." What we need is a real relationship with God, one steeped in prayer and openness to God's presence in our life.

This week has afforded me the opportunity to be in constant communion with God in nature, Scripture, meditation, reflection and prayer. How often on any given day do we take time "to be" with God? My roommates and I are blessed in that we share two worship times each day (even though morning prayer comes at 6:30 A.M. twice a week.). It is our communion with God that we share as a community, as well our individual time with God that allows us to claim a Christ-centered, simple community. It is our focus on God's presence in our lives that backs up our bold claim of simplicity in this complex world.

So there you have it, my musings and reflections on simple living. Do I see a future as the next new-age guru on how to change lives? For your sake as well as my own, no. But I will leave you with my working definition (to date) of simple living: Simple because my focus is on God's presence in my heart and with us at Resurrection House. Simple because I'm trying to keep up with God and not the Joneses. ●

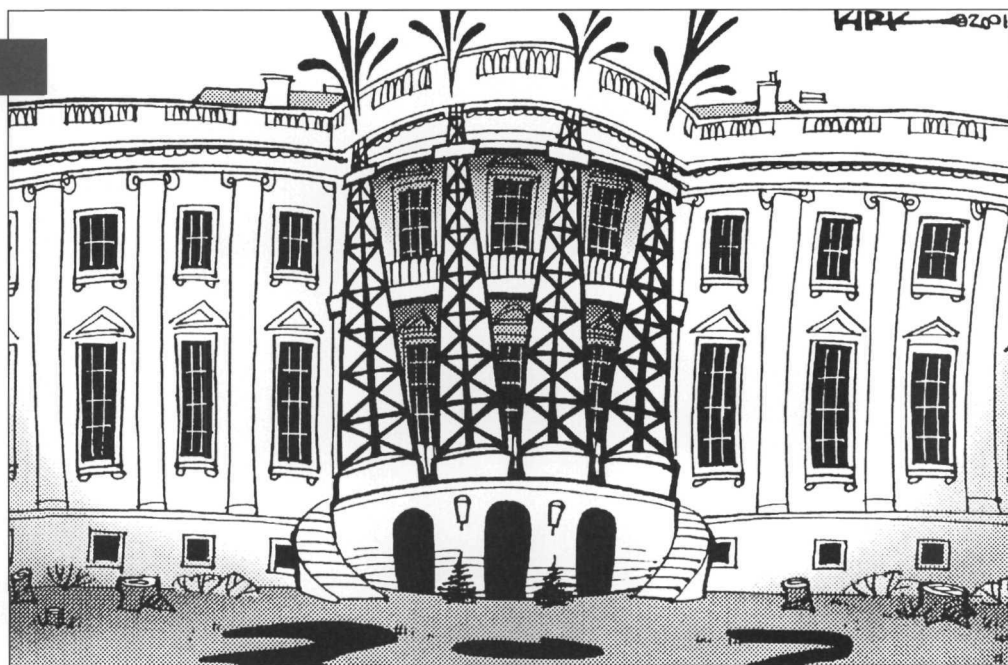
For more information on Resurrection House contact <fatherscott@uswest.net>.

School shootings and white delusion

White Americans “live in an utter state of self-delusion,” Nashville-based writer Tim Wise wrote in a commentary on recent school shootings that appeared on the internet. “We think danger is black, brown and poor, and if we can just move far enough away from ‘those people’ in the cities we’ll be safe. If we can just find an ‘all-American town, life will be better, because ‘things like this just don’t happen here.’ ... In case you hadn’t noticed, ‘here’ is about the only place these kinds of things do happen. Oh sure, there is plenty of violence in urban communities and schools. But mass murder; wholesale slaughter; take-a-gun-and-see-how-many-you-can-kill kinda craziness seems made for those safe places: the white suburbs or rural communities.

“And yet once again, we hear the FBI insist there is no ‘profile’ of a school shooter. Come again? White boy after white boy after white boy, with very few exceptions to that rule (and none in the mass shooting category), decides to use their classmates for target practice, and yet there is no profile? Imagine if all these killers had been black: Would we still hesitate to put a racial face on the perpetrators? Doubtful.

“Indeed, if any black child in America — especially in the mostly white suburbs of Littleton, or Santee — were to openly discuss their plans to murder fellow students, as happened both at Columbine and now Santana High, you can bet your ass that somebody would have turned them in, and the cops would have beat a path to their doorstep. But when whites discuss their murderous intentions, our stereotypes of what danger looks like cause us to ignore it — they’re just ‘talking’ and won’t really do anything. How many kids have to die before we rethink that nonsense? How many dazed and confused parents, mayors and sheriffs do we have to listen to, describing how ‘normal’ and safe their community is, and how they just can’t understand what went wrong?



“I’ll tell you what went wrong and it’s not TV, rap music, video games or lack of prayer in school. What went wrong is that white Americans decided to ignore dysfunction and violence when it only affected other communities, and thereby blinded themselves to the inevitable creeping of chaos which never remains isolated too long. What affects the urban ‘ghetto’ today will be coming to a Wal-Mart near you tomorrow, and unless you address the emptiness, pain, isolation and lack of hope felt by children of color and the poor, then don’t be shocked when the support systems aren’t there for your kids either.”

Treaty conflict gives way to partnership

Conflict between Ojibwe Indians and white sportfishing groups in northern Wisconsin has given way to an environmental protection partnership that has chased several mining companies from the state, according to a recent story in *ColorLines* (Spring ‘01).

“Under the treaties of 1837 and 1842, the Ojibwe had reserved rights to use natural resources — such as fish, game, wild rice and medicinal plants — in the ‘ceded territories’ they sold to the U.S.,” write activists Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt. “The tribe’s historic practice of spearfishing was outlawed in 1908, driving the tradition underground, until a 1983 court decision

recognized that Wisconsin Ojibwe had retained treaty rights in the ceded territories.

“In response, a backlash gained steam among white sportsmen who feared that spearfishing would deplete the lakes of fish. Although the Ojibwe never speared more than 3 percent of northern Wisconsin fish, they were repeatedly scapegoated by the media and sportfishers for the region’s environmental and economic problems.

“Indian spearfishers were confronted by mobs of white anti-treaty protesters who held signs reading ‘Save a Walleye — Spear an Indian.’ They shouted racist epithets such as ‘timber n——,’ ‘welfare warriors,’ and ‘spearchuckers,’ and threw rocks, bottles and full beer cans at Natives. Ojibwe saw their elders assaulted and nearly run over, their drum groups harassed with whistles and mock chants. White sportfishers blockaded, swamped and attacked Ojibwe boats with metal ball bearings, pipe bombs and sniper fire. ...

“In response, the Midwest Treaty Network (MTN), founded in 1989 as an alliance of Native and non-Native groups supporting tribal sovereignty, initiated the Witness for Nonviolence, modeled after similar monitoring programs in Central America. During the treaty conflicts, about 2,000 trained witnesses stood with Ojibwe fishing families as a supportive presence, documenting anti-Indian violence and harassment and trying to deter or lessen

the violence and promote reconciliation.

"Witnesses noticed that many followers of the anti-treaty groups were confused by anti-Indian propaganda, and genuinely concerned about the environmental effects of spearing. Even at the height of the spearing clashes, the late Red Cliff Ojibwe activist Walter Bresette had predicted that white northerners would realize that environmental and economic problems are 'more of a threat to their lifestyle than Indians who go out and spear fish. ... We have more in common with the anti-Indian people than we do with the state of Wisconsin.' How to turn this potential into a reality was the question.

"The opportunity came with the 1990s invasion of mining companies into the area. The environmental threat they posed provided a crucial common enemy around which to build an alliance. A number of multinational mining companies, such as Exxon and Kennecott, had long eyed the metallic sulfide deposits in northern Wisconsin. They saw the administration of pro-mining Republican Governor Tommy Thompson as the ideal opportunity to propose new mines, particularly since Native and non-Native communities were split over treaty rights. Ironically, it was native sovereign rights guaranteed by treaties that became a key factor in building a multiracial alliance against the mining companies in Ojibwe-ceded territory. The treaties gave the tribes legal standing in federal court to challenge environmental degradation. This political clout forced whites who were seriously interested in environmental protection to sit down at the table with the Native nations as potential allies."

Grossman and McNutt report that "international mining industry journals now express worry about the contagious spread of Wisconsin anti-mining strategies, and identify Wisconsin as one of four global battlegrounds for the industry's future."

"The earth is capable of forgiveness"

We need to begin a "truth and reconciliation" process with the natural world, says writer-philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore in an interview with *The Sun* (3/01). "After a war is over,

the healing process almost always begins with amnesties and pardons, the formal trappings of forgiveness. Right now, experiments in truth and reconciliation are going on all over the world, such as in South Africa, where those who admit their crimes under apartheid are allowed to go unpunished.

"This relates to the natural world because, here in the U.S., we are involved in a centuries-long war against the land. There are natural consequences to ecological warfare: devastating floods and hurricanes, increased cancer rates, crop failures. We might think of these disasters as a kind of cosmic justice — tit for tat, no mercy. But the earth is also capable of forgiveness, because it has the ability to heal itself. When the earth covers burned-over land, first with wildflowers, then alder thickets, then pine forests; when a marsh filters water; when plants create oxygen; when a river washes silt from the gravel beds where salmon spawn — these great natural cycles of renewal are a kind of forgiveness, again and again transforming death into life. They are a kind of grace.

"The breaching of hydroelectric dams, for example, offers the chance for grace and the possibility of redemption. I want to be there when the sluice gates are opened and the Columbia River rises, fed by the reservoir behind the John Day Dam. True, in so many places, we have done irreparable, unforgivable harm. Extinct species will not be born again. And when corporations cut an ancient forest and poison the bulldozed ground, we will not see that forest again for 14 generations. But a river can heal itself, and so has the power, essentially, to forgive."

Hugh White

The former associate director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company from 1973 to 1981, Hugh Carleton White, Jr., 80, died April 14 in Pontiac, Mich. A lifelong Detroit resident, White helped found the Detroit Industrial Mission, which he directed from 1955 to 1967. DIM grew to include an ecumenical staff of clergy and lay persons who participated in mediation and dialogue between unions and management regarding working conditions, wages and racial and gender discrimination. Between 1966 and

1968 White assisted in the founding of 11 Industrial Missions in North America.

From 1981 to 1989 White served as consultant to Michigan's Episcopal bishop, H. Coleman McGehee, with a special emphasis on economic justice and corporate responsibility. ●

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Youth Empowerment Coordinator

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