

WITNESS MAGAZINE

AIDS IN A GLOBAL AGE



VOLUME 86
NUMBER 1/2
JAN/FEB 2003

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Ray Gaston on Christians and resistance to war
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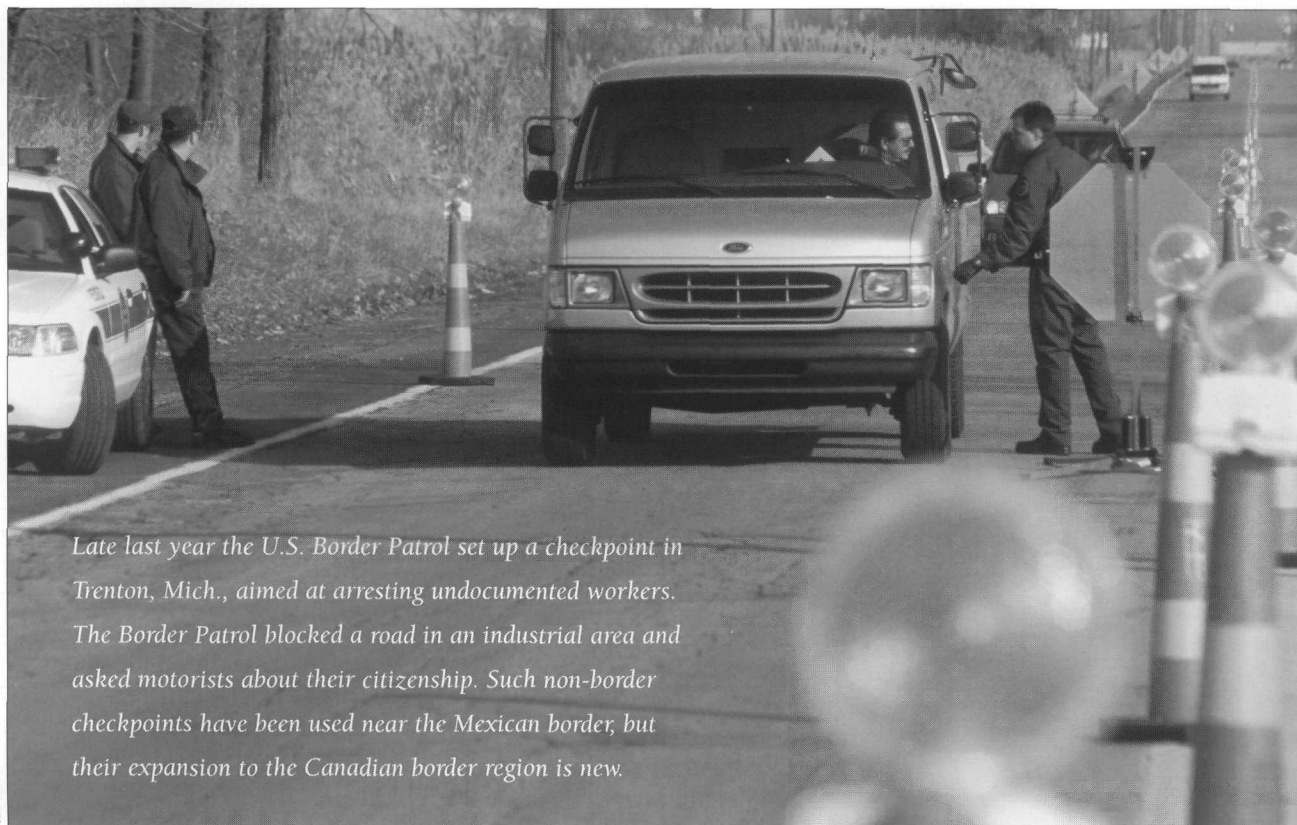
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on the cover

Zimbabwe: The Gombedza kids are an orphan family of seven that lives alone in the house which belonged to their parents before they died. They are solely dependent for food and help from the neighbors and a young aunt who comes to visit them whenever she can. September 1999 © Karin Retief/Trace Images/The Image Works

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Late last year the U.S. Border Patrol set up a checkpoint in Trenton, Mich., aimed at arresting undocumented workers. The Border Patrol blocked a road in an industrial area and asked motorists about their citizenship. Such non-border checkpoints have been used near the Mexican border, but their expansion to the Canadian border region is new.

Jim West

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Foreign subscriptions add \$20 per year.

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LETTERS

Crucial contribution

I genuinely appreciate *The Witness* and find it extremely refreshing and useful for working on peace and justice issues. Keep up the fine work, and be assured that the contribution you are making to help us make connections between our faith and the difficult issues of our time is crucial.

Jane C. Strippel
Oxford, OH

Claiming the blessing

Julie Wortman is precisely correct [TW 11/02]. Failure to approve rites of blessing for all committed relationships calls into question our church's claim that we collectively are defined by our Baptismal Covenant: To work for justice and peace for all persons.

For, of course, this is a justice issue. Those who would argue otherwise know that we cannot be "mostly just"; that a "little justice" is tantamount to no justice. Those who would deny or delay the full inclusion of all our brothers and sisters into our shared blessings also know that the Episcopal Church historically moves on justice issues, and that if "Claiming the Blessing" is named as a justice issue, our church will be much more likely to move to include. Hence, the disingenuous, "Let's not dignify this as a 'justice' issue" simply seeks to define this justice issue out of existence.

Those convening and attending the Claiming the Blessing conference know that until our church gets this right, then every other act of compassion and justice supported and carried out by the Episcopal Church will be contaminated with hypocrisy. Now IS the time.

The Rev. Dr. Alan C. Miller
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
Williston, FL

What would Jesus drive?

Thank you for sending me an examination copy of *The Witness*. I intend to subscribe based on your interview with Bill McKibben [TW 7/8-02]. I am in an Episcopal Community called Grace Church in Riverhead, N.Y., and have read several

of McKibben's books.

As part of the "Turn the tide" program sponsored by the Center for the New American Dream, based in Washington, D.C., I decided to not drive my car two days a week. This meant abrupt changes in my life-style patterns about a year ago. Since then, I have come to look forward to those days without driving. I walk or bike and have reaped many benefits from this decision. This Thanksgiving, I've decided to do a seven-day walk on a path in my county called the Paumanok Path to bring attention to the path which is under-used and to use my feet as witness to say thanks for all the open space that has been preserved in a county that has a population in excess of 1.2 million people! My mission is to inspire people, even SUV drivers, to become embodied and think about the larger consequences of operating a vehicle that guzzles fossil fuel and spews out plenty of carbon dioxide. This is the kind of witnessing that is necessary not only by clergy, but by people of faith.

Tom Stock
Manorville, NY

Thoughtful overview of Palestinian struggle

I returned from Palestine in August as one of 13 United Methodists who went over on a Peace with Justice mission. I just came across your issue on the Palestinian struggle [TW 9/01] in *The Witness* (I used to subscribe and have since renewed).

Congratulations.

You have provided a great service by providing a highly readable, thoughtful, and comprehensive (within the constraints of your space, etc.) overview of the situation. I intend to draw upon this rather frequently in my conversations with Christians and Jews.

Les Solomon
Alexandria, VA

To cure ideological insanity and terrorism

The Israeli-Islam problem might be solved if all

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *The Witness* magazine and related website projects, seeks to give voice to a liberation Gospel of peace and justice and to promote the concrete activism that flows from such a Christianity. Founded in 1917 by Irving Peake Johnson, an Episcopal Church bishop, *The Witness* claims a special mission to Episcopalians and other Anglicans worldwide, while affirming strong partnership with progressives of other faith traditions.

Manuscripts: Writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

religious authorities would teach the difference between "objective reality" and "subjective reality." "Objective reality" has to do with what is repeatedly demonstrable and so scientifically provable. "Subjective reality" has to do with religious or ideological or hypothetical beliefs that are not scientifically provable and are therefore subject to question, challenge or doubt, but are fervently believed by many people.

Extremes of belief in "subjective realities" and resultant inability to distinguish it from "objective reality" amounts to "ideological insanity" and inability to find pragmatic solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is the religious basis of terrorism.

Will religious leaders promote this potential Great Enlightenment to enable the benighted masses to see and respond to the significance of the difference between "objective reality" and "subjective reality"? Leaders might be impeded by fear that such enlightenment would weaken their authority for teaching religion and reduce their finances. Surely not! Such a service of enlightenment, curbing ideological extremism and terrorism and opening the way for pragmatic solutions to ethnic and political conflicts, would elevate their public esteem and serviceability to humanity. It would facilitate President Bush's proposed solution.

Or could we "brain storm" for other solutions? Could President Bush set aside an Israel-size area in Texas and invite Israelis to emigrate there to build a Promised Land? Might other nations do the same?

Or could President Bush persuade the entire conflicted Israeli-Palestinian area that it is by natural geographical design a single geopolitical hegemonic entity and must therefore be democratically unified politically and economically according to pragmatic requirements without reference to or interference by ideological or religious prejudices?

The Rev. John Julian Hancock
Los Angeles, CA

'A new *Witness* for a new time'

These are desperate times. The drums of war rumble in the background of our lives, unemployment is reaching new highs, the economy is precarious, and the last national election gave evidence of a strong conservative backlash in this country. Many of the people in our churches reflect this reality, and it is sometimes difficult to offer the Bread of Life when so many have already been filled with the Bread of Anxiety.

Never has the need for the prophetic voice of *The Witness* been greater — or, under greater threat. The title of this essay, which was used in a recent staff report to the board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company (publisher of *The Witness*), was taken from a working paper prepared in 1989 to assist the board at that time in deciding how to go forward into the 1990s. Then, as now, the financial resources of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company were dwindling. Then, as now, the possibility the board and staff faced was the loss of *The Witness*' prophetic voice.

The new board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, working closely with the staff of *The Witness*, believes that God is doing a new thing. We are choosing to see opportunities even in the midst of danger. We are beginning to see the emergence of a vision for a new *Witness* for a new time.

This may mean that *The Witness*, as a magazine, begins to look different and have a different publishing schedule. We may need to provide an alternative print vehicle while expanding our capacities in cyberspace. We are beginning to explore cooperative ventures with affiliate organizations. Exciting new ideas for membership development are emerging.

Edmund Burke said, "Desperate people in desperate times do desperate things." As Christians, however, we are a people of hope. The board and staff of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company are committed to going forward in a way that ensures

a future for this important voice of prophecy that, for more than eighty years, has challenged the church to stay focused on its mission. We intend to do that by staying focused on the sacred mission that God has given us as the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

We ask your prayers as we move forward into this time of challenge and discernment and decision.

— *The Executive Committee of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, for the Board of Directors*

CLASSIFIEDS

Bread for the World

FREE 12-page booklet with practical tips about "What You Can Do to End Hunger," published by Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' movement that seeks justice for hungry people. To order your free copy, call toll free at 1-800-822-7323 or visit the Bread for the World web site: www.bread.org.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

An Episcopal religious community-in-canonical-formation of brothers and sisters; single, partnered and married; either living-in-community or living independently; striving for justice and peace among all people. Contact: Order of Jonathan Daniels, St. Brigit's Hallow, 94 Chatham St., Chatham, NJ 07928.

Order of Christian Workers

Welcome to our life/work in community, homelessness, immigrants, AIDS, Recovery, housing, spirituality, including "To Follow the Christ" poster, books, etc. www.orderofchristianworkers.org.

As we went to press...

This news digest was prepared from news and wire reports by *Witness* news editor, Pat McCaughan.

'What Would Jesus Drive?' Not a gas guzzler!

The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) launched its "What Would Jesus Drive?" advertising campaign to focus attention on fuel efficiency and environmental issues. Leaders of an umbrella group known as the Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign (ICEC) delivered a letter signed by more than 100 heads of denominations and senior religious leaders from 21 states, to Ford, General Motors, and DaimlerChrysler executives and leadership at the United Auto Workers in Detroit on November 20. They arrived in a caravan of electric-hybrid cars. The letter asked automakers to build more fuel-efficient cars. Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold was among those who signed the letter, which focused on the damaging effects of pollution from vehicles on human health and the rest of God's creation, its contributions to global warming, and added a concern about U.S. reliance on imported oil from unstable regions of the world.



Jim West

First native bishop dies at 92

Harold Jones, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota, died Nov. 12 in Arizona at the age of 92. He was the first Native American to be ordained to the office of bishop by any Christian denomination. Bishop Jones was consecrated January 11, 1972. His consecration marked the highlight of a career that began in 1938 with his ordination to the priesthood.

World Council of Churches to cut staff by 15 percent in 2003

The World Council of Churches (WCC), faced with a financial shortfall of more than six million Swiss francs in 2003, has announced it will reduce staff by 15 percent, from 165 full-time positions currently to a total of 141 positions by year end. The WCC, the world's biggest church grouping, also will reduce its 2003 expenses and begin to discern new ways to fulfill its mandate of seeking unity and cooperation among its 342 member churches worldwide.

German Jewish community given 'milestone' status equal to churches

The German government's plan to give the country's Jewish community an equal legal status to the mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic churches has been hailed as a milestone by Jewish leaders. "This is a historic event," said Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. "That Jews live here once again in considerable numbers is a fact that those who returned after 1945 can hardly imagine."

Sydney newspaper reports allegations of nepotism against archbishop

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen, has been accused of nepotism after appointing his wife to a ministry position in the diocese. Jensen commissioned his wife, Christine Jensen, along with five other women at St. Andrew's Cathedral, to lead a newly formed women's ministry. It marked a first in Australian Anglican history, with no previous records of an archbishop performing the "commissioning" of his own wife, the newspaper reported. Less than three weeks earlier, Jensen infuriated critics by nominating his brother, Phillip, as new Dean of Sydney. With the archbishop's son, Michael, already serving as St. Andrew's School chaplain, there are four Jensens in key positions in the Sydney diocese. The newly commissioned women's ministry team consists of three laywomen, including Christine Jensen, and three female deacons, the highest rank a woman can attain in the Sydney diocese, which bans women's ordination.

Interfaith group stages living-wage protest at Wal-Mart

Demonstrators rallied outside a Sam's Club (Wal-Mart) as part of the People's Campaign for Justice at Wal-Mart in Southgate, Mich., in late November. The Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues wants Wal-Mart, the largest private employer in the U.S., to provide jobs with a living wage and benefits and to end the trade in goods made in sweatshops.



Jim West / Impact Digitalis

Bid for 'Dress Down Sundays' defeated in Church of England

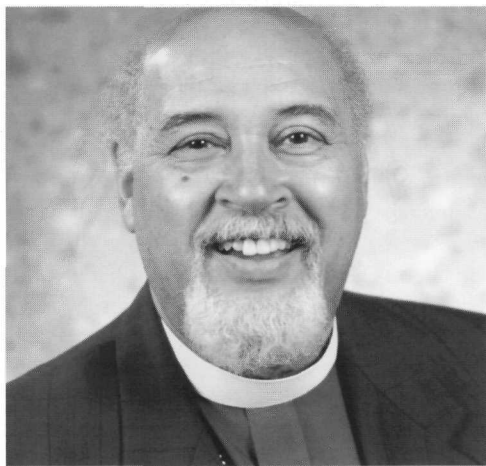
A proposal to allow Church of England vicars to opt for jeans instead of cassocks and surplices on Sunday mornings was defeated at the church's general synod meeting in London. The "Dress Down Sundays" plan was a bid to appeal to younger congregations. Some supporters of the proposal said they felt as though they were dressing in drag when putting on cassocks, the *Guardian* reported. Some clergy already conduct services in corduroys and sweaters. According to a study, the Church of England faces a marked reduction in attendance over the next two decades. By 2030, it is predicted that the number of adult parishioners will fall from 800,000 to 500,000. And for every 100 children in churches in 1930, there could be just four in 2030.

Restructuring of ethnic ministry unit draws scrutiny

by Pat McCaughan

Arthur B. Williams, Jr. says he'll begin his new role as the acting director of Ethnic Congregational Development by assisting national church staff with restructuring the unit, recruiting staff and communicating an ongoing commitment to ethnic ministry and anti-racism initiatives — all within an evolving process.

"The four ethnic desks will continue," said Williams, who retired Dec. 31 as Ohio's suffragan bishop and began the part-time interim position Jan. 1. He emphasized that



Arthur Williams

the voices of ethnic Episcopalians will continue to be heard within the national church.

"I certainly would not have taken the position otherwise," said Williams. "I am as committed as the Presiding Bishop for those concerns to continue to be heard. Each desk will have a staff person and there will be a full-time director. The difference is that, in addition to advocacy, there will be a congregational development component."

Less clear is the way the process will now evolve.

A 'dreadful' process

Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold announced

the staff changes at the February 22, 2002 Executive Council meeting in San Antonio. He said the ethnic ministry unit would be refocused on congregational development and clergy recruitment rather than advocacy.

Carole Jan Lee, a member of the national church's Executive Council (EC) and of the council's People of Color Caucus, called the process flawed because people of color weren't included. She said the caucus, in particular, felt left out of the process and considered it doomed to failure from the start because of its approach. "[The plan was,] if they hired a Hispanic to head the department, then they would look for people of the other three ethnic groups to fill the other positions," she said. "So, the process has been, whatever ethnic group the director is, they'll hire three others from the other groups. But nobody applied for the director's position. So all the [incumbent] staff people have been in limbo. It's been dreadful, a poor personnel practice that shows insensitivity to people's lives."

Brian Grieves, director of Peace and Justice Ministries, said the practice of hiring a director who also has a programmatic work load is not new. "Since the 1994 budget cuts, program managers have supervised in addition to carrying their own workload. But," he added, "I don't know what the plan for ethnic ministries will be. Art Williams will come to help the Presiding Bishop and the program staff sort out what are the ministries of all of the ethnic desks, what makes sense for them to focus on for the future, related to the rest of the structure of the church."

Grieves acknowledged the long delay in filling the position and said Williams was recruited to begin in January because "it was only fair to the incumbents not to drag the process out any further. They had been told of the changes in February 2002." He said that Williams will conduct field consultations with constituent groups, to find out what they are thinking and feeling.

But Lee said that the lack of communication continues and that requests from the EC's People of Color Caucus to be kept informed of the process have not been honored.

"There have been so many bad feelings engendered about the way people have been treated. It's hard to undo. Three people are leaving and one is staying. That part I don't understand at all," said Lee, referring to the Dec. 31 retirement of Winston Ching, Missioner for Asian Ministries, and the year-end departures of Lynn Collins, Missioner for African American Ministries, and John Roberston, Missioner for Native American Ministries. Daniel Caballero, Missioner for Hispanic Ministries, remains on staff.

"They (the national church) have been wanting to do so much toward eliminating racism and practicing diversity, but the senior staff and management team are nearly all white," said Lee. "If they can't feel the need for sensitivity, who's going to bring it to their attention?"

Time to reflect church's 'new majority'?

Emmett Jarrett, national coordinator for the Episcopal Urban Caucus, agreed that it's time for the church's hierarchy to actively reflect its "new majority."

"There is a general understanding that the majority of people in the U.S. and among Christians, even among Episcopalians, are going to be people who used to be called minorities. They are the new majority and they need to set the agenda, not a top-down, white-male hierarchy," said Jarrett.

"I'd also like to see all of these people working on the fact that the U.S. is working on the process of starting World War III. Changing staff and reshuffling bureaucratic structures is not helpful to enabling the people of God to resist and to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed," he said.

"The church needs to be a prophetic witness against the war, against racism. In 1991, the Urban Caucus and deputies for the consultation introduced the church's program to become a church for all races and a church without racism. We renewed it in 2000. There's still another seven years to go on that.

"That's the important work of the ethnic desks, to be raising up the ministries out there and they are out there, in Latino, Asian, Native and African American communities," Jarrett

said. "We will become a new majority church whether we like it or not and the structures we put in place now ought to be encouraging, anticipating and helping it happen."

Williams hopes to do just that. In his work with Ethnic Congregational Development, he plans to connect with the ethnic communities and networks to strengthen, grow and develop ethnic congregations, while maintaining an advocacy role within them.

A native of Providence, R.I., Williams is the former chair of the national editorial committee of *Lift Every Voice And Sing II* and of the Justice and the Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Committee, and vice president of the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE). He was also a co-chair of the committee that drafted the Pastoral Letter on Racism in the 1990s.

Carol Gallagher, bishop suffragan of Southern Virginia and the first native woman to be elected a bishop in the Anglican Communion, enthusiastically welcomed Williams' appointment and said she plans to be part of that ongoing collaborative process.

"It is important for the church to take responsibility and leadership in the area of inclusion and to make sure the voices of a lot of different people are heard in the church. We hope to find a way to make that continue to happen," she said.

Peter Ng, a former member of Executive Council and parish administrator at Church of Our Savior in New York City's Chinatown, also praised Williams' appointment. "We have tremendous respect for Bishop Williams," said Ng. "We look forward to working with him and to developing strong ethnic congregations."

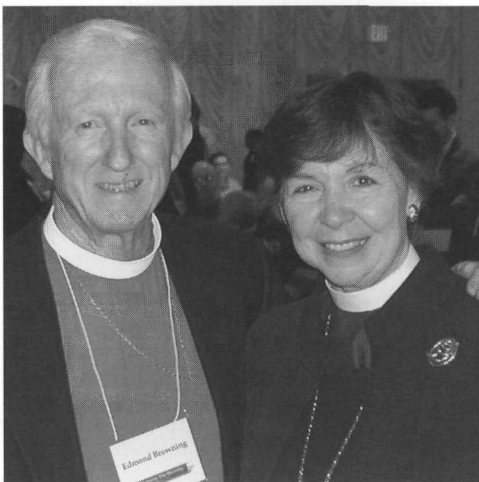
Advocates gather to claim blessing rite

by Jan Nunley

(ENS) Nearly 200 advocates of a rite of same-sex blessing gathered at Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis over Veterans' Day weekend for a part pep rally, part prayer meeting, part strategy session, preparing for what will surely be the most

controversial issue of the next General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

Claiming the Blessing (CTB) is a collaboration between three groups — Integrity, Oasis and Beyond Inclusion — with a primary witness to, by, and for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered (LGBT) individuals in the Episcopal Church. The group shares partnership with *The Witness* magazine as well as other organizations.



Former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning and Bishop Jane Dixon, president of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, at the Claiming the Blessing Conference in St. Louis.

The gathering included representatives of 38 states, with almost a quarter of the participants serving as deputies to the 2003 General Convention.

The conference opened with a Eucharist at which Susan Russell, executive director of CTB, preached to what she called "a persistent people [who] belong to a most persistent God." In a pointed reference to the American Anglican Council's "God's Love Changed Me" campaign, launched at the 2000 General Convention in Denver, Russell said, "Our persistent God does indeed seek to change us ... but the change God desires for us is not our sexual orientation but our theological orientation. It's not our gender identity but our spiritual identity."

Still walking, after Lambeth

In her opening remarks, the Elizabeth Kaeton, a member of the CTB steering commit-

tee and rector of St. Paul's in Chatham, N.J., traced the origins of the gathering to the 1998 Lambeth Conference, which passed a resolution declaring homosexuality to be "incompatible with Scripture."

"We came away from Lambeth deeply wounded and limping, but still walking," Kaeton said. "We saw what they did. ... We came away outraged, and remain outraged, that some members of this elite group of people in purple shirts dare to claim that they, and they only, speak the mind of the worldwide Anglican Communion. What arrogance! What cheek! Last time I read the Outline of Faith [in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*] there were four orders of ministry: bishops, priests, deacons and the laity.

"At this moment, we are focused and coalesced around a single task: to obtain authorization for the development of a liturgical rite of blessing of the faithful, monogamous relationship between two adults of any gender at General Convention 2003," Kaeton said. "Would someone please tell the bishop of Pittsburgh that we do not bless 'sexual relationships'? We are blessing faithful, monogamous relationships!"

Mutual deference for the sake of unity

Michael W. Hopkins, president of Integrity and rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in Glenn Dale, Md., said that the shape of the rite of same-sex blessing that emerges from the next General Convention will not be all that advocates might hope for. "We know and accept that such a rite will not be used or even allowed to be used universally," Hopkins said. "We are quite deliberately advocating for a rite whose use would be optional for the sake of the unity of the church we love.

"We believe in our heart of hearts that our relationships are equal to heterosexual relationships, whether or not the term 'marriage' is appropriate for them, and so, in our heart of hearts, we believe the rite used to publicly celebrate them should be equal. But that is not what we are asking for. We are compromising, moderating our position, in the spirit of a resolution from the 1920 Lambeth Conference (Resolution 9:VIII): 'We believe that for all, the truly equitable approach to union is by way of mutual deference to one another's consciences.'"

Hopkins said he had several messages to deliver. To the Episcopal Church he said that gays and lesbians “are not going anywhere — gay and lesbian Christians make up a significant portion of the Episcopal Church,” he pointed out. “We will continue to do so after General Convention 2003 no matter what happens. We will not attempt to get our way by threatening to leave. I ask those on all sides of this debate to make this commitment as well.”

Hopkins assured conservative Episcopalians that “we do not desire for you to go away” from the Episcopal Church. He invited the president of the conservative American Anglican Council to sit down with him and “discuss ways we can proceed with the debate about our differences without tearing each other down or apart.”

“We do not desire to force same-sex blessings on you or anyone,” Hopkins added. “We do challenge you to stop scapegoating lesbian and gay Christians for every contemporary ill in the church, particularly for our current state of disunity or the potential for the unraveling of the Anglican Communion.” He said that “scriptural interpretation and authority, including the very different polities that exist in different provinces of the Communion and whether or not local autonomy is a defining characteristic of Anglicanism,” are “just one tip of that very large iceberg and if sexuality went completely away tomorrow, the iceberg would still be there.”

Crime of silence

At a banquet on Friday night, Washington bishop John Bryson Chane delivered a stirring after-dinner address that brought participants to their feet. He blasted dioceses of the church for not following through on the sexuality dialogues mandated by several resolutions of General Convention. “Had open, honest, consistent dialogue, study, and debate been the norm within the Episcopal Church over the last 25 years in dealing compassionately, biblically, pastorally, and theologically with issues of human sexuality, then I believe we probably would not be meeting here tonight in preparation for Minneapolis in 2003,” Chane opined. “In many ways the Episcopal Church has been

guilty of one of humanity’s greatest crimes — the crime of silence.”

Chane challenged the Episcopal Church to answer three questions in Minneapolis. First, he said, the church must decide whether it is “fair, theologically sound, and pastorally appropriate to inhibit the informed judgment and pastoral care of good priests” with reference to same-sex blessings in their congregations. Second, he asked whether it is “an open and faithful pastoral response to the gift of the Holy Spirit when a congregation’s discernment of a person’s call to the ordination process is disregarded by a diocese simply because that person happens to be gay or lesbian and is living in a monogamous, committed same-sex relationship.” Finally, asked Chane, “Is there any grace or compassion in forcing celibacy upon a gay or lesbian person as the only option if they are to be ordained to the diaconate or priesthood?”

Chane also criticized the Episcopal Church for “centering its will and vast resources on internal jurisdictional disputes and canonical conflicts” when the world is threatened by “pandemic disease, abject poverty, religious wars, racism, misogyny and illiteracy.

“In the last 24 hours, 15,000 people died from AIDS in Africa. Tomorrow and every day thereafter another 15,000 people daily will die of AIDS,” Chane said. “How can we as a church be so engrossed in our own internal battles that we are immune from this horror?”

Classical Anglicanism

William Countryman, professor in Biblical Studies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, gave the conference’s final address. “I’ve noticed that people who object to what we are working toward here often speak of it as the work of a ‘gay/lesbian lobby,’ the functional equivalent of the ‘outside agitators’ of the not so distant past,” Countryman said. “The church ought to be delighted, of course, if it found people outside the church clamoring for its blessing. But I don’t see that happening,” he added, to chuckles from the audience.

Countryman drew a distinction between the “Geneva tradition” of Puritanism,

whose theological heirs, he maintained, are modern U.S. evangelicals, and the broad stream of “classical Anglicanism.”

“For members of this theological tradition, purity of doctrine trumps God’s mandate for Christians to stick with one another through thick and thin,” he said.

“We look to some like radicals. In reality, we are in the odd position of being the principal advocates of classical Anglicanism today on this continent,” Countryman proclaimed to applause from the gathering.

“Well-meaning people sometimes say to me, ‘Why can’t the gay and lesbian community just hold back on this point so the church can get on to more important things in its mission?’” Countryman continued. “To that, my answer is, ‘Spiritually, there may not be anything more important.’ This blessing of unions is not finally, for us, about social convenience, or status, or even justice. It is about our access to God.”

Former Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning was the celebrant at the conference’s closing Eucharist, with Robert Taylor, dean of St. Mark’s Cathedral in Seattle, preaching. Browning was presented with Integrity’s Louie Crew Award at the banquet.


[Ed. note: Sally Sedgwick and Kevin Jones contributed to this report.]

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When religion goes bad

by L. William Countryman

When I read, from time to time, the anguished plea of a moderate Muslim that the rest of us not judge Islam by those who practice it as a religion of hatred and violence, I feel a certain resonance with my own experience as a Christian. More than once, over the past few decades, I have found myself trying to distinguish, in public settings, between the classical Christianity of, say, Anglicans, Lutherans or Roman Catholics and the repressive, hostile version of the religion proclaimed by fundamentalists and near-fundamentalists.

Occasionally, I've had broad-minded Episcopalians take me to task for saying that fundamentalism isn't real Christianity. They were mistaken, I think. Whether fundamentalist Islam is as much a misrepresentation of classic Islam as fundamentalist Christianity is of our faith I am in no position to say. But I think we would all do well, both Muslims and Christians, to think about what goes wrong in the teaching and practice of religion to produce this sort of hostile, life-destroying religiosity.

Jesus went to dinner once at the home of a very religious man, who met him without any great show of hospitality. A woman of questionable reputation came in and began washing Jesus' feet with tears and wiping them with her hair. The pious host was inwardly disapproving. Jesus rebuked him by pointing out that only the person who has been forgiven much can love much (Luke 7:36-50).

Despite this warning, Christians have been as eager as anybody else to place the cultivation of devout perfection at the heart of our religious life. I wonder if this is not exactly what lies at the root of all fundamentalisms. The search for this sort of flawless perfection breeds hardness; it breeds lack of hospitality; it breeds anger and a sense of entitlement and, if frustrated, sometimes violence as well.

An important part of the gospel is that God is much more generous than we are likely to be — even with ourselves. When we want to feel good about ourselves, we cloak our own faults and concentrate on those of our neighbors. When God wants to feel positive toward us, God manages to do it with full knowledge of exactly who and what we are. Somehow, God manages to love and forgive us anyway.

Perhaps there are contexts in human life where this message cannot be heard. I know there have been times in my own life when I could not hear it. I wonder whether this message is particularly difficult for young men to hear. Both in Christianity and Islam, young men seem to be particularly apt recruits to fundamentalism. Is that an age when we males are particularly in need, not just of ideals, but of absolutes? If so, how can the teachers of faith, Christian or other, enlist the attention of young men for other ways of understanding God, life and the world?

I do not mean to undervalue the tendency of young men to devote themselves to a cause. It is also a tendency toward idealism and self-giving. That is precisely why it deserves something better than to be

employed in the interests of perfectionism, for perfectionism will eventually prove destructive to those who embrace it and often to those around them as well.

Do women have a comparable tendency to take the faith of Jesus in the wrong direction at some point in their lives? I think so. But I'm not sure when it is most likely to happen. I would guess that, in the American culture I know, it is a bit later than in the case of men and has more to do with responding to disappointed hopes in one's 20s.

However that may be, the wrong choices of both men and women are apt to remain with us for a long time. And as we grow older and assume leadership in the community of faith, we will propagate them — unless God has somehow gotten through to us and rescued us from our own misguided efforts to be godlike.

That, after all, is the great danger. Religion keeps confusing itself with God. We religious keep confusing ourselves with God. This seems to be a cross-cultural, multi-religious opportunity for sin. Fundamentalisms are expressions of idolatry, the terrible confusion of something this-worldly with the God who is never simply to be identified with even the most devout beliefs or claims of worshippers.

Islam seems to be the leading example of the moment. But it holds no patent. The Roman Catholic hierarchy's truly dumbfounding indifference to those sexually abused by priests has its roots in an idolatrous sense of the church. The self-styled Christian Right's indifference to truth and human suffering in its campaigns against lesbians and gay men has its roots in idolatry of their particular interpretation of the Bible.

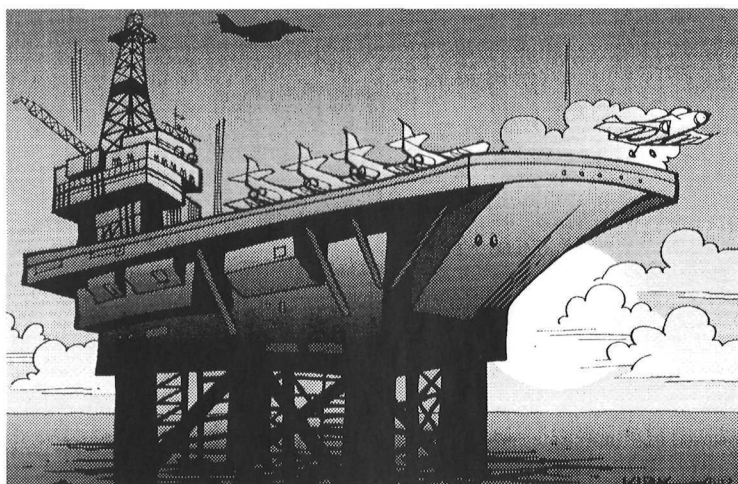
Episcopalians are not exempt. We can tolerate everything except "what simply isn't done." And we feel sure that God can't tolerate that, either.

To which I say, "Get forgiven." It will do us all a world of good.

Time to resist

by Ray Gaston

With the UN inspectors arriving in Iraq and the increasing likelihood of our country becoming embroiled in another U.S.-led war, how should Christians respond? [*Ed. note: Gaston writes from England.*] In recent weeks the Anglican church, through the House of Bishops, has expressed caution and the Roman hierarchy has questioned moves toward war, but is it not time for Christians to be bolder in our opposition to the move toward war? Our mild-mannered criticism often fails to address/recognize the "bigger picture" of a world dominated by U.S. imperialism. Our obsession with institutional church crises prevents us from drawing clear parallels between our existing context and the context of Jesus, presenting the radically relevant and challenging message of the gospel to our world and discovering its power afresh.



Jesus was a radical prophet who posed resistance to both Roman rule and the established religious authorities of his time. Jesus preached the good news of God's reconciling love, a good news that was not easy for those in authority to welcome but was a word of liberation to the poor and marginalized. His challenge to the religious authorities of his time was a challenge to the institutional tendencies through which the liberating message given to the people of Moses had been transformed into a legalistic ideology which now oppressed those people and itself collaborated with the oppression of Rome. He spoke, too, against the religious "terrorists" of his time — the Zealots and others who sought to defeat the Romans by indiscriminate violence against Roman authority and ordinary Roman people. He challenged people to "love their enemy," to "pray for their persecutors" — a truly radical perspective.

Jesus' call in the Sermon on the Mount to nonviolent direct action through shaming the oppressor was a creative response to Roman rule: "If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also." Just as creative were his healings and his approach to the elitism of the temple, challenging the religious hierarchy of his time. These actions, aimed at political and religious authorities, were matched by a call to a way of life that was deeply challenging for individual Jews facing an oppressive and barbaric foreign power, whether they were rich or poor, powerful or powerless within the Jewish social structure.

It was this triple challenge — firstly, to Roman authority, secondly, to religious authority and thirdly, to the prevailing popular culture that encouraged personal hatred of anything or anybody Roman — that led to his crucifixion. By saying this, I am not saying that Judaism was inherently legalistic and oppressive, but in Jesus' time the institutional tendency had taken over from the more prophetic tradition that sought to call the community back to its original radicalism. Similarly, in the face of Roman oppression, the temptation to resort to a limited interpretation of the "chosen" people in favor with

God over other peoples, rather than responsibility to God in relation to all humanity, was too great. Jesus was a prophet in a new key. His gospel drew on that prophetic tradition, challenging institutionally dominated perspectives and racial prejudice, whilst moving it in new directions.

The crucifixion is central to this, as Paul says "foolishness to the Greeks, a stumbling block to the Jews." The self-giving, risk-taking love demonstrated in that act is what leads us as Christians to talk of Jesus as a new revelation of God, a revelation of the true Love and vulnerability of God in a world of violence, expediency and hatred. This risk-taking God answers human violence with love and the risk of vulnerability and, through that offering, opens a new way via resurrection. Christians are called to live this way of self-giving and risk-taking love that opens the way to personal and communal experiences of the hope of the peaceable Kingdom to come.

The early church recognized this with its militant pacifism. This slowly became watered down as the church became more and more incorporated into the state and the Roman Empire particularly. Christian attitudes to the violence of war became more pragmatically orientated. Augustine began the development of a "just war" theory, later developed for a different context in the 13th century by Aquinas and others, as the church increasingly became an institution of the state and a powerful "political" force in the sense of wielding influence with, and being used by, those in power. As with the Judaism of Jesus' time, so with Christianity in the post-Constantine era, the tendency toward institutionalism has had a stifling and negative influence upon the proclamation of the true gospel.

We are in a period of time in which parallels can be drawn to Jesus' own context. The Gospel is a challenge to us in three ways. Firstly, there is the challenge to U.K.-backed U.S. imperialism. Pax Americana is akin to Pax Romana in that it proclaims liberation and peace through violence and oppression, a violence that is waged through war and through the horrendously unequal distribution of the earth's resources and a neo-liberal economic philosophy — a violence of which we are a part. Secondly, the gospel challenges our own religious institutionalism where, like the High Priests, we fear what we might lose, rather than risk letting go and living in the hope of transformation. Thirdly, it is a challenge to the violence of the oppressed, to the embittered terrorists whose rage has led them to a hatred that refuses to see the humanity of the oppressor.

The three-way challenge of Jesus is the challenge we face as Christians today and is the gospel we are called to proclaim. Firstly, to expose U.S. imperialism for what it is — violent and terrifying, in the grip of the principalities and powers and not to be seen as a benevolent force. Secondly, to push for renewal in the church and for our ecclesiastically centered preoccupations to be cast aside in favor of a confident proclamation of a radical gospel. This will lead us initially to increasing marginalization, "irrelevance" and numeri-

cal church decline but also, God willing, to a growth in discipleship. And finally, to challenge the prevailing culture of violence, whether in the form of imperialism or its opponents. In our case that means facing up to the challenge of refusing to be dominated by calls for national security in the face of the terrorism of the oppressed. It means resisting the temptation to side with the terrorism of imperialism, but challenging ourselves and others to walk the way of love. And, in response to 9/11, that means the challenge to place the search for justice for all peoples above safety, security and vengeance for ourselves and those “like us.”

Christians can pick up this challenge by engaging in nonviolent direct action (NVDA) against the War on Iraq and the “war on terrorism.” I accept such action is not open to everyone. However, engaging in NVDA should be a communal activity, embracing not only those who take the action in an obvious way but also the wider community of people who support them in a variety of ways — with prayer, financial support, court support, vigils, etc.

The vast majority of mainline U.K. Christians would perhaps disagree with this and consider in our present climate that war might be a necessary evil. It is a view held by perhaps the majority of Christians. However, I do not think it is a tenable Christian position. I would go as far as to say that in light of the above to support a U.S.-backed war is to sup with the devil. But even without that shocking recognition, if we look at the options the tradition offers us, it is hard to see how support for the war on terrorism and Iraq can be theologically justified.

In Christian history, as I have said, two options have been open to Christians — a radical nonviolence and various versions of a “just war” theory built upon the work of Augustine and Aquinas. The “just war” theory just does not hold up in contemporary context: Modern warfare with its civilian casualties cannot be thus legitimized. Thankfully, things are not as they were in 1914, when bishops and clergy were actively involved in recruiting soldiers to the war and claiming God was on our side. In the war of 1939–1945, a more humble church blessing was offered, however. Toward the end of the war, Bishop George Bell questioned — by application of a “just war” theory — the continued morality of the war, in the light of the blanket bombing of German cities and the Allies’ refusal to countenance a negotiated peace with anti-Nazi Germans. In recent years, the church is one of the last voices in society willing to support war, confining itself to maintaining a largely cowardly silence, a hand-wringing reluctant support, as it did for the war on Afghanistan, or mild-mannered caution in relation to war on Iraq. I have yet to hear a theological justification for war post 9/11. No one speaks of a “just war.” I have heard many Christians pragmatically accept that there seems to be no alternative and so reluctantly support the “war on terrorism,” but I would maintain this is because of our lack of confidence in the gospel. We listen instead to our own fears and concerns for security. Who can blame us? It is a terrifying

world. Fortunately Jesus does not allow us to get away with that and calls us instead to listen to him.

The ancient tradition of Christian nonviolence has not disappeared in Christian history and has been kept alive through the post reformation peace churches especially. But it has also been growing in the mainline denominations since 1900 — our own Anglican Pacifist Fellowship is an example. There has also been a marked change in its interpretation from rather passive personalized absolutist pacifism to a more engaged militant nonviolent perspective more akin to the politics of Jesus. The Christian component of the anti-Vietnam War movement associated with the Berrigan brothers, which has continued in the anti-nuclear “ploughshares” movement of the 1980s and 1990s, is a stunning example of this.

The time is now ripe for the church again to take a strong anti-war stance and it can do so now by church communities signing up to the Pledge of Resistance organized by anti-war groups ARROW and Voices in the Wilderness. In signing the pledge, people agree to undertake nonviolent direct action if and when war is declared by the U.S. on any other nation. People can sign either as active resisters or supportive resisters. The House of Bishops could issue a statement supporting all Christian people who, through an examination of their conscience, decide to participate in nonviolent direct action against war. Wouldn't it be a refreshing change if the *Church Times* were filled, not with letters debating the “orthodoxy” of our new Archbishop over homosexuality, but with debates on tactics for anti-war activity? This then would be a church really exploring living the Kingdom in the present world crisis, a church being “foolish” for Christ's sake.

[*The Pledge to Resistance can be signed online at www.j-n-v.org or by contacting: ARROW, c/o NonViolent Resistance Network, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ.*]

Claiming the Blessing – A rite of passage

by Elizabeth Kaeton

There are events in the life of a community which become rites of passage as well as marks of maturity and growth. Like a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Confirmation for the individual, the gathering known as “Claiming The Blessing” was one such event which marked the spiritual maturation of the movement for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the life of the Episcopal Church.

For the first time since the movement to ordain women, many justice-seeking groups — including the Episcopal Women's Caucus, the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, the Union of Black Episcopalians, and the Episcopal Peace Fellowship — gathered together with Beyond Inclusion, Integrity and The Oasis with a single purpose and focus: to secure, at General Convention 2003, the authorization

of a liturgical rite of blessing for two adults of any gender.

It has been over 25 years since this level of collaboration has been attained with such enthusiasm and energy. Clearly, a new generation of the progressive movement is being launched in the Episcopal Church and it is emerging with a clear, unified and prophetic voice. The excitement about that rebirth was palpable and began to grow at every liturgy, workshop and plenary session.

Moreover, it was abundantly clear that the LGBT community has not only made great strides in the work of justice, we have also reached a level of spiritual development previously unseen and considered by many to have been unattainable. Now, some in our community would “pooh-pooh” that as evidence only of our “assimilation” and our “aping the cultural stigmata.” I suppose that’s as valid a perception as any other, but it comes from a particular location “on the fringe” that does not even have in its sight a pew in the Episcopal Church — or, if it does, it’s one that has neither been comfortable nor welcoming. Acknowledging the blessing of our baptism is one thing — being able to claim that blessing for ourselves is an undeniable mark of maturity.

That spiritual maturation was visible on the faces of the people in attendance who listened to the presentations. It was in our eyes as we sang, “I want to follow Jesus” at Morning Devotions and in our tears as we sang, “Just as I am” at the altar call. It was in the enthusiasm in the room as people were making plans to go home to organize. It was in the commitment to take responsibility for our own lives.

Even the two members of the conservative press who were in attendance were not unaffected by it. Indeed, the press coverage in those venues has been fair and balanced. I don’t think that would have been possible if they, too, hadn’t seen and experienced the level of this community’s spiritual development and growth for themselves.

As one attendee said to me, “We may not have ‘come a long way, baby’ but we cer-

continued on page 14

LOUIE’S INDEX

Which Episcopal bishop is a descendent of a murderer of an Archbishop of Canterbury?
Most Rev. Frank Tracy Griswold is a direct descendant of William de Tracy, one of the four knights who murdered Thomas A’Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1170.

State with the highest percentage of citizens of Hispanic/Latino origin:
New Mexico (42.1%)

Percentage of Episcopal Church clergy of Hispanic/Latino origin in New Mexico’s Diocese of Rio Grande:
1.4%

The Episcopal Church diocese that grew the most during the Decade of Evangelism:
Vermont (50.3%)

The Episcopal Church diocese which grew the least during the Decade of Evangelism:
West Tennessee (-39.9%)

If a gay priest is elected bishop in the elections scheduled between April 1, 2003 and General Convention, who will need to approve that election for it to be accepted by the whole Episcopal Church?

Persons elected as bishop within 120 days of General Convention must receive consents of a majority in each House of General Convention. Persons elected bishop at other times, must receive consents by mail of a majority of the House of Bishops and a majority of the diocesan Standing Committees.

What is the difference between the church organizations IRD and IDS?
The Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD) is a think-tank and activist organization of political and religious conservatives. The Institute for Religion and Democracy is a think-tank and activist organization of political and religious liberals.

What is the difference between ECW and EWC?
The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) is a service organization dating back for more than a century, with a chapter in almost every parish. The Episcopal Women’s Caucus (EWC) is an advocacy organization for women’s ministries and came into being to promote women’s ordination as priests before that was possible.

Witness contributing editor Louie Crew, founder of Integrity and a longtime Episcopal Church leader (he currently sits on the Episcopal Church’s Executive Council and the Diocese of Newark’s deputation to General Convention 2003) is a well-known collector and disseminator of statistics and little-known facts about the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion. His website is www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew.

tainly have come a pace, though, haven't we?" Indeed. We have made it through a rite of passage to claim a liturgical rite of blessing. No matter what happens in Minneapolis at General Convention 2003, our spiritual goal is this: that we may become even more of the blessing we seek — for ourselves, our church and the world.

Outsider Art: Just another put-down?

by Bruce Campbell

The phrase is almost irresistible: Outsider Art. It sounds sufficiently rebellious, yet also decorative. In case you're one of those people who must have been sleeping instead of reading fine art journals, Outsider Art is definitely in — so in, in fact, that some are making real money at it, begging the question of its outsider status. In a word, Outsider Art is one name given to artworks made by non-mainstream, untrained and/or unexhibited artists. Politically, the term is supposed to embrace artists who have worked without interest — and presumably without hope — of entering the fine art marketplace. Other terms for the same art have been "naïve," "art brut," "self-taught," "visionary," and — is this offensive? — "southern."

At least one semi-prominent northern institution, the Chicago-based Intuit ("The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art"), has built a non-profit business plan behind the phenomenon. Their website says that Outsider Artists have come to include "rural African Americans, eccentrics, isolates, compulsive visionaries or the mentally ill" — or, more generally, artists not in New York.

Good church people, like you and me, might say we have been acquainted with this stream of creativity perhaps all too well. It has been easy to feel sentenced to life, for only the crime of parish membership, amidst an unending parade of banners, murals, crèches and festive vestments whose sole claim to beauty or greatness was their intention. If you have ever felt this, you're on to something, because

one of the significant tracks of Outsider Art is art with religious or devotional imagery. Unlike most (but not all) Parish Art, these works have an obsessive quality: highly detailed diagrams of heaven, words or phrases in tiny scrawls lacing through images, exorbitant or psychedelic renderings of eternal judgment. In the days of Shaker "spirit drawings" or Native American sand paintings, such works as these used to be referred to as folk art, which for a long time meant

you couldn't buy them because nobody would sell them.

But now there is a market for them, and by all accounts it is growing. Undoubtedly some people are seeking authenticity at a modest price, relative to the inflated price they paid to dry-mount, matte and frame that Picasso show poster. For others, this is an aesthetic protest against non-representational art they don't like, don't understand and don't want around the house. More depressing is the possibility that people are awed at art from people who aren't expected to make any.

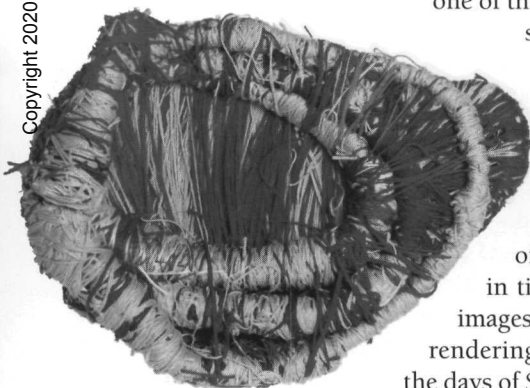
The basic appeal, according to the website of *Raw Vision* magazine, may go back to the roots of this category of art: the paintings and drawings of asylum patients in the early 1900s. People seemed to want to see these "raw" expressions of untrained artists as a way of knowing the unknowable visions of the mentally ill, a pure pipeline straight from the brain without the shapings of acculturation or even consciousness. This sentiment was an echo of the persistent stereotype of the mentally disabled as somehow more truthful or wise than the rest of us, a praise as limiting as any other stereotype.

Judith Scott, an Oakland, Calif.-based sculptor, has made her name through her creation of "cocoons," which are everyday objects she has proceeded to wrap elaborately with fabric, ribbon and other small found objects until they are large, retaining the vague shape of the original object. She has had an exhibition at a New York gallery, but this summer, her stuff wound up at the Exploratorium in San Francisco, a local museum of "science, art and human perception." Why there? Because, as a press release explained, "Judith Scott's work is even more remarkable because Scott is a 59-year-old woman with Down's Syndrome [sic]. In addition, she cannot speak or hear."

There are enough -isms in that descriptor to launch a diocesan task force. In the case of mental retardation, the fact that we find artistic output "remarkable" is in the end an indictment of our culture. The only truly remarkable thing is that Scott's work is being publicly exhibited at all.

The fascination with unacknowledged creativity is understandable, but in the end probably more so to art consumers than to artists. Artists know that the quality of their creative urge is not a function of their consciousness or lack of it, or the LSD generation would have brought us the next Dutch Masters. They also know that everything they make is an expression, with a shape and a purpose, so that lauding Outsider Artists for unconsciousness or naiveté is at best insulting. People of faith should know this, too. The fact that these artists bust apart our categories for what comprises art is arguably their greatest contribution, one they probably did not set out to make. The challenge is left to us to accept — or not — yet another display of the unquenchable creativity of God and, thereby, the children of God.

[Ed. note: Two extensive directories of web sites featuring Outsider Art are: <http://www.janesaddictions.com/jadmain.htm> and <http://www.interestingideas.com/out/outlinks.htm>]



Cocoon by Judith Scott,
courtesy Ricco Maresca
Gallery

AIDS IN A GLOBAL AGE

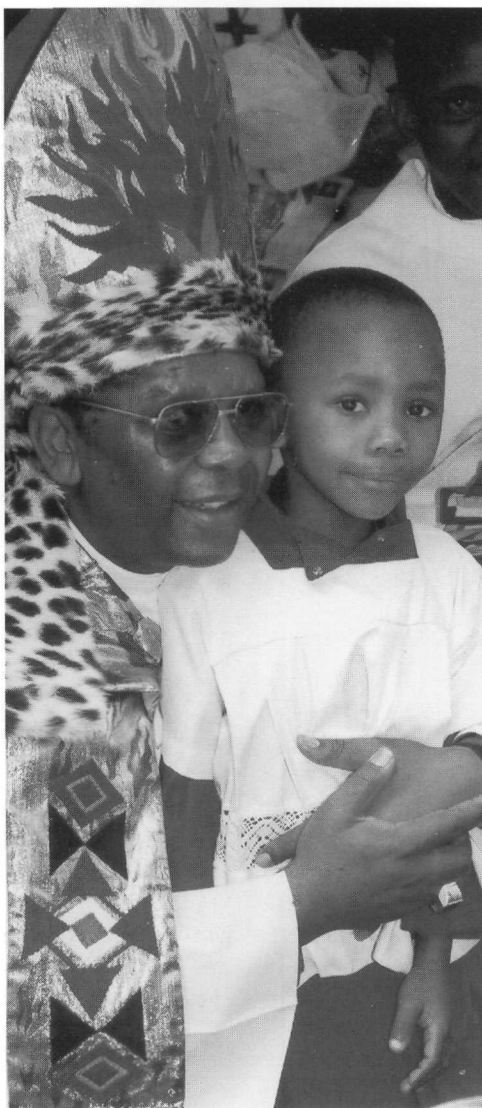
A Pastoral Letter from the Archbishop of Cape Town, His Grace, the Most Reverend Njongonkulu W.H. Ndungane, D.D., F.K.C.

BELOVED IN CHRIST: When measured in the cost of lives lost and lives yet to be saved the HIV/AIDS pandemic across sub-Saharan Africa and around the world is calling us into relationships and commitments never before imagined. We are facing global annihilation of some of our most vulnerable people on earth and social chaos unprecedented in human history.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is decimating communities and nations. It is tearing apart families and creating millions of orphaned children. Who will build the future, which is on loan to us from our children? Who will guarantee the hard-won gains of our freedom if no one is educated or able to work and protect the rights of millions who will come after us?

We know that prevention can and does work. We know that anti-retroviral treatments can further prevent the deterioration from disease and subsequent death that tears our families asunder. We know that people of goodwill can band together to form networks of care and support. And we know that there are enough resources in the world to stop this killer in its tracks, if only we have the passion and the will to make it so. Thus we must make ending the AIDS pandemic and ensuring survival for those most at risk a crucial part of national strategies for change and development.

This naturally means addressing the root causes of poverty on a massive scale and forgiving the indebtedness that is strangling



our fledgling nations of the global South. By freeing some of these financial burdens, alone, we can do vast amounts of this work ourselves. We must also come together in a new consensus to put an end to the crushing effects of gender inequality. We can change our cultures of enslavement of women and commit ourselves to equal opportunity in order to bring the promised reign of God "on earth as it is in heaven." And then, together, we can usher in a new age of hope for Africa.

In many parts of our continent, the Church is one of the only institutions with both the historic continuity and core of willing and able volunteers to make the changes real, amidst globalization and threat of unending conflict between nations and peoples. In our Church of the Province of Southern Africa, the 2003 HIV/AIDS focus is: "Our Struggle, Our Hope — Working for a Generation without AIDS." I am calling on people of faith everywhere to join us in saving humanity.

The moment is in its fullness. The God of history is beckoning us to enter a larger understanding and enact our basic humanity. Around the world people have rediscovered that we are, indeed, a global community. This is supremely manifested by the global consensus of what each nation should be doing. With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the nations of the world have stated that we have a stake in the well-being of each other. This recalls our

Christian roots and the words of St. Paul, "We are members, one of another. When one part of the body suffers, we all suffer."

The response of the faith community is straightforward and simple. It means committing ourselves daily in prayer for saving the world. I invite you to build a tapestry of hope through prayer that will alleviate the suffering of those stultified by the overwhelming tasks which lie ahead.

We know this can work wonders as we can personally give witness to as we peacefully ended our "struggle" against apartheid. We can also prevail upon our governments to give their unconditional support to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other government-sponsored relief and development efforts that can and will make a difference in people's lives. We can become vigorous advocates, lobbying our governments for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

We can extend our reach through our churches by supporting the International Anglican AIDS Fund, administered by the Anglican Communion Office. We can work for justice in our own communities and partner with those living with HIV or AIDS. For we have learned that without a personal relationship to someone living with HIV or AIDS, one can easily become elitist and discriminatory, even with the best intentions to do otherwise.

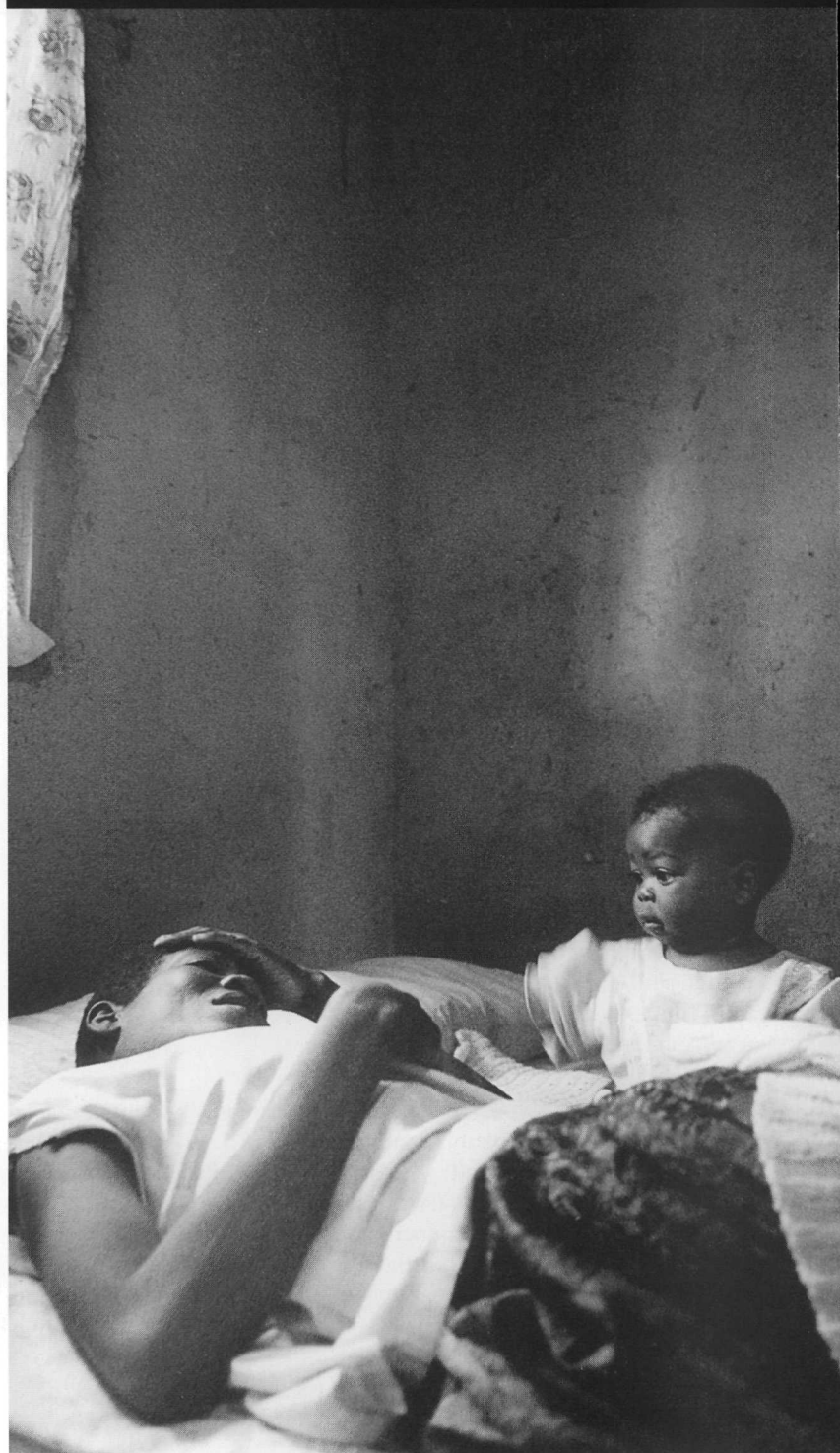
Finally, we can learn the fine art of companionship. That is, of traveling this difficult highway to hope with one another. We must learn again, too, that we do not travel alone, but the Lord of history, Jesus Christ, travels with us all along the way. He is willing to guide and strengthen us by the power of His life-giving and eternal Spirit. He is able to comfort us in sorrow and loss. And he is willing to dine with us and give us rest when we are hungry and tired. What more do we need?

And so my friends, I invite you into this Partnership for Life with your prayers and your support. Please do not let the birthplace of our humankind become the graveyard of our humanity. Please stand with us and among us as agents of hope and commitment. We must keep our eyes on the prize by working together for a Generation without AIDS.

—Njongonkulu, Cape Town

Njongonkulu W.H. Ndungane is Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the 10-million-member Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), comprising the nations of Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mocambique and the islands of St. Helena and Ascension. He is chair of the HIV/AIDS Board of the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA) and holds the HIV/AIDS portfolio for the Primates of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Well-known across the Communion for his leadership on justice issues, for nearly a decade he has spearheaded efforts on international debt forgiveness, poverty alleviation and gender inequality. Formerly he was Bishop of Kimberley and Kuruman in South Africa and Provincial Executive Officer of the CPSA during the tenure of Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu as Archbishop of Cape Town. ●

A CALL



FROM THE CHURCH

A call from the church of the global South to respond to the AIDS pandemic

by Ted Karpf

WHEN THE PRIMATES of the Anglican Communion met in Canterbury last April, they declared a word spoken from the church of the global South to the church of the global North. They proclaimed that "AIDS is not a punishment from God." The Primates described the church as being "too often a voice of condemnation," which has led to neglect and abuse of those living with AIDS and those who survive them. They went on to describe a way forward which called for "coordinated and joint action [with governments, development programmes, health and pharmaceutical agencies and NGOs] to address the enormity of this challenge."

To Nesta, a 34-year-old mother of four, these words came too little and too late. She now lies buried with her miner husband and two of their children in a shallow grave behind their mud hut in South Africa's Valley of Thousand Hills.

To Thembe, a grandmother in Botshabelo Township in the Free State of South Africa who is raising eight grandchildren since the death of her two daughters due to AIDS, these words could be the difference between hope and hopelessness. Two of her grandchildren are HIV-positive, and more may become so for lack of education and employment.

For Gareth, age 14, growing up in the streets of Cape Town, these words could help him access the help he needs, if his church is listening and ready to minister.

And to Margaret, a priest, these words point the way to engaging her people in ministry, but until they have a means of making a living, along with food, potable water and sanitation, they are great ideas with little or no content just now.

The canary in the pandemic

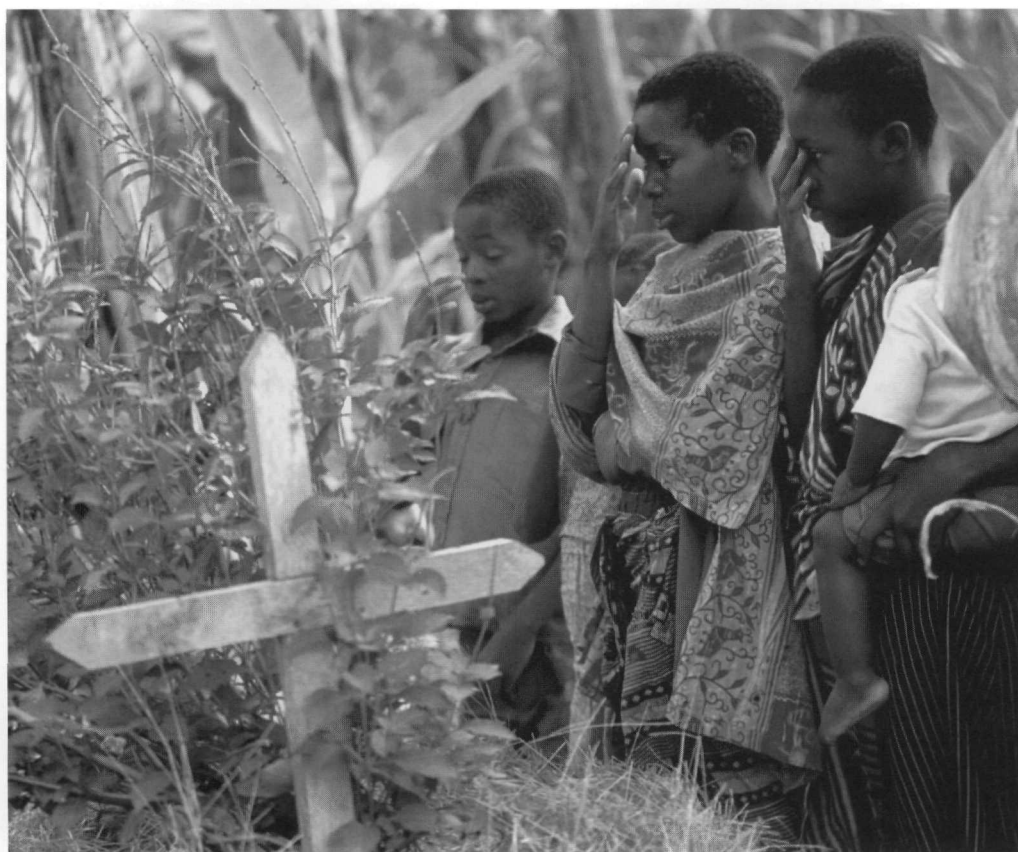
In a profoundly simple way, 20 years of stigma and denial addressed at Canterbury marked the end of the silence of the quiescent church of the South. The full extent of the AIDS

pandemic in Africa alone has been described by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan as "a tragedy of biblical proportions." Thirty million of the 40 million worldwide who are infected live in sub-Saharan Africa. In a word, Africa is dying.

The numbers also point to grotesque gender inequalities. Some 58 percent of these sufferers are women between the ages of 15–49. Altogether in Africa, only 30,000 people have access to the life-extending anti-retroviral treatments (ARVs), which illustrates the concurrent pandemic of poverty.

Africa is not alone. United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS Stephen Lewis has described southern Africa as the "canary in the pandemic" for the rest of world. New predictions of pandemic in Eastern Europe, India, China and Russia are lifting the estimated worldwide numbers of HIV infections to as many as 100 million by 2020. To give that number perspective, the Black Death in 14th-century Europe killed more than 40 million and the 1918 flu epidemic claimed 45 million lives.

This catastrophe, in slow motion, is being played out against the backdrop of the effects of globalization. It is often seen in systems: multinational pharmaceutical companies making policies on costs, distribution, manufacture and profit of life-saving medications; international mining, resource-management and agricultural corporations making daily life-and-death decisions about treatment and health care; generations of disrupted development due to climactic changes and shifting agricultural conditions; massive unemployment and underemployment; inept and incapable fledgling national governments overwhelmed by the need of their people for basic systems of clean water, food security and public health care; and the relative neglect and indifference to the burgeoning destruction by the most powerful and wealthy nations of the developed world. Indeed, the issues are enough to make one's head swim.



Mother with AIDS prays by husband's (who died with AIDS) grave with three of her children.

Organizing a response at Boksburg

Nonetheless, the response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic has coalesced around the leading figure of the International Debt Forgiveness Movement within the Anglican Communion, Njongonkulu W.H. Ndungane, Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, comprising Angola, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mocambique, St. Helena/Ascension Islands and South Africa. These are some of the hardest hit areas in Africa where poverty, famine, tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS are always intertwined.

In April of 2001 the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and his fellow Primates charged Archbishop Ndungane to lead the Communion's response to the AIDS pandemic. In August 2001, the first-ever All Africa Anglican Conference on HIV/AIDS was held in Boksburg, a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa.

This grassroots effort has come about, in part, because the losses are beginning to manifest in other tragedies like the present famine, caused by lack of farmers to plant and reapers to reap, as well as political and social upheaval and drought; the slowing of growth and development to near-stop; the failure of governments to deal with the unfolding panoply of social and economic issues; the swelling of the ranks of orphaned children — now estimated to hit 25 million in the next seven years; and the breakdown of education systems due to ever-increasing teacher and pupil deaths. What exists in the way of a public health system is on the verge of collapse.

Financial and moral support for the conference began with the Compass Rose Society, followed by Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD), along with UNAIDS, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Asso-

ciation (PhRMA).

More than 54 nations from the 12 Anglican provinces of Africa were represented at Boksburg. Over the course of three days, a consensus statement was drafted and adopted along with a template for strategic planning and reporting on the church's HIV/AIDS activities. The meeting also brought together international donors, NGOs, Christian charities, pharmaceutical companies, religious leaders and people living with AIDS to create a model or template for strategic planning and community development that could be supported and sustained by donors.

At its conclusion the archbishops of Africa declared, "We pledge ourselves to the promise that future generations will be born and live in a world free from AIDS." Such is the nature of hope in Africa where faith leaders can lay claim to the future, standing firmly in the agonizing present.

Beacons of hope

Small beacons of hope continue to give witness to what is possible in a place where the equivalent of two 9/11s occur every day of the week. Canon Gideon Byamugisha, an Anglican cleric from Uganda, is a living witness as an HIV-positive person of what ARVs can do. He nearly died in 1998 due to opportunistic diseases. Today he and his HIV-positive wife, who was also widowed like Gideon due to the virus, are the proud parents of an HIV-negative daughter made possible by an 80-cent treatment of Nevirapine, a drug that cuts by 50 percent the chance of HIV transmission between mother and child. He is the image of a resurrecting Africa as he daily expends his energies giving witness to and garnering support for people living with AIDS across Africa and around the world. It was his testimony at the Primates' meeting in Kanuga in 2001 that moved them to declare AIDS the "number-one priority of the worldwide Communion."

Faithful witnesses to the power of hope and commitment are galvanizing the collective will of people across the continent. Communities are coming together to orga-

nize their responses. Youth are actively participating in and leading seminars with their parents and elders to talk prevention, which is to discuss the tender issues of sexuality, tradition, community values and mores. Hospices, in nothing more than mud huts, abandoned garages and saloons, are the sites of many efforts to relieve suffering. Even the matter of more cost-effective ways to respectfully lay to rest the dead and care for their survivors who mourn are being examined.

Women's groups, particularly the Mother's Union, Anglican Women's Fellowship, and the men's Bernard Mizeki Mission Society are initiating efforts for home-based care and wellness management. The church is actively engaged in organizing ministries to respond to the burgeoning numbers of orphaned children. Yet for all the work that people are doing, many families struggle from day to day without food and access to clean water, which makes many efforts futile. How can an overstretched family take on orphaned children when they, themselves, cannot sustain life?

Finding resources

The reality is that without adequate resources to enable communities to work on issues of prevention and treatment, food and water, their hopes will be scattered on the heaps of broken promises to the people of Africa. A new sustainable and compassionate mission effort is needed. The church in Africa prevails in telling its story and now asks the Communion worldwide for support: financial and human resources and technical assistance. The Synod of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, after unanimously approving its first \$2.5 million three-year plan of action — developed with the support of USAID, ERD and a small cluster of participants from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington — drew up a list of 23 short-term projects and activities based on their strategic plan, costing no more than \$5,000 each, to move their agenda forward immediately. But who will support them?

At the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Hong Kong last September, the

African-led HIV/AIDS initiative called for the worldwide Communion to become companions to the churches of the global South in a Partnership for Life. The Communion responded by approving the creation of an Anglican Communion International AIDS Fund, to be administered by the Anglican Communion Office in London.

Current need stands at \$2.5 million for the first three years of what must be a 20-year commitment. The first to contribute was the Japanese Church. ERD is rapidly organizing

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efforts through a newly created 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation to assist the AIDS-stricken African continent.

Africa is organizing all of its resources, but more are needed. The very infrastructures of churches and communities, where hundreds of thousand have already perished, are being taxed by the burden of care and death. Clergy in many communities have gone without paychecks for months at a time, because parishioners are frantically meeting the demands of funerals, child support, unemployment and now hunger. In a recent visit to famine-plagued southern Africa, UN World Food Programme head James Morris noted that food was only part of the problem; the heart of the problem was AIDS.

Images of a modern apocalypse

For nearly two years, I have been privileged to be at the heart of the continent-wide effort across Africa to engage the Anglican Church and the worldwide Communion in our

struggle against the ravages of HIV/AIDS. I have visited dozens upon dozens of communities and congregations, particularly in southern Africa, where people have come together to fortify their faith in plotting their tactics against AIDS. I have met with faithful folk who have struggled day and night to eke out livings, raise their children, pay tuition for primary school — universal education is not a fact of life here — and feed their families amidst the growing horror around them. Life goes on, much as it always has. People rise in the morning to fetch water from a well, sometimes as far as 10 kilometers away, returning at sunrise to wash and clothe and feed a family. They go about the business of living, often singing hymns of praise to the Creator, who called this land and people into being as the birthplace of humankind. I am constantly inspired by the faith that allows people to dream of a better day and offers unstinting hospitality in a place of scarcity and deprivation.

From the frontlines, I can report that there are not yet mounds of dead bodies awaiting burial where I can see them. There are not millions of sick and dying folk where I can smell the stench of death. There are not armies of starving orphaned children roaming through and pillaging the countryside in a frantic search for food and shelter, ready to risk all for a crust of bread. Yet all these images of a modern apocalypse are at hand, just beyond what I can see today.

The structures and leadership of the church have moved and committed Anglicans around the world to ministries of hope. What remains is the long-term material, financial and human support of the churches of the North for the people of the South. Archbishop Ndungane summarizes the situation this way: "We know of the goodwill of our sisters and brothers. We also hold to the basic facts that no one should care alone and no one should die alone. We need everyone to press their faith communities and governments to the task of walking with us in this journey through death into life. For we are all working for a Generation without AIDS." ●

AIDS, ECONOMICS,

A conversation with African women

by *Pauline Muchina*
Mabel Katahweire
and *Lyn Headley-Moore*

[Ed. note: Pauline Muchina is a theologian from Kenya who is currently working for the AIDS Resource Center in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. Mabel Katahweire, an Anglican priest from Uganda, recently spent nine months doing AIDS ministry in Johannesburg, South Africa. Lyn Headley-Moore, the executive director of the AIDS Resource Center, a mission of the Diocese of Newark, facilitated a conversation between them in November.]

Lyn Headley-Moore: I thought we'd start with looking at the impact of AIDS in Africa. Why is southern Africa so severely affected?

Mabel Katahweire: AIDS in southern Africa is not worse than in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Southern Africans are waking up to the reality of HIV and AIDS after being in denial. Some people still think that it is a curse — that is why there is much killing and stigmatization of those who are known to be HIV-positive.

Pauline Muchina: You have to put it within the context of the whole continent, where you have 28 million people who are carrying HIV/AIDS and where you have 2.8 million people dying every year of HIV/AIDS. You have to look at the different factors that play a role, and some of them go back to the early stages of the disease. When the disease started in South Africa they were still under apartheid. I strongly believe that racism played a major role in the way HIV/AIDS was handled — in matters of assigning resources to combat it, education, providing knowledge for communities and how the media addressed it in black communities.

You look at a country like Angola, like Mocambique, like Zambia. And then you come to east Africa and you look at Kenya,

Uganda, Rwanda and all these countries with very poor economies and with governments that are not even able to take care of their people in other areas — then you expect them to be able to take care of them on the issue of health and HIV/AIDS.

The other major part is the issue of urban migration. There is a lot of migration in southern Africa into urban centers.

Mabel Katahweire: When people migrate they are hoping to get a job. When they come to urban areas the reality is quite the opposite. They don't get jobs, so some young girls just end up selling their bodies in order to support themselves. And in the process they have children who become infected also. Because HIV/AIDS is more severe in poor neighborhoods, when people get infected they deteriorate very fast because they don't eat well and they have no medical care. So you end up burying more people every day.

Lyn Headley-Moore: Mabel, you've just been in South Africa. What did you see in terms of poverty, in terms of education, in terms of HIV and AIDS?

Mabel Katahweire: Many people are poor, but in ways that are different according to the country. In southern Africa, for example, the economy is mainly a money economy, so if you have no cash in your hand, you can't eat. Whereas in Uganda or Kenya you may not have cash in your hand, but at least you can grow fruit and you can put up a house. In southern Africa people are helpless if they have no job.

Pauline Muchina: When you think about the economy of South Africa and how they are tied up with the global market economy — and the way that none of the African countries today can operate without being tied up to the global econ-



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GENDER AND RACISM

omy — then you will begin to understand how globalization has been so devastating for us. Over 60 percent of the population of most African countries live below the poverty level of one dollar a day. They don't have access to proper housing, food, clean water, health care, education. Or if they do, it's very limited.

It makes me so angry because most of our African countries are also paying massive amounts of dollars in debt repayment because of the international debt. For example, a country like Kenya spent more money paying debt back than providing health services for citizens. When you look at the Structural Readjustment Program, which is implemented by the World Bank and the IMF, to try and help poor countries to repay their debt — those programs affect the poor, you know. They dictate to governments that they have to cut government spending, and so the first things to go are the resources that would be helpful to our communities, like health services, education. And women are the ones who are mostly affected, because they have to take on the burden of taking care of their families and they are the first ones to be cut off from their jobs.

Lyn Headley-Moore: What has been the role thus far of multinational pharmaceutical companies, and what are some of the things that could help that aren't happening yet?

Pauline Muchina: As you know, there have been a lot of advances of technology in countries like the U.S.A. and some countries in Europe, where drugs that help people with HIV/AIDS live a longer life are available, and where prenatal care and anti-retroviral drugs are available for

mothers who are pregnant, and they are able to give birth to children who are not HIV-positive. But when you come to a region like Africa, those drugs are not available. Most people who get HIV/AIDS die within a period of six years. It's compounded by lack of good nutrition, poverty, but also lack of access to health services, medication and treatment. Pharmaceutical companies have been challenged to make those drugs available to poor countries. And some of them have said, okay, we're going to provide those drugs at a cheaper rate — but how is that going to help if it is being taken to a country where poor people who are infected are not even able to buy food? And at the same time, the World Trade Organization has this rule that local companies in places like South Africa, Brazil, India, cannot produce or manufacture generic drugs. If they were manufactured locally, they would be priced in a way that local people, poor people might be able to afford.

Lyn Headley-Moore: And government could subsidize.

Pauline Muchina: But that's impossible now, because of the World Trade Organization. Talk about globalization and imperialistic attitude! They are the owners of the knowledge of HIV medication and they will make some concession and lower the prices. But how are people going to buy anything? Let alone HIV medication, they can't even buy condoms. They can't even buy malaria tablets — malaria is the number one killer in Africa today and we're still wrestling with it. So the pharmaceutical companies have a moral obligation when it comes to sharing resources and sharing

knowledge, and the international community needs to hold them accountable.

Lyn Headley-Moore: Why does HIV/AIDS have so great an impact for women?

Mabel Katahweire: One reason is poverty — women are poorer than men. And yet their families depend on them. They have to struggle to support the family and one of the ways they do that is to sell their bodies.

Another problem is that once a woman is married, she can't say no to a man even if she is aware that the man is infected. Also, when husbands die and widows have no income, they have nothing to support their children. And they will be forced into marrying some man who they know is infected in order that their children may get care.

Lyn Headley-Moore: What about women's choices within relationships, within marriage, about prevention options?

Pauline Muchina: We just had a meeting of African women theologians in Ethiopia in August to look at HIV/AIDS and African women and religion. And one of the things that came out so clearly to me was that marriage is not a safe haven for women. Most of the African women who are HIV-positive contracted HIV in marriage. You have to look also at women's rights in the whole society — and here you have to look at the three major religions that operate in Africa, which are Islam, Christianity and African religion, and how they view women, where women have no rights. Women's holdings do not belong to them, they belong to the man they are married to or to the men who are their fathers or their

GAIA call to action

The Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance (GAIA) was created in the summer of 2000 within the context of the United Religions Initiative (URI), a San Francisco-based project that brings people of different religious traditions together to respond to common local problems around the globe (see *TW* 12/01). Under the leadership of William Rankin, vice president of URI and a former Episcopal Church Publishing Company board chair, GAIA has pursued its mission "to facilitate HIV prevention strategies in developing countries by working through religious and inter-religious organizations and/or their health care systems and native faith communities" (www.thegaia.org).

GAIA'S PROJECTS IN ITS FIRST TWO YEARS INCLUDE:

- initiating a comprehensive training program on HIV/AIDS in Tanzania, including two major conferences which brought together Christian and Muslim religious leaders, health care representatives, and non-profit organizations for workshops and action planning. GAIA's follow-up work in Tanzania has included an emergency grant for purchase of medicines and the dissemination of a theological paper to help de-stigmatize ill people.
- the creation of a consortium of religious organizations in Malawi and in Mocambique to become part of the United Religions Initiative, each of which have sponsored training sessions similar to those in Tanzania. GAIA sponsored a second training conference in Malawi in October, 2002, which brought together 75 religious leaders to report their successes and challenges in HIV/AIDS prevention and care efforts and to plan for the future.
- supporting training programs in Kenya for rural clinic nurses and other community-based health workers, as well as an international conference in Nairobi to respond to the crises of AIDS-related family disintegration by strengthening community and church-based educational and support systems.
- taking part in the All Africa Anglican Conference on HIV/AIDS in Boksburg, South Africa in August, 2001.
- assisting an HIV-prevention training session for pastors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- supporting a program for STD and HIV testing and counseling in Ghana.
- supporting a week-long support and de-stigmatization strategy planning conference in Zimbabwe for 120 religious leaders living with HIV from 13 sub-Saharan countries.
- providing consultation to NGOs, governmental agencies and researchers interested in understanding or connecting with developing country religious organizations.

GAIA maintains a website (www.thegaia.org) which offers updates on their work, as well as links to other sites offering HIV/AIDS information and resources. They offer the following suggestions on what you can do to help:

- Become knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and how it affects all of us. It's not just a problem "over there" or somewhere else.
- Develop an awareness of the issues surrounding AIDS in the larger community, the world community, and be willing to talk about them with friends and family so that we all become familiar with this crisis and its impact.
- Remember in our intentions and prayers our sisters and brothers everywhere who are living with AIDS and those who are caring for them.
- Add your name to receive monthly updates on GAIA activities.
- Join GAIA's call-to-action email list that will notify you when there is action pending by our elected officials that may impact U.S. decisions in AIDS-related matters. You will be asked to write, call or email our concerns and opinions to Washington.
- Make a tax-deductible donation to GAIA's HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in sub-Saharan Africa or other developing countries (GAIA, The Presidio of San Francisco, P.O. Box 29110, San Francisco, CA).

brothers. You have to look at this whole issue of their right to choose. That doesn't even exist in most communities in Africa, where sexuality is tied so closely with reproduction. That was the cultural perspective, but then Christianity encouraged that. You realize rape in marriages is very old, because a woman has no right to say no, she has no right to negotiate a condom. And if she does, she is subjected to violence by her husband and also condemned by the community, because her body belongs to her husband.

Mabel Katahweire: I came across a woman who knew that her husband had died of HIV/AIDS. The woman had known the husband was infected and she wanted to get out of that marriage, so she went to talk to her pastor and the pastor said, "You can't do that! You made vows in health or sickness, you have to stay with your husband." And this woman told me, "This was between life and death and I didn't want to die. I decided to get out of the marriage anyway. I got out of the marriage but I was stopped from having Holy Communion. I was punished for leaving my husband, for breaking the vows."

Lyn Headley-Moore: I heard a story when I was in South Africa last year about a woman who had been badly beaten by her husband because she had learned that a condom could be helpful. She knew that her husband was sexually involved with other people, so she had asked him to use a condom — which he took as meaning that she was sexually involved with someone else. Apparently that is not an uncommon experience.

Pauline Muchina: In Kenyan communities, a lot of men go to the cities to look for jobs. The women are left in the country where they take care of their families and work on their farms. When the husband comes back the woman doesn't know what he has been doing in the city. But it is possible that he engages in sexual activities with other women and especially prostitutes who are poor women trying to make a life. This man comes back to the village with HIV/AIDS and the woman cannot say no to him, and she gets infected. The next thing you know, the husband dies and she has to be inherited by the next of kin of the husband. So the cycle of HIV continues.

Mabel Katahweire: I wanted to go back to the role of the church, especially in Uganda, because the church's stand is that a condom is not to be used unless it is in a marriage setting. The church feels that it encourages immorality if you allow the use of condoms, which I really think is unfortunate.

Pauline Muchina: I agree with those who view the church as a movement capable of facing the challenge to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS through massive sensitization of communities. The church has been quite effective in teaching about the subordination of women. I

believe they can undo the negative socialization by teaching respect and dignity, women's rights to choose, empowerment of women to be all that God intended.

Lyn Headley-Moore: What are the opportunities for being tested in most of Africa? Here in the U.S. a big part of the population that we're pretty sure is infected is untested even though there are opportunities for confidential testing. That's the hardest piece to break through, to get people tested.

Mabel Katahweire: Well, in Uganda we have been lucky, because the government has really spearheaded these programs to help eliminate HIV/AIDS. So testing is available. It used to be free. But today you pay for it and many people do go. And what education has done in Uganda is to get people to be open about AIDS. People are no longer ashamed. And that has been very helpful because people find out if they are infected. And they are not victimized through their jobs. There are many centers in the rural areas where people can go for treatment, and there are many people who go for testing, because they want to know their status and plan their future.

Pauline Muchina: That's so encouraging because my feeling has been the opposite — a lot of people don't go and get tested because they are afraid to know, because of the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. But the government is saying, you have to go for testing. And they do provide a clinic. But that kind of testing is very limited where the health services are very poor. NGOs are the ones who are picking up the funeral costs in Kenya, especially in the Nairobi area, and it is NGOs that are leading the way in counseling, educating people and encouraging people to go for testing.

But I have known cases like my own cousin who died of HIV/AIDS about four years ago. He was tested by his doctor, and they didn't tell him he was HIV-positive. They were afraid of how he was going to react. So he didn't know until it was too late for him to take care of himself. But he, in turn, even after he knew he was HIV-positive, never told his wife. So everybody is implicated.

Mabel Katahweire: I think people are also afraid that when they are diagnosed with HIV, that's the end of their sexual life. They don't know that with protection they can still be sexually active. And most men will not go for testing because of that.

Pauline Muchina: And I think the church has to expect that people are sexually active outside marriage. Give young people a way to protect themselves, even if they are given knowledge to abstain or postpone sex. By not helping them to protect themselves, you are denying them abundant life which Jesus promised to us. I've been asking this question a lot — what does abundant life mean in the context of HIV/AIDS, especially in Africa? We talk all the time about abundant life, yet we as the church also stand in the way of people attaining abundant life by the rules and regulations that have been placed on people's sexuality.

Lyn Headley-Moore: Overall, do you have any idea how well educated people are about HIV and AIDS?

Pauline Muchina: I think people who have access to radios and TVs and newspapers hear more about HIV/AIDS than people who don't

have access to that kind of knowledge. I think the problem with our whole system is we are not teaching about HIV/AIDS. They are afraid of addressing the issue of sexuality in school. In Kenya, the most educated people are dying of HIV/AIDS. I was talking to someone who was saying, do you know that even doctors are dying from HIV/AIDS? There is a group in Kenyan society which is dying not because they do not have knowledge of HIV/AIDS, but because they're in denial. They don't want to admit that they themselves are at risk. But I think the majority of the population are dying from the lack of knowledge.

Lyn Headley-Moore: I think that applies here, too. The populations being hardest hit currently with new infections are the poorest people, people of color, youth, seniors and women. Part of it is a lack of accurate, useful information. Part of it is a certain amount of denial of their risk potential, genuine ignorance of their risk, and ignorance on the part of doctors who are assuming that certain populations are not at risk, when in fact they are. It's not only men who have sex with men, it's not only injection drug users, it's women who are at risk of heterosexual transmission. And so doctors are very late recognizing the symptoms. Also, women still represent a very small percentage of clinical trials for treatment. And women are much later going for testing, getting a diagnosis and being available for treatment. So all of those things contribute to the death of women.

Pauline Muchina: You know, we all like to say that HIV/AIDS does not discriminate, but I've been just shocked working with the AIDS Resource Center and finding that most of the people who are affected are African Americans.

Lyn Headley-Moore: And now Latino numbers are rising.

Pauline Muchina: Right. But the face of HIV/AIDS is a problem of color. I know that initially it was primarily gay men, but now it is people of color who are the most affected. I mean, look at Haiti. You go to Asia, it's people of color. You go to South America, you go to Africa. Racism definitely has something to do with it.

Lyn Headley-Moore: Well, certainly racism has had a role in economic status, in opportunities for education and in choice. We're so aware these days — thank God — of the impact, for instance, in Africa. But people are not aware that in the state of New Jersey we still have six new infections every day despite the fact that we have some education. The infection rate is much higher than it should be and in the African-American community nationwide, it's one out of every 50 African-American men and one out of every 160 African-American women. In the city of Newark, though, we're talking like one out of every four to five people who are infected. It's impossible to stand at a bus stop with 20 people and find one person in that crowd who has not either been infected themselves, lost a close family member to AIDS, or who is at present a caretaker for someone who is living with HIV/AIDS. And although people are living healthier and longer, again medications are an issue for the African-American community. Partly because of the Tuskegee Syndrome [fear of racist medical experimentation], partly because of a general distrust of entire systems, and because poverty is a barrier to receiving the very services that are set up for you to access.

Pauline Muchina: A man from USAID was speaking to us at a con-

A resolution on response to the explosion of AIDS worldwide

[Ed. note: The Episcopal Church Responds to AIDS Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia (Washington) won approval of the following resolution addressing the global AIDS pandemic at Olympia's annual diocesan convention last November. The Episcopal Church's national Standing Commission on Anglican & International Peace with Justice Concerns plans to submit a resolution on AIDS to next summer's General Convention.]

Whereas, throughout the world and especially in Africa, HIV/AIDS has become one of history's most devastating catastrophes, and

Whereas, despite aggressive prevention programs and ever-improving treatment programs, the number of people in our own country who are living with AIDS continues to increase; be it

Resolved, That this 92nd Convention of the Diocese of Olympia urge each congregation to designate annually an appropriate Sunday as Worldwide AIDS Sunday; and be it further

Resolved to urge congregations to dedicate this day to prayer for all people living with HIV/AIDS and to learning more about this epidemic worldwide and ways to help; and be it further

Resolved to urge congregations to respond to AIDS in Africa and other heavily affected parts of the world by supporting AIDS service organizations in these areas that have proven records of success; and therefore be it

Resolved to urge congregations to respond to AIDS locally by supporting AIDS service organizations in their communities.

Explanation: Although people everywhere suffer from AIDS, Africa has been especially devastated. While sub-Saharan Africa comprises 3 percent of the world's population, it is the home of 70 percent of those infected with HIV/AIDS. Of the 40 million people infected worldwide, 28.5 million are Africans.

Other heavily affected areas include the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and South and Southeast Asia. The resolution spotlights Africa, however, because it remains the heart of the tragedy.

In our own country, the public perception is that HIV/AIDS is no longer a significant problem. Yet more than 950,000 Americans are living with HIV/AIDS. Among our neighbors, those infected are increasingly the young, women, substance abusers, the mentally ill, African-Americans and Hispanics, along with young gay men.

In his letter on AIDS of September 13, 2002, the Presiding Bishop suggested several appropriate days for Episcopalians to focus on AIDS. The Feast of Constance and her companions (September 9), St. Luke the physician and healer (October 18), and World AIDS Day (December 1) were examples, or Sundays near these days.

In response to such pervasive suffering far away and near at hand, our baptismal vow to seek and serve Christ in all persons calls us as Episcopalians, to seek and support effective ministries that relieve the sick, the dying and those orphaned by this disease.

Episcopal Relief and Development and The Episcopal Church Responds to AIDS Committee have developed strong connections with some AIDS organizations in Africa. They are able to connect congregations with proven ways to offer specific and practical support to people suffering from AIDS in Africa, and in other parts of the world.

Submitted by: Earl Grout, Episcopal Church Responds to AIDS Committee, Diocese of Olympia.

Co-Sponsored by: Holy Spirit, Vashon; St. Clements, Seattle; St. Stephen's, Seattle; Clergy of Color; Commission for the Church in the World; Episcopal Relief and Development; St. Mark's Cathedral.

ference in New Haven at the Yale Divinity School and he said that they went to the U.S. government to ask for additional money to fight HIV/AIDS, and they were told that there was no funding. And the same week, the U.S. government allocated two billion dollars to war. Are we missing something here? They need to look at their priorities much more.

Lyn Headley-Moore: And stewardship of resources. That brings me to another question. War is also an infection factor for people.

Pauline Muchina: I think a lot of women who live under war or have experienced war will tell you that their governments have spent millions of dollars fighting wars that were not helping them in any way. They were actually condemning them to death. Because the resources were taken away from things like shelter and the infrastructure of the country. They will also tell you that they have lost mostly all the males in their communities, either to death or they've run away and left them behind. And women are left with the burden of taking care of their children and that puts a lot of pressure on them to look for money in different ways. You know, the greatest number of refugees in Africa today are women and children, women running away from war and going to a country where they're left at the mercy of the local community that receives them, and that has not always been a positive experience.

Lyn Headley-Moore: And what about rape as a spoil of war?

Mabel Katahweire: Violence against women increases when people are at war. You know, women are raped to punish the men in the other communities. Women are raped by men who have been in the bush fighting war and have not had the opportunity to be with women in their own community.

Pauline Muchina: For example, Somali women were raped by Kenyan soldiers in a refugee camp in northern Kenya. Refugee women are also sold by the staff of some of these organizations that are working in refugee camps to exchange sexual favors in return for food. So war is a major factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. ●

LIVING WITH AIDS IN EL SALVADOR

One woman's story

by Susana Barrera

MARÍA DE LA PAZ CALLEJAS is 29 years old and the mother of three children between 10 and 15. She smiles often and is known for her lively personality. She realizes that she is living in the last days of her life. Each day that passes is a struggle against time. Callejas is one of the few people in El Salvador who is facing up to HIV.

The telephone rings. It is the confidential line of the National Foundation for the Prevention, Education and Accompaniment of Persons with HIV/AIDS, known as FUNDASIDA. Callejas answers the phone; without revealing that she, too, is a carrier of the virus, she lets the caller know that she understands perfectly.

Callejas came to FUNDASIDA in 1998 after receiving her diagnosis from a physician in the most grotesque way possible. The physician briskly gave her the news, telling her that she had only five years left to live. Since then, she has had to confront humiliation, denigration and the need to prepare her children and the rest of the family for her final days.

"The virus came to my house," Callejas says. "I didn't look for it. My husband died of AIDS. He transmitted it to me."

El Salvador — the smallest country in Central America with a population of six million people, the majority of whom are poor — since 1984 has had to confront, along with the other countries of the region, the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic.

These days, according to national statistics, 6 percent of the adult population in El Salvador is infected by HIV. More than 2,000 persons died of AIDS in 2001. Eighty-six percent of infections were related to sexual activity, 4.6 percent were infants who became infected through their mothers, and 1.5 percent resulted from needles shared by drug users.

According to official statistics in El Salvador, 24,000 persons are carriers of HIV, and more than half are not aware of it. El Salvador has the fourth highest number of cases among Central American countries. Since 1984, 13,000 children have become orphans as a consequence of AIDS. Organizations involved with HIV/AIDS estimate that by the year 2004 we will have one member of each family infected with HIV.

FUNDASIDA, an organization which has existed for the past 10 years, receives 12–15 patients daily, the majority of whom are male and test positive. Dr. Julio Alfredo Osegueda, executive director of the organization, says that each month two to four of his patients die.

Callejas has been involved in every program that the organization

offers. She participates in the Help Groups, which offer a weekly time of reflection and sharing. Parents of patients attend, as well as the persons who live with AIDS. Patients are adolescents, rural peasants, heterosexuals and homosexuals, all of whom appear to be in good health.

"They come from all strata of society, day workers and physicians alike," says Dr. Guadalupe Flores, a psychologist at FUNDASIDA. "The virus is no respecter of persons."

Callejas listens attentively to the group discussions. She is standing because she also has to attend to the telephone, which rings constantly. She explains that, each day, between 15–22 persons call, the majority of whom are men. Some admit that they are carriers of the virus, others don't. Mondays and Tuesdays are the busiest, with the most calls. She thinks the reason is that on weekends the callers had unprotected sexual relations with possible carriers.

Callejas has already begun to take anti-virus medicine — the famous cocktails which the Social Security Institute (Public Health) offers.

"I do not ask God that I be healed, only I pray to God that I will have time to see my children grow up," she says. "My children already know. It has been difficult because they were almost expelled from the school. I had to talk with the teachers of the school, and the director, to explain to them that I was the one with AIDS, not my children. I asked for 15 minutes, and the meeting lasted over an hour."

Callejas lives west of the capital city, in Lourdes, Colón, a semi-urban zone. She lives in the open-country part of the area. Her neighbors are people of little education. When rumors came about her sickness, some wanted to expel her from the neighborhood. At that time she worked selling food, such as tamales and pastries. Some of her customers stopped buying from her, saying that she was "una sidosa," (a bearer of "SIDA," the Spanish acronym for AIDS). She says that many times the rejection of her neighbors has hurt her more than the sickness.

Four years have passed since Callejas learned that she was a carrier of the virus. She is dedicated full-time now to the task of education and prevention. Her dream is to form an association of women who carry HIV. She

believes that it is the women who suffer most from the pandemic.

Callejas is the third person with HIV to have appeared on the local media. She was on a talk program of a local TV station. Clear, sure and precise, she shared her testimony eloquently and with courage. She announced that the use of preventative measures was almost totally safe. "I have a partner and we use condoms, and my partner has not gotten the virus," she said.

She says that her daughter has been educated in prevention. Her daughter told her that she says to her boyfriend that if they are to have sexual relations, they have to use a condom. "Because of this sometimes my boyfriend says he doesn't love me anymore."

In El Salvador there are more than 20 organizations to support persons who live with HIV. All of them form a network called Prevention Network. The Anglican/Episcopal Church, along with these other organizations, offers pastoral support to some of the groups that watch over those who suffer from the virus.

"We have strong commitments to those in our society who suffer," says Bishop Martin Barahona of the Anglican/Episcopal Church. "Sometimes it is difficult to care for them, because we lack sufficient means to offer for the clinical needs. At times we have contributed to the prevention campaigns. We have offered condoms to some of the organizations, and our dream is to offer a clinical pastoral ministry to those who live with HIV/AIDS."

Discrimination continues to abound. In the hospitals, if someone dies of AIDS, the parents are forced to clean the body in order to be permitted to take it from the hospital.

Patients who arrive at the hospital with AIDS sometimes find a public sign on their beds announcing "Patient with AIDS." Most family members of those who have died of AIDS hide the diagnosis for fear that there will be repercussions.

Paradoxically, Callejas has been able to find employment, thanks to being a carrier of HIV.

During the week, in addition to working with FUNDASIDA, she visits support groups in the public hospitals and works with a group called Live with Condoms. "I would wish that all who live with HIV would have the same good luck as I have had, that they might be

able to obtain work as I have," she says.

In the legislature, a "Prevention and Control of Infection Caused by the Virus HIV" law is currently being discussed. In this proposal, a directive mandates an HIV examination for workers when the employer or administrative authorities require it. This remedy has awakened the concern of human rights organizations, since the situation of persons with HIV is already so vulnerable.

Callejas has to consume 15 doses of antiviral medicine daily. In order to receive this medicine, patients need to present to the hospital authorities two witnesses who will guarantee its correct administration. The price of the medicine in private pharmacies ranges from \$500 to \$1,000 monthly. Medical exams that determine the advance of the disease cost between \$10 and \$15 in some laboratories; in other labs the cost is much higher.

It costs \$5–10 million annually in El Salvador to maintain each person hospitalized by AIDS. The cost could increase greatly. This indicates an economic expense that is more than the entire health sector in El Salvador could cope with. And William Pleitez, an economist for the United Nations Development Agency, recently said that the loss of productive manual labor in consequence of HIV/AIDS sickness is equal to a reduction of 2 percent of the Gross National Product of the nation.

For the second time El Salvador has proposed to the annual assembly of the World Health Organization a request for \$40 million from the member countries to help raise awareness and increase attention for those sick with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and lung disease. As yet, there has been no response.

"Today, more than ever, I take care of my health," Callejas says. "I have a partner who takes care of me, children who love me, and a mother who understands me."

Callejas dreams of seeing her children grown and married and continues her work, hoping for a better policy for distribution of medicines for persons with HIV/AIDS and for an end to discrimination against them, so that they might live their lives as normal persons and write their own history. ●

[This article, originally written in Spanish, is available in the author's native language at www.thewitness.org/espanol.]

EMPOWERING



Empowering communities in North India

by Sanjana Das

“MY HUSBAND IS A GOD-FEARING MAN. He loves our children and me. He goes out to earn for himself and the family for months together. I have no idea as to whether he goes to any other women for fulfilling his sexual urge. I can never even question him, even though I have my own doubts. Now I know that the best way of keeping myself protected is to practice safe sex. But how can I even talk of condoms since I have already got myself operated. Moreover, we have never discussed about condoms nor do we talk about sex. In a situation like this, how can I protect myself from HIV/AIDS?”

A woman raised this question during a women's fellowship training workshop sponsored by the Church of North India. This group of women hailed from very interior rural areas of the state of Orissa. It was a tribal group with little access to information and communication. They had known only one means of birth control — tubectomy. Most had between five and nine children. Their

husbands worked mostly as labourers, migrating out to the neighbouring states or to other parts of Orissa.

The Church of North India, through the Synodical Board of Health Services (SBHS), is focused on HIV/AIDS prevention by supporting awareness programs and working to bring about attitudinal changes. Training workshops are organized for youth and women's fellowships of all 26 dioceses. Participants become core trainers who train others from their parishes and communities.

The spread of HIV/AIDS in India

In India, HIV/AIDS is spreading like a wild-fire throughout the length and breadth of the country. Over the next decade, the HIV virus is likely to be the highest cause of death among India's adult population.

Eighty-nine percent of the reported cases are in the sexually active and economically productive age group of 18–40 years. Over 50 percent of all new infections take place among young adults under 25. Twenty-one percent of new infections are among women — a majority of whom do not have any risk factor other than being married to their husbands. This adds to mother-to-child HIV transmission.

Persons in traditionally high-risk groups, including women in prostitution, injecting drug users, and men who have sex with men, have been shown to have alarmingly high rates of infection. In several states of India, such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the epidemic has spread to the general population.

There are various factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS in India. These include poverty and low economic status, a high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases which mostly go untreated, gender disparity, double standards of morality and gender norms, population mobility, migration and rapid urbanization, injecting drug use, lack of information and failure to observe mandatory Universal Precautions and screening of blood.

As is known, infection by the virus is preventable, and the spread of the epidemic can be stemmed if prevention strategies are put

into action on a large scale. There are strong links between incidence of infection and the economic and sociological vulnerability of specific groups, and there is ample evidence that those who have information and choices can protect themselves from exposure to the virus.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is not just a health issue but also a development challenge. It impacts the social, economic, cultural, political and legal parameters of society. Therefore, it is important to empower communities not only in the context of HIV/AIDS prevention, but also in the wider context of socio-economic development and basic human rights.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is not just a health issue but also a development challenge.

Breaking the silence

My work takes me to different parts of the country and I meet with adolescents, youth, women and men. As I work with these different groups I sense the urgent need for people to "break the silence" and to talk. It's not just talking about HIV/AIDS, but talking about a whole range of issues.

The adolescents need to cope with peer pressure and to understand sex and sexuality. This group is highly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. They need an environment of trust and openness and to be able to talk without being judged or condemned.

The women I come across during my field visits have made me understand women as a disadvantaged group socially, economically and biologically. Their vulnerability is a major concern in our society since this is a major factor influencing the spread of the epidemic. Trafficked women and girls represent the most vulnerable category as far as

sexual violence is concerned. There is an integral connection between HIV/AIDS, gender and trafficking through the nexus of vulnerability and sexual violence.

Women face greater risks of rejection, ostracism and neglect if they get infected, making them even more vulnerable. Indeed, the shame, blame, fear, distrust and dangers that surround these issues, and the difficulty of discussing them in present-day cultures, are major problems. The stigma surrounding the AIDS pandemic is in fact helping to fuel the spread of the virus.

Church initiatives

Community mobilization and empowerment are critical to HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Thus, the effort of the SBHS is geared toward trying to create spaces for facilitating greater community action. Its activities include workshops for pastors and lay leaders, prayer vigils, a Teen Peer Educators Program, college seminars, and mass awareness programs.

The SBHS has an ongoing project in the states of Assam, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. This project is primarily being supported by DANIDA, the Danish Embassy. Its objective is to empower communities to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a more comprehensive, systematic and humane way. The project aims at increasing awareness, motivating people to take preventive measures, providing testing and counseling facilities for those affected, and persuading communities to support affected individuals and their families.

In Madhya Pradesh, we are beginning to work with a tribal community called Banchra. Among the Banchras, prostitution is openly practiced, promoted and protected, notwithstanding the law and international convention against it. This community migrated from Rajasthan centuries ago and has engaged their daughters in prostitution, making them the principal breadwinners of their families. The men mainly solicit clients for their daughters and sisters. They live in 35 villages with a population of more than 6,000 people. Official estimates say that over

600 women are engaged in prostitution in this belt. The Church of North India through its AIDS wing of the SBHS has started working in this area. The main objectives are to increase the level of awareness, bring about change in behaviour of women in prostitution, bring about change in community attitudes, empower women in prostitution to make decisions about themselves, their profession and their health with an open mind and without pressures, provide alternative sources of income through self-help groups and networking with governmental and non-governmental organizations, work with truckers on the highway who are their major clients, build hospices and provide care and support to people living with HIV/AIDS.

In Assam, the Assam State AIDS Control Organization (ASACS), which is operating under the National AIDS Control Organization of the Government of India, has given us their School AIDS Education Programme for one district covering 30 schools. A targeted intervention project for the truckers on the National Highway of Assam has been submitted to ASACS and is in the process of being sanctioned.

We have networked with the government, with UN bodies and NGOs as well as with various other churches. On June 4, 2002, a National Consultation of Church Leaders in response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in India was jointly organized by SBHS, the Church of North India and the Lutheran Church. UNAIDS has assured this network of its support. We are working with different denominations even at the grassroots level, such as the Baptist, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist churches and the Church of South India.

An epidemic is an extraordinary situation. It demands extraordinary efforts. I am reminded of what Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the first Vice-President and second President of Independent India, once said: "Christians are very ordinary people claiming to do extraordinary work." The entire team of AIDS Wing, SBHS, Church of North India asks for your support in prayer as we take small steps in fulfilling this great mission. ●

Radical hospitality

by Joseph Wakelee-Lynch

Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love by Daniel Homan, O.S.B., and Lonni Collins Pratt (Paraclete Press, Brewster, Mass.)

With the title *Radical Hospitality*, this volume conjures images of blessed ministries of those who shelter the homeless. But *Radical Hospitality* is only partly about working with homeless people, being a welcoming host or treating the stranger justly. And although the authors are intimately familiar with the work of a Benedictine monastery, the book is only partly about monkish hospitality. Instead, *Radical Hospitality* — a friendly, readable, gentle spiritual primer — offers a stark and radical message: If we truly try to follow Jesus, our outlook on the world — especially its strangers, its poor, its homeless, its injured, its helpless, its needy, its enemies — will be forever changed. *Radical Hospitality* is about conversion.

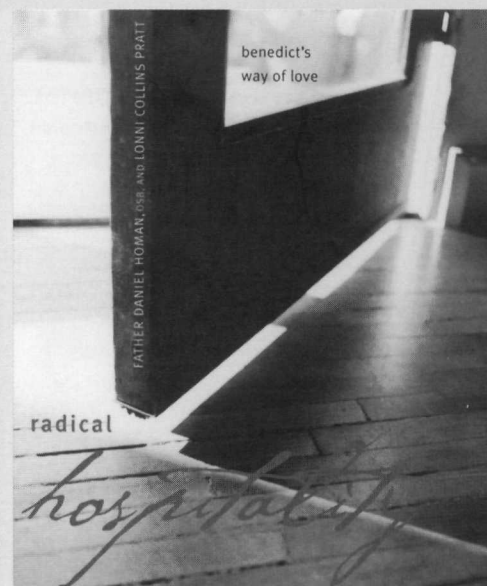
Daniel Homan, O.S.B., who has lived more than four decades as a monk, is prior of St. Benedict Monastery in Oxford, Mich. Lonni Collins Pratt is a writer and frequent visitor to the monastery. Pratt and Homan lead retreats, and their book, in fact, is much like a retreat. Filled with common-sense wisdom and both uplifting and whimsical anecdotes, *Radical Hospitality* reads like an inspirational tape. One seems to hear it more than read it. With the enduring wisdom of St. Benedict's life and Rule as a guide, the authors lead us through the work of hospitality: accompanying those in pain, setting boundaries, listening to one's self and others, welcoming despite the risk of danger and other courageous acts.

Benedictine hospitality, Homan and Pratt tell us, is based on listening to and acceptance of the other, and on the Christian conviction that every life is sacred. But acceptance is not synonymous with condoning all about the other, or agreeing with the other. "[W]e confuse [acceptance] with tolerance, and even approval. But acceptance is about receiving, rather than judging."

In Benedictine spirituality, the monks need the "other," the stranger. The stranger brings

another face of Christ into their lives, and therefore practicing hospitality is to welcome Christ. Radical hospitality leads to a provocative degree of acceptance — acceptance not only of the poor, the stranger, the injured and the needy, but also of the enemy or opponent. This is the same challenge Jesus presented: the challenge to love the enemy.

This is the point where *Radical Hospitality* becomes a wisdom book with profound theological implications. "Benedict's conviction," the authors write, "was that all of us are headed together toward God. We are headed toward union with God." Their focus primarily is on the enemy as defined by the political order in which we live. But implicit in their challenge, too, is the ideological enemy within our churches as well. Can we find a degree of acceptance that is real — even if minimal — and that allows us to offer a genuine word of welcome to those who disagree with us at our theological foundation? If so, we will find out for ourselves that the hospitality of Benedict truly does have power — a much-needed power for both church and world. ●



THE BODY OF

Responding to a gendered pandemic as an embodied community

by Denise Ackermann

AFRICAN THEOLOGIAN TERESA OKURE startled her hearers at a theological symposium on AIDS held in Pretoria in 1998, by saying that there are two viruses more dangerous than the HIV virus because they are carriers enabling this virus to spread so rapidly. The first virus is the one that assigns women an inferior status to men in society. The second is the virus of global economic injustice that causes dreadful poverty in many parts of the developing world. Picking up on Okure's observations, I argue that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a gendered pandemic exacerbated by poverty that is having a devastating impact on our ability to sustain people-centered development.

How can the Body of Christ, itself infected with AIDS, find and bring hope into this context?

First, I suggest that we begin by acknowledging that our social reality is an embodied reality. So is HIV/AIDS and poverty. So is the degrading of our environment. As the Body of Christ we are an embodied community of people. Why is this important? It is the starting place for our sense of community — when one limb of the body suffers, we all suffer. The body carries our scars, our memories, our hopes and the clues to our identities. The recognition that sustainable development is about people's bodies is the place to start.

Stigma and the body

Women who are HIV-positive are at the receiving end of prejudice, social ostracism and violence. Countless women in South Africa who are HIV-positive have been the victims of sexual violence, perpetrated within a cultural order in which power is abused and women are used for male purposes. In a patriarchal system, women's cries of distress are insufficiently heard and they often disappear under a veil of silence. Breaking the silence about one's status can be life-threatening. Gugu Dlamini became South Africa's first AIDS martyr when, in December 1998, she was stoned to death for speaking out about her HIV status.

When the HIV virus enters, lurks, then makes forays into the immune system of a person, life changes forever. The body is not only diseased but becomes the focus of stigmas. Stigmas are socially constructed ways of marking people. Stigmas brand or disgrace individuals or groups, tainting them and making them alien to the dominant culture.

The question of stigma is particularly poignant when it is attached to persons suffering from HIV/AIDS. Ignorance, prejudice, stereotypes, issues of power and dominance all conspire to stigmatize sufferers and in so doing to label them and to distort their true identities. You simply become "an HIV-positive," a statistic

whose identity is now subsumed in your status.

Fortunately, within the body of people living with HIV/AIDS there is an increasing band of people who are slowly gaining power by defining their experiences and claiming their reality, speaking out and breaking the silence around the disease. There is also a new brand of social activism emerging in South Africa, as bodies march in the streets demanding affordable treatment for HIV/AIDS. We cannot sustain any form of just development in communities which are a breeding ground for stigmas. As members of the Body of Christ, we ourselves have to demonstrate the truth that all members are equal in value and dignity.

Awakening from virtue

In South Africa today there is much talk, and very necessary talk, about abstinence, prevention and medication in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The Roman Catholics say abstinence is the only answer. The Anglicans say yes, but if you must, use condoms. There is very little being said, however, about the moral and ethical issues raised by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. So far the church has not grasped this nettle. The recognition that the Body of Christ is a community of sexual human beings is slow in coming and centuries of ignoring any matter related to human sexuality is merely feeding the

CHRIST HAS AIDS

silences around HIV/AIDS. It is simply not good enough merely to preach fidelity and abstinence in sexual relations. This message cannot be heard, understood or followed as long as it is communicated without a properly constructed debate on what constitutes a moral community. This is a debate in which both men and women must take part. Moral choices and moral accountability and a community in which women are respected as equal partners in the church itself, as well as in their sexual relations, are essential to this debate.

What makes a moral community? Christian ethics are communal ethics. How people live with one another and our faithfulness to God are two sides of the same coin.

To put it differently, a moral community is one whose goal is the common good of all. Common good makes sense if it is translated into sustained people-centered development. A moral community upholds the integrity of life, values the dignity of the human person, includes those who are on the margins or excluded, while not avoiding the reality of structural sin.

Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen in their book *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* tell the story of Dom Helder Camara meditating in the middle hours of the night about the attitudes of the rich toward the poor and then writing a poem. This poem speaks to those of us in the church who are not HIV-positive and who may be tempted to feel virtuous about our status, perhaps even indifferent to those who are infected:

**I pray incessantly
for the conversion
of the prodigal son's
brother.**

**Ever in my ear
rings the dread warning
"this one [the prodigal]
has awoken
from his life of sin.
When will the other
[the brother]
awaken
from his virtue?"**

The bodily practice of grace

I see a link between the violated, hungry and diseased bodies of countless people and the crucified and resurrected body of Jesus Christ whom we remember and celebrate in the bread and the wine at the Eucharist. Deep inside the Body of Christ, the AIDS virus lurks.

The Eucharist is the bodily practice of grace. Nancy Eiesland writes: "Receiving the Eucharist is a body practice of the church. The Eucharist as a central and constitutive practice of the church is a ritual of membership. The Eucharist is a matter of bodily mediation of justice and an incorporation of hope." Because God chose to live with us in the flesh, sacramentality takes physical reality very seriously. We are bodily partakers of the physical elements of bread and wine, Christ's presence in our lives and in our world. The very bodiliness of the celebration of the Eucharist affirms the centrality of the

body in the practice of the faith.

The communion meal mediates communion and true life-giving relationship with the crucified one in the presence of the risen one. It becomes a foretaste of the messianic banquet of all humankind. It is the meal at which the bodies of all are welcome. In Christ's Body, the Eucharist is the sacrament of equality. Only self-exclusion can keep one away. At the communion table we are offered the consummate step in forging an ethic of right relationship, across all our differences. "We who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread." This visible, unifying, bodily practice of relationship with all its potential for healing is ours.

As long as WWSD [World Summit on Sustainable Development] or NEPAD [New Partnership for Africa's Development] or any other grand design does not address the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa there will be no sustained development for African people. This places a heavy burden on the Body of Christ to be a voice of truth in the midst of denial and prevarication. We can speak into the moment by acknowledging the central role of gender in this pandemic and holding fast to the truths of our faith which we must put into practice day by day. HIV/AIDS is our *kairos* because as long as we are unable (even unwilling) to deal adequately with this scourge, development that is truly sustainable, gender-sensitive and people-centered will not come about. It is a time when the ordinary rhythm of life is suspended. Will it be a time of doom or will we find a new unveiling of God's presence and love for us here and now? ●

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Social Worker holding the hand of a n AIDS patient. © Sean Sprague / The Image Works

The Witness

The Witness Magazine

P.O. Box 1170, Rockport, ME 04856

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