

# THE BLUE BOOK

Reports of the Committees,  
Commissions, Boards, and Agencies of  
THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF  
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH



LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA  
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one say in such cases that the baby, conceived by mutual contract, is being offered for sale? What about the theology of marriage? Does not the Prayer Book put the primary emphasis on the relationship of husband and wife, their "mutual joy" and "the help and comfort given one another," with the procreation of children secondary "when it is God's will." Many infertile wives, considering a surrogate mother for their child, argue that their marriage cannot be fulfilled without a child. Clearly, that is not the view espoused in our liturgical formularies. It seems to our Commission that, on balance, the gain for the couple with the new child via the surrogate route cannot outweigh the emotional distress and even grief experienced by the surrogate mother and her family. Thus, we feel compelled to offer the following resolution:

### Resolution #A—89

***Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 68th General Convention, acting in the light of the Church's longstanding opposition to the selling of human sexual services, expresses its opposition to surrogate parenting for hire.***

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### 11. Marriage counseling in the Church: A report

A resolution of the 1982 General Convention (A-69) encouraged "each diocese to establish a special Commission on Marriage, the responsibility of which [is] to review and report on current diocesan policies and practices respecting Holy Matrimony." The central theme of such reexamination was to be the redemptive and sacramental nature of Holy Matrimony. Each commission was to consider the means of revitalizing a Christian concept of marriage, to review practices with respect to counseling of prospective partners in the sacrament, to inquire as to continuing education procedures for clergy and laity, to study the role of the clergy in a failed marriage, and to ascertain the extent and quality of prenuptial guidance, the continuing parish support for a married pair, guidance in childbearing and rearing, and other appropriate matters. The Convention directed the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health to study and review the responses made by said diocesan commissions and to report findings to the 68th General Convention.

Our Commission undertook such a study and review and, in a report completed on April 26, 1984, having had responses from 61 dioceses, learned that 19 dioceses had formed such commissions while another 11 had commissions under another name or were in the process of forming such a body. Thirty-one dioceses at that time did not have such a commission.

We find it difficult to summarize the findings. One typical diocese, however, may be illustrative. The Diocese of Maryland Marriage Commission was convened in 1983 and gathered data from a wide variety of sources and practices—including marriage preparation, nurture, responsible approaches for divorce and (if desired) remarriage. Part of their data came from rectors and couples they had recently married. Most of the Maryland clergy, according to the Commission, "take the canonical provisions concerning Holy Matrimony quite seriously, with well over fifty percent responding at the high end of a scale designed to measure the same. Only two priests reported taking a 'loose' approach to the canonical provisions." The vast majority of the clergy spend three or more hours during the process of premarital instruction. Fewer than 10% spend less time. Some clergy report spending 10 hours or more at the task. The Commission is now in the process of developing guidelines for the diocese—one set for laity and another set, more technical, for clergy. The Maryland Commission does not feel changes in Canon

are now needed, but they do feel there needs to be a clearer definition of what is uniquely important for a couple seeking marriage with Christian solemnization.

The Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health has detected no great demand at this time by the dioceses for revision of the national Canons respecting Holy Matrimony or Remarriage after Divorce. We do believe the Church will be well served if other dioceses follow the lead of those who have already acted in response to the 1982 General Convention resolution. We commend once again the study and use of our Commission's 1982 statement on Marriage, as found on pages 134 to 140 of the 1982 "Blue Book." We recommend that our Commission monitor this whole matter during the coming triennium and bring such recommendations as may seem wise to the 1988 General Convention.

## 12. Some ethical concerns about developments in genetics

The recent and rapid progress of research into molecular genetics and developmental biology has provided great new insight into the development, differentiation, growth, function, health maintenance and progress of disease. Biomedical researchers foresee additional advances ahead and important benefits to the human race that can result from further experiments.

Many morally sensitive people, however, fear that we are already "playing God" in all this, and probing too closely to the fundamental manipulation of life itself. They wonder: May we not soon create bizarre new life-forms which will overrun the world? May we not be tempted to control human identity or to develop a "super race" and, perhaps, "servant races?"

The Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health believes it is possible to acquire fundamental understandings about the basis of life, and to learn how to manipulate facets of life, without endangering the future of human beings or of the physical and biological environment in which people live. But two serious ethical questions about genetics need to be faced: (1) Should some limits be imposed on what human beings shall be allowed to learn? (2) How can we assure that good applications of new knowledge are allowed and encouraged while at the same time we avoid dangerous applications of that knowledge?

At the present time, these questions might be called "foresight" rather than "immediate action" problems. It is, however, very important that ethical leaders think about them now in order to relieve unnecessary fears and to prepare for future effective action.

One thing seems certain: a significant portion of our population is even now presented with genetics-related problems in medical ethics. Parents of a newborn with genetic birth disorders, families who know they carry genes which can cause serious disorders—both must wrestle with difficult choice options. Moreover, ethical problems about genetic disorders are not independent of ethical problems in genetic engineering. Some of the proposed genetic engineering experiments, for example, may so greatly increase our understanding about the etiology of certain genetic defects that it may soon be possible to provide effective therapy for conditions presently considered incurable.

### *Some Historical Background about Genetics*

While genetics is very much a science of the 20th century—during which advances in the field have proceeded with exciting vigor—human beings have, in fact, been interested in (and have "tampered with") inheritance since at least the beginning of agriculture.

Consciously or unconsciously, the earliest farmers established "land races" of vegetable crops which today are still considered very important as sources of "life-saver"