

CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE

**A Pastoral Study Document of the House of
Bishops
to the Church as the Church Considers
Issues of Human Sexuality**

MEMBERS OF THE A104sa COMMITTEE

The Rt. Rev. Richard F. Grein, *Chair*
The Rt. Rev. Frank K. Allan
The Rt. Rev. Mark Dyer
The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting
The Rt. Rev. Rogers S. Harris
The Rt. Rev. Richard L. Shimpfky
The Rt. Rev. Harry W. Shipps
The Rt. Rev. Vincent W. Warner
The Rev. Jane N. Garrett
The Rev. Barnum McCarty
The Rev. Warner T. Traynham
Mrs. Kit T. Caffey
J.P. Causey, Esq.
Ms. Mary Meader

FOREWORD FROM THE COMMITTEE

The title given to this Pastoral Study Document states in a succinct way what the document is all about: *Continuing the Dialogue: A Pastoral Study Document of the House of Bishops to the Church as the Church Considers Issues of Human Sexuality.*

The committee charged with writing the Pastoral Study Document recognized early in our discussions that while we agreed on the great majority of issues connected with human sexuality, there were several issues which could not be resolved by even the most carefully written statement.

The persons making up the committee, eight Bishops and six members of the House of Deputies, are united in a common faith; on the central affirmations of creed and sacraments, we are joined together. On the subject at hand, we represent a broad spectrum of viewpoints and experience which we know to be representative of the Church as a whole. But within this difference of perspective we shared a common attitude--willingness to listen to one another even on potentially divisive issues. This openness allowed us to come to some level of appreciation of perspectives that differed from our own. What we learned from this experience we want to pass on to the Church.

Whereas the solution to our dilemmas lay beyond our ability to grasp, we discovered we could remain together as a community in dialogue sharing common faith. This Pastoral Study Document then is not intended to offer a particular solution or some new unusual perspective on the issues, nor have we changed the present teaching of this Church on any of these issues. At the same time, we do have a clear purpose: to encourage a process of dialogue and to remind the Church that our strength is what we share through our common baptismal covenant.

Thus what we hope to teach is about a way for this Church to work together as it seeks a common mind under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this teaching we have also tried objectively to provide a history of our Church's discussions on human sexuality, the traditional Christian teaching on matters of human sexuality and marriage, differing perspectives by biblical theologians on key Scripture references, and a description of what the 1991 General Convention called "discontinuities." We have also offered a set of guidelines for our life together as we seek answers to these important concerns so that when we are asked, "Where does the Episcopal Church stand on issues of human sexuality?" we can reply--we stand together seeking God's guidance.

Finally, the appendix contains a report from Bishop O'Kelley Whitaker's committee, which guided the many discussions on human sexuality. While those discussions are not to be considered a referendum, the report offers many valuable insights on attitudes held by Episcopalians. Importantly, it appears that most found the discussion helpful and productive.

The committee was conscious from the beginning that it worked for the House of Bishops. What we wrote was theirs to accept or reject. Altogether we produced five drafts with opportunities for the Bishops to offer reflections and critiques and make the document their own. Throughout the process the Pastoral Study Document was reviewed by ethicists and biblical scholars. We were pleased to be able to use their many suggestions to improve the Teaching. On the subject of human sexuality, even the so-called experts do not agree.

In preparing this Pastoral Study Document, we were mindful that its purpose, in the last analysis, is to assist persons, in whatever their life circumstances, to live as faithful Christians, growing and deepening in their life with Christ. Nothing for Christians can take the place of a strong life of prayer, the study of Scripture, and participation in the liturgical and communal life of the Church. In every area of human life, God calls us to fidelity in our relationships--with God, with one another in the community of the Church, in our personal lives.

As this Teaching makes evident, devoted Christians in our faith community do not find themselves of a single mind on various aspects of our lives as sexual beings. All the more reason, then, for congregations and other gatherings of Episcopalians to struggle together, as we have and as the House of Bishops has, to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in the midst of our life together, seeking forgiveness from one another and from God for the ways in which deeply held emotions often block genuine listening. What we must not do as we make this journey together is question any one's faith commitment even when we disagree with their position on these concerns. We must, as the poet Rilke said, "learn to live the question, and perhaps one day we will live into the answer."

The Rt. Rev. Richard F. Grein,
Chair
Committee for the Pastoral Study
Document
on Human Sexuality

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1

THE DIALOGUE TO DATE IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Introduction

Issues related to human sexuality are high on the agenda of virtually every Christian denomination in our day. There are many reasons for this, of which the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies and the women's movement are but two. The relative silence of the Church on matters sexual in the past and the current wellness and spiritual-growth movements in the Church have also played their part. When the power and centrality of sexuality in our lives and its close association with spirituality and the desire for intimacy with God and one another are added, it is no wonder that issues of human sexuality are so prominent in the Church today.

Of all the issues related to human sexuality, one has occupied a central place in the entire discussion. Largely as a result of the emergence of the gay liberation movement, homosexuality (and specifically the debates surrounding the blessing of gay and lesbian unions and the ordination of noncelibate gay and lesbian persons) has played a key role in the discussion by forcing us to look again at the meaning and role of sexuality in general.

Certainly this has been the case for the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. The 70th General Convention, meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, in July of 1991, acknowledged its inability to resolve the complex issues surrounding human sexuality by means of the normal legislative process. The Convention opted instead for a process of continued study and dialogue across the whole Church before the 71st General Convention to be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, during the summer of 1994. One part of this process called for congregational and diocesan dialogues, the results of which were to be reported back through the Provincial structures.¹ A second part mandated the preparation of a Pastoral Study Document of the House of Bishops prior to the 71st General Convention. A rehearsal of events leading up to this Pastoral Study Document may be instructive.

Background, 1976-1991

At least as far back as the 1976 General Convention, resolutions passed by the bishops and deputies began to frame the parameters of the debate. One resolution acknowledged "that homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance

1 and pastoral concern and care of the Church." In 1977, at a special meeting
 2 in Port St. Lucie, Florida, the House of Bishops accepted the report of its
 3 Commission on Theology, which stated, "The Church is right to confine its
 4 nuptial blessing exclusively to heterosexual marriage. Homosexual unions
 5 witness to incompleteness." It further stated, "In the case of an advocating
 6 and/or practicing homosexual," ordination is inadmissible because, "It involves
 7 the Church in a public denial of its own theological and moral norms on
 8 sexuality," and because, "it would require the Church's sanction of such a life
 9 style, not only as acceptable but worthy of emulation." In 1979, the 66th
 10 General Convention adopted a resolution recommending that those having
 11 authority in the ordination process recognize:

12
 13 1. There are many human conditions, some of them
 14 in the area of sexuality, which bear upon a person's suitability
 15 for ordination;

16
 17 2. Every ordinand is expected to lead a life which
 18 is "a wholesome example to all people" (*Book of Common*
 19 *Prayer*, pp. 517, 532, 544)^[2]. There should be no barrier to
 20 the ordination of qualified persons of either heterosexual or
 21 homosexual orientation whose behavior the Church considers
 22 wholesome;

23
 24 3. [T]he traditional teaching of the Church on
 25 marriage, marital fidelity, and sexual chastity [is] the standard
 26 of Christian sexual morality. Candidates for ordination are
 27 expected to conform to this standard. Therefore, . . . it is not
 28 appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual,
 29 or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside
 30 of marriage.

31
 32 However, an indication of some real division at least in the House of
 33 Bishops was shown by the inclusion of a minority report signed in 1979 by 20
 34 bishops and in 1988 by 29 (out of 175). While joining their fellow bishops
 35 in affirming marriage and celibacy as appropriate vocations, these bishops also
 36 affirmed the "ministries of ordained persons known to be homosexual. . . ."
 37 They also declared, "Not all of these persons have been celibate; and in the
 38 relationships of many of them, maintained in the face of social hostility and
 39 against great odds, we have seen a redeeming quality which in its way and
 40 according to its mode is no less a sign to the world of God's love than is the
 41 more usual sign of Christian marriage."

42
 43 The report went on to state,
 44

45 [W]here an ideally stable relationship has not, or has not yet,
 46 been achieved, we are conscious of ordained homosexual
 47 persons who are wrestling responsibly, and in the fear of God,
 48 with the Christian implications of their sexuality and who seek
 49 to be responsible, caring, and non-exploitive people even in the
 50 occasionally transient relationships which the hostility of our
 51 society toward homosexual persons . . . makes inevitable.

52
 53 The minority rejected the idea that "either homosexual orientation as
 54 such" or "the responsible and self-giving use of such a mode of sexuality,
 55 constitutes a scandal in and of itself." Since their examination of Scripture
 56 gave Òno certain basis for a total or absolute condemnation of either
 57 homosexual persons or homosexual activities . . ." they stated their inability
 58 to accept the 66th Convention's recommendation on ordination and instead
 59 affirmed their intention to exclude no person on the basis of a category but to
 60 select each candidate for ordination on the basis of individual merit, "as a
 61 whole human being and in the light of the particular circumstances obtaining
 62 in this case."

63 Such a position made a debate not only on homosexuality but on
 64 sexuality in general inevitable. For its part, the Standing Commission on
 65 Health and Human Affairs sought to encourage and inform the discussion in
 66 both areas. (This Commission, made up of members from both Houses, is an
 67 Interim Body of General Convention. The reports and recommendations of
 68 Interim Bodies have no standing unless or until they are adopted by the
 69 Convention. The Commission's reports are cited in this review because they
 70 are representative of some of the perspectives in the discussion.) In its report
 71 to the 1988 Convention, the Commission cited significant changes in society
 72 as one reason for the need to review sexual standards. It reaffirmed marriage
 73 as the standard or norm in which human sexuality is to be shared and at the
 74 same time acknowledged disagreement in its ranks as to whether sexual
 75 intimacy in any other relationship can be called "moral." It noted that "the
 76 majority of our Church is committed to an attempt to call the society to the
 77 traditional sexual standards. A significant minority, however, of this Church
 78 is convinced that the time has come to begin a process that will enable
 79 Christians to think through new moral and sexual options in the light of new
 80 realities."

81 With respect to homosexuality, however, the report specifically avoided
 82 making any legislative recommendations. Instead, it confessed to the
 83 complexity and lack of clarity of the issue and suggested that a greater
 84 measure of openness and understanding were required before the Church could
 85 confidently make any ultimate moral judgments. The Commission urged the
 86 Church to create a context in which it could listen to homosexual persons tell
 87 their stories and in which they would feel comfortable in doing so. It
 88 observed that although many heterosexual Christians say, when speaking of

89 homosexuals, we must "hate the sin and love the sinner," homosexual
 90 Christians almost consistently report feelings of being hated rather than loved
 91 by their fellow Episcopalians.

92

93 Finally, 52 bishops at the 1988 General Convention signed a copy of
 94 a statement from the 1987 Synod of the Church of England and asked that it
 95 be included in the Convention Journal. The statement read, in part:

96

97 This Synod [of the Church of England] affirms the
 98 biblical and traditional teaching on chastity and fidelity in
 99 personal relationships is a response to and expression of God's
 100 love for each of us, and in particular affirms:

101

- 102 1. that sexual intercourse is an act of total commitment which
 103 belongs properly within a permanent marriage relationship;
- 104 2. that fornication and adultery are sins against this ideal, and
 105 are to be met by a call to repentance and the exercise of
 106 compassion;
- 107 3. that homosexual acts also fall short of this ideal, and are
 108 likewise to be met by a call to repentance and the exercise of
 109 compassion.
- 110 4. that all Christians are called to be exemplary in all spheres of
 111 morality, including sexual morality, and that holiness of life
 112 is particularly required for Christian leaders.

113

117 **Authority and Collegiality**

118 Believing that the 1979 and 1988 resolutions regarding the
 119 "inappropriateness" of ordaining noncelibate homosexuals to be
 120 recommendatory in nature and therefore lacking canonical authority, the Rt.
 121 Rev. John S. Spong, with the consent of the Standing Committee of the
 122 Diocese of Newark, and after written notification to the Presiding Bishop and
 123 the House of Bishops, ordained the Rev. Robert Williams, "a homosexual
 124 person living in a public, avowed relationship with a person of the same sex"
 125 to the priesthood in 1990. Following this ordination, the Presiding Bishop and
 126 his Council of Advice reaffirmed the content of the 1979 resolution of the
 127 General Convention declaring the ordination of "a practicing homosexual or
 128 any other person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage"
 129 to be inappropriate. This statement was then reaffirmed by the House of
 130 Bishops meeting in Washington, DC, in September of 1990.

131 The main focus of the statement, however, was the authority of the
 132 General Convention resolutions and the accountability of bishops within the
 133 Church. The conflict over sexuality had now also become an issue of
 134 authority and collegiality. Those affirming the statement voted to disassociate
 135 themselves, not from the gay and lesbian members of the Church, but from the
 136 actions of the Standing Committee and the Bishop of Newark in carrying out
 137 this ordination contrary to the stated mind of the Church.

138 In an attempt to provide healing and some measure of reconciliation in
 139 the wake of these events, the House of Bishops, still meeting in Washington,
 140 DC, released a statement calling the Episcopal Church to dialogue and
 141 patience. The bishops once again acknowledged their division on the issues
 142 and urged the Church to respond to the call of the 1988 General Convention
 143 to disciplined dialogue. "We call on you," they wrote, "to share our
 144 recognition of the inherent faithlessness of a closed mind, one that blocks God
 145 from illuminating old truths in a fresh way, from calling us to new
 146 understandings or from leading us into new ways of thinking."

147

148 **The 70th General Convention, 1991**

149 Two other highly publicized ordinations of noncelibate homosexuals
 150 (in the Diocese of Washington and the Diocese of Newark), and a number of
 151 other such ordinations carried out with less publicity, escalated the concerns
 152 or hopes of many throughout the Episcopal Church in 1991. It was in this
 153 climate that the bishops and deputies gathered for the 70th General Convention
 154 in Phoenix during the summer of 1991. In preparation for that meeting, the
 155 Commission on Human Affairs had submitted its report summarizing the
 156 results of diocesan dialogues to date and making recommendations based upon
 157 the Commission's own study of these issues. Although this commission report
 158 was never approved, many of the issues it raised are pertinent to an
 159 understanding of the ongoing debate.

160 In its report, the Commission noted that only 28 of the 99 dioceses had
 161 submitted reports on the commended dialogue during the triennium, leading
 162 to the conclusion that fewer than half the dioceses complied with the
 163 recommendation of the General Convention. It noted that no strong consensus
 164 had emerged in the dialogues, although there was considerable agreement on
 165 the need for the Church to provide leadership in this area. Turning to its own
 166 deliberations, the Commission agreed that while sexual desire can often be
 167 misused, the Church needs to emphasize the positive aspects of the fact that
 168 we are sexual beings. It agreed that sex is rightly used in Christian marriage
 169 and rejected sexual exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. It agreed
 170 that homosexual orientation is not culpable or inconsistent with being a
 171 Christian and opposed the argument that genuine conversion for gays always
 172 involves a transformation to a heterosexual orientation. It agreed that human
 173 beings are not meant to be alone "and that homosexual relationships often

174 provide such comfort and support and exhibit commendable love and
 175 commitment." It agreed that homophobia (the irrational fear of homosexuals)
 176 is widespread in both our culture and the Church and should be rooted out.
 177 It reaffirmed the 1985 Convention's call for dialogue to better understand
 178 homosexual persons and dispel myths about homosexuality.

179 Finally, a majority of the Commission made two recommendations:
 180 "That the Standing Liturgical Commission study the theological and liturgical
 181 issues involved in affirming and blessing these covenants of gay and lesbian
 182 persons and begin the process of developing liturgical forms for them."³

183 Further, a majority of the Commission recommended, "That the Church
 184 acknowledge that it has for centuries ordained gay men and has in recent years
 185 ordained lesbians from whose ministries it has benefited, and that some of
 186 these persons have been and are sexually active" and

187
 188 [T]hat the Church be open to ordaining gay men and
 189 lesbians otherwise qualified who display the same integrity in
 190 their sexual relationships which we ask of our heterosexual
 191 ordinands. We recommend this because we consider the
 192 opening of the ordination process to gays and lesbians a matter
 193 of justice when justice should no longer be denied. . . .
 194 Explicitly opening the ordination process in this way is
 195 desirable to clear the Church of the taint of hypocrisy, since the
 196 presence of gay men and lesbians among the clergy is no secret.
 197 It may also be necessary if the Church is to counteract the
 198 irrational fear and hatred of gay men and lesbians rampant in
 199 our society; we cannot effectively advocate civil rights for gay
 200 men and lesbians in society at large if we appear to deny such
 201 rights within our fellowship.
 202

203 Beyond these recommendations, the Commission reiterated the need for
 204 dialogue and the need for the Church to continue to inform itself on gay and
 205 lesbian issues.

206

207 **Summary**

208 After this review, one may still ask where the Episcopal Church stands
209 on the two issues around which most of the debate has centered, namely, the
210 blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of noncelibate homosexuals.

211 In 1976, the General Convention affirmed the "equal claim of gay
212 persons with all others to the care and pastoral concern of the Church." The
213 House of Bishops, however, meeting in Port St. Lucie the following year,
214 accepted a report declaring that neither blessing same-sex unions nor the
215 ordination of noncelibate homosexual persons was appropriate. The 1979
216 Convention reaffirmed the Church's traditional teaching on marriage and
217 sexual chastity and passed a resolution declaring the "inappropriateness" of
218 ordaining noncelibate homosexuals. That resolution was ultimately dissented
219 from by 29 bishops, and some bishops have acted contrary to it, taking it to
220 be purely recommendatory and otherwise lacking the force of canon. Even in
221 the face of these ordinations, the Church has never clarified the authority of
222 that resolution.

223

224

225 **The 70th General Convention**

226 The last several Conventions have called for dialogue on the whole
227 issue of sexuality, with the 70th Convention specifically acknowledging a
228 discontinuity between the Church's teaching and the experience of many of its
229 members. The 70th Convention also directed the House of Bishops to prepare
230 a Pastoral Study Document on the matter, the aim of which would be to
231 promote dialogue and provide direction. This document was to be produced
232 prior to the 71st Convention in 1994.

233 The action of the 70th General Convention in Phoenix was an attempt
234 to give a pastoral response to the issues and questions that had been raised.
235 The Convention's action reflected that the Judeo-Christian understanding of
236 humankind's relationship with God cannot be neatly packaged and easily
237 handed on, but that understanding develops through prayer, Scripture study,
238 worship, life in a community, mission, and in confrontation with the realities
239 of history. Such realities of history include the many critical questions Church
240 and synagogue have had to face at other historical crossroads. In reality,
241 theology is generally done in response to questions raised either inside or
242 outside the community of believers that come to challenge the current
243 understanding of the faith.

244 The Jerusalem Church early faced the issue of whether and how to
245 overcome the religious barrier between Jew and Gentile (non-Jew) so that the
246 latter might be admitted to the Christian community without first being
247 circumcised. Instead, by requiring abstention from sexual immorality and
248 enforcing rules concerning food and its preparation in order to enable Jews
249 and Gentiles to sit at the table and share a meal together, the early Church

250 created an identity for itself which was neither Jew nor Gentile but Christian,
251 an identity which called people together rather than separating them. This was
252 an accommodation on both sides for the sake of community.

253 The critical questioning of history tests the limits of understanding.
254 Galileo's and then Darwin's theories forced the Church to review and revise
255 the theological understanding of their time about the nature of the world.
256 They required serious and painful adjustments which in some ways we are still
257 working through. Today's questions are also often painful and raise issues
258 with which the Church would rather not deal. Many today would rather not
259 face the challenge to the Church's traditional interpretation of Scripture raised
260 by questions about human sexuality. Some would even say these are not
261 legitimate questions. What is clear is that challenges are not new, that the
262 function of theology is to grapple with such challenges, and that the questions
263 being asked of the Church today, like some of those of yesterday, may result
264 in new insights and a deeper and more comprehending faith.

265 So, the questions raised by history present challenges and challenges
266 require a response. In Phoenix, the General Convention responded in a
267 thoroughly Anglican way. A clearly received principle from deep within the
268 tradition was affirmed. The historical challenge to that principle was
269 acknowledged. And a pastoral response was formulated--Resolution A104sa
270 concerning human sexuality:

271
272 *Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the
273 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirms that
274 the teaching of the Episcopal Church is that physical sexual
275 expression is appropriate only within the lifelong monogamous
276 "union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind intended
277 by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given
278 one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God's
279 will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the
280 knowledge and love of the Lord" as set forth in the Book of
281 Common Prayer; and be it further

282
283 *Resolved*, That this Church continue to work to reconcile
284 the discontinuity between this teaching and the experience of
285 many members of this body; and be it further

286
287 *Resolved*, That this General Convention confesses our
288 failure to lead and to resolve this discontinuity through
289 legislative efforts based upon resolutions directed at singular
290 and various aspects of these issues; and be it further

291
292 *Resolved*, That this General Convention commissions the
293 Bishops and members of each Diocesan Deputation to initiate

a means for all congregations in their jurisdiction to enter into dialogue and deepen their understanding of these complex issues; and further this General Convention directs the President of each Province to appoint one Bishop, one lay deputy, and one clerical deputy in that Province to facilitate the process, to receive reports from the dioceses at each meeting of their Provincial Synod and report to the 71st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention directs the House of Bishops to prepare a Pastoral Study Document prior to the 71st General Convention using learnings from the diocesan and provincial processes and calling upon such insight as is necessary from theologians, theological ethicists, social scientists, and gay and lesbian persons; and that three lay persons and three members of the clergy from the House of Deputies, appointed by the President of the House of Deputies, be included in the preparation of the Pastoral Study Document.

The resolution thus affirmed the principle that "the teaching of the Episcopal Church is that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong, monogamous union [of marriage] as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer." In the context of Bible study, Eucharist, prayer, and sometimes painfully honest debate, the majority of bishops and deputies clearly upheld that this Prayer Book teaching is part of the received Judeo-Christian tradition of the Church.

These same bishops and deputies also recognized the historical reality-- "the discontinuity between this teaching and the experience of many members [of the Church]"--that the way some followers of Jesus live constitutes a challenge to the traditional teaching. The Convention declared its resolve to "continue to work to reconcile" this discontinuity. It must be said here that taking time to reconcile the discontinuity of practice with the teachings of sacred Scripture and the received tradition of the Church is not new. Christians have yet to reconcile and resolve the conflict that exists between the clear ethical teaching of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel and the practice of most of us concerning, for instance, war ("Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"), or the pursuit of wealth ("Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and woodworms destroy them and thieves break in and steal").

Members of the Church seem to live rather comfortably with the discontinuity of our material wealth--having a choice about tonight's dinner, having access to an automobile or public transportation, having more than one pair of shoes or a change of underwear--and the way 90% of the people in this world live. We expect interest on our savings accounts and our investments,

338 despite the scriptural prohibitions respecting money and interest.

339 And perhaps the most obvious discontinuity we currently live with in
340 the area of sexual relationships is the practice of divorce and remarriage which
341 stands in the face of Jesus's explicit prohibition against both the dissolution of
342 and the contracting of subsequent marriages found in the synoptic gospels, in
343 particular, Mark 10:2-9. As a Church, we believe addressing the latter
344 discontinuity, for instance, in the manner in which we have, on balance, has
345 resulted in a more faithful Church, given all the factors that may be involved.
346 (Data from those who participated in the dialogues on human sexuality
347 generated by Resolution A104sa of the 1991 General Convention indicate that
348 among 15,342 respondents, 8.5% are divorced and 13% are divorced and
349 remarried.) In the case of other of the discontinuities cited, instead of honestly
350 struggling to resolve them, we have forgotten that they are discontinuities with
351 Scripture at all. Just as sustaining challenges to current understandings of the
352 faith is not novel and not necessarily a bad thing, neither is struggling with
353 discontinuity novel or without value.

354 While pledging itself to reconciliation of the discontinuity between the
355 Church's traditional teaching on marriage and the experience of many of its
356 members, the Convention recognized that legislation is not the appropriate
357 way to deal with issues of human intimacy and that therefore it must
358 acknowledge its inability "to lead and to resolve this discontinuity through
359 legislative efforts based upon resolutions directed at singular and various
360 aspects of these issues." The gospel, the Convention thus said, cannot be lived
361 by law. If it is to become alive, it must first be lived with human
362 responsibility and divine empowerment. So, having affirmed the principle (the
363 received tradition), having recognized the practice (the experience of many
364 members), the Convention then considered what the pastoral response should
365 be.

366 Finally, the resolution commissioned each Bishop and members of each
367 diocesan deputation "to initiate a means for all congregations to enter into
368 dialogue and deepen their understanding of these complex issues" and directed
369 the House of Bishops "to prepare a Pastoral Study Document prior to the 71st
370 General Convention using the learnings from the diocesan and provincial
371 processes and calling upon such insight as is necessary from theologians,
372 theological ethicists, social scientists, and gay and lesbian persons."

373 Clearly, it was felt that the Church needed more time to be able to
374 speak the truth in love, recognizing that for many, if not for most, change will
375 not be possible unless they see how Scripture and tradition can be faithfully
376 interpreted to support a new position. The resolution admitted that we needed
377 time to make honest witness and testimony to one another and to trust that, in
378 the context of prayer and mission, the Holy Spirit would lead the Church to
379 the right place. Since the Church is basically a community of witness, it
380 seemed necessary to take the risk of allowing people to tell their stories. Such
381 stories need to be told in the context of "baptismal discourse," where

382 Christians gather to speak to one another about the implications of the
383 Baptismal Covenant. This process must begin with prayerful consideration of
384 the Baptismal Creed and the five promises contained in the Baptismal
385 Covenant (BCP, pp. 304-305), one of which is a promise to "strive for justice
386 and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

387 Baptismal discourse confronts compromises that suggest that Christians
388 have to live "in the real world." Baptismal discourse lifts up how Christians
389 have chosen to perceive reality and affirms that the "really real world" has
390 been disclosed in Jesus Christ. Reality is what God is doing in Jesus Christ,
391 and that reality has to do with living in community today in ways that preview
392 tomorrow's Kingdom of God.

393 "Let us dream of a Church," Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning said
394 at Phoenix, "that refuses to settle its disputes and divisions by legislation, that
395 refuses to accomplish with law what only the gospel can do." And former
396 Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Robert Runcie, speaking at the
397 concluding Convention Eucharist, invited the Episcopal Church to consider that
398 the Holy Spirit "leads us into all truth, as in everything else, through
399 relationship, by staying in discourse with those whose views may appall us,
400 without rubbishing their spiritual integrity."

401 "The Spirit of Truth," he continued, "is also the Spirit of Love, the one
402 who rescues faith from being turned into the poison of bigotry. What I long
403 for in your Church and mine [is] that we shall presume our opponents'
404 reasoning has something to do with his or her desire to be loyal to the same
405 Christ we want to serve ourselves [and that] we shall recognize that what is
406 and is not a matter of fundamental loyalty to Christ cannot always be made
407 clear in a generation."

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¹A brief report on these dialogues will be found in the Appendix to this Pastoral Teaching.

¹ ²In fact, the ordinal for bishops enjoins them to be a wholesome example "for the entire
² flock of Christ" (BCP, p. 517); the ordinal for priests specifies "to your people" (BCP, p.
³ 532); it is only the ordinal for deacons that uses the form "to all people" (BCP, p. 544).
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¹ ³A minority report dissenting from the conclusions of the majority was also filed.

2

DIALOGUE IN COMMUNITY

.c3.Communion in Faith

Since the 70th General Convention in 1991, some in our Church have participated in the dialogues on human sexuality mandated by Resolution A104sa. From the perspective of proportionality, the number of participants (approximately 18,000) was not large, but it was very significant. The survey forms filled out by the participants, while not intended to be a plebiscite or referendum on these critical issues, will contribute substantially to the ongoing conversation on human sexuality in our faith community. It is our considered opinion that the dialogues should continue, for, at this time, these are not matters which can be settled by a poll or by voting resolutions.

The Church's greatest resource in addressing the complex issues are committed communities of Christians where concerns can be addressed in open dialogue, in a setting that feels secure. Our greatest resource then is tied to the strength of our communion with each other--a communion created and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

The realization of the truth of God's revelation came to the disciples as pure gift. On the night before his death, Jesus promised the disciples that he would intercede with the Father to send "another Paraclete" who would always remain with the community. Communion with God will come as a gift of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit will bear witness to the teaching and life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will "prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe" in Jesus (John 16:8). The Spirit of God will be the presence of God truthfully telling the disciples of Christ; it will be the revelation of God the Father and God the Son (John 14:17; 15:26, 27; 16:13). By the power of the Holy Spirit a communion of disciples is formed, a Church is founded that will describe itself historically as "the temple of God" (I Cor. 3:16), "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9), the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27).

These images of self-definition from the Apostolic period speak deeply of a holy communion with God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Anglicans understand that this communion (*koinonia*) determines theologically our relationship with one another in the Church. *Koinonia* is the property or state of having something or someone in common. What is said to be held in common is not specified by the word *koinonia*. If we are to talk about our communion with one another, we must therefore also be clear about what it is we have in common. For example, intimacy and friendship, of necessity,

are about something--they are rooted in something shared, something held in common. Knowing this, the author of the First Epistle of John writes to share his experience of Christ: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship [*koinonian*] with us; and our fellowship [*koinonia*] is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:3). In the same way, our communion is about having something in common, sharing something in friendship and intimacy--our faith in Jesus Christ.

Communion with God and one another is both gift and divine expectation for the Church. The Church is that community in the world which is already open to receiving the love of God and to being enfolded into the orbit of God's life. Awareness of this reality moves St. Paul to address the Corinthian community, the most divided of all communities in the early Church, in these words: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (I Cor 1:2).

In baptism, by the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, Christians die with Christ and rise to the new life. Thus the baptized are united to God, the Holy Trinity, and brought into a relationship of Holy Communion with all the baptized through the ages, the Communion of Saints. The Church's response to and experience of the gift of *koinonia*, holy communion, is in fact the matter of the spiritual life.

The experience of communion is at once personal and corporate and is linked to liturgy and mission. The daily discipline and practice of liturgical and private prayer, the nurture of biblical teaching and meditation, the celebration of word and sacrament, the shared life of love and pastoral care, a passion for justice and peace, are the essential elements of the spiritual life that provide the necessary environment for the people of God to experience *koinonia*, holy communion with God and one another in the Body of Christ.

The Baptismal Covenant

Sometimes controversies over difficult issues make it easy to forget the real depth of our communion in faith. Polarization can lead us to believe that those things which might divide us are greater than what unites us, the basis of our communion. Yet, as we read in our quote from John's First Epistle, our communion is rooted by faith in the proclamation of the mystery of Christ which also unites us into the *koinonia* of the Triune God. We find this basis of our communion within the Church clearly set forth in the baptismal covenant:

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

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Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy
Sprit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified,
died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the
right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the
dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Sprit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting.

*Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and
fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers:*

I will, with God's help.

*Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you
fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?*

I will, with God's help.

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

I will, with God's help.

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

I will, with God's help.

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

I will, with God's help.

88 Because of this faith covenant, we can believe that that which unites
89 us in communion is far greater than any issue or controversy over which our
90 membership has disagreement. We do not need to fall victim to the false

91 belief that true unity only exists where everyone agrees on everything. We are
 92 a diverse Church with a variety of perspectives and opinions. Such diversity
 93 can be advantageous as we wrestle with complex issues. Further, our ability
 94 to live with ambiguity without being driven to settle questions prematurely is
 95 not only a sign of maturity but is also a measure of our security in faith.
 96 These are strengths, not weaknesses. These strengths and our communion in
 97 one baptism are also the means by which we can, with the leading of the Holy
 98 Spirit, find solutions to the many concerns which confront the Church. This
 99 was most clearly stated in the report of the Section on Dogmatic and Pastoral
 100 Concerns of the Lambeth Conference of 1988:

101

102 Communion with Christ also means communion with
 103 all those who belong to Christ. Through the response of faith
 104 and of baptism, Christians enter a living Body, the Church, of
 105 persons committed to relationship with one another. In the
 106 New Testament the implications of this are spelt out
 107 realistically and concretely. It implies the task of the
 108 overcoming of divisions imposed by culture, whether of race,
 109 class or caste, or sexual discrimination (Gal. 3:28, "You are all
 110 one in Christ Jesus"). It means giving material help to those in
 111 need (Rom. 15:27). It means esteeming each and every
 112 believer for the gift which the Holy Spirit has bestowed, to be
 113 used for the benefit of the whole body (I Cor. 12:13-30). Thus
 114 the Gospel establishes as the normative pattern of the life of the
 115 community a relationship of interdependence, a mutuality
 116 between persons.

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118 As we move ahead in our ongoing dialogues on human sexuality let us hold
 119 fast to the communion we share. Seeking always to realize the fullest
 120 possibilities of the communion given to us in the one baptism we share, we
 121 will not allow disagreement about any issue that is not a central affirmation of
 122 our Christian faith to disrupt our communion.

123 Having such a rule of faith means our communities are built on the
 124 strongest foundation. Having such a rule of faith means dialogues which take
 125 place in such communities will be open and honest--and the participants will
 126 have a sense of security. It is in such settings that the Holy Spirit can lead.

3

THE BIBLE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

The Bible is a collection of sacred scriptures composed over a 1200-year period. It is made up of a variety of types of writings. Much of it is in stories, reflections on human circumstances and conditions in which God is frequently seen to be directly or indirectly involved. Often the voices heard in the Bible indicate that they are engaged in interpretation, seeking to understand and make relevant and pertinent for their time the traditions and experiences given to them.

These traditions are often about struggle--between order and chaos, freedom and slavery, justice and injustice, life and death. Amid suffering and evil, they tell of hope and the victories of the power of God's righteousness and love, especially in the resurrection of Jesus. Above all, the Bible is about God's love and concern for God's people.

While there have always been different emphases with regard to an understanding of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the catechism of the Book of Common Prayer (p. 853) states the essential Anglican and catholic view. Scriptures are called "the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible." On the one hand, the Bible is fully an historical book. An analogy can be made with the Incarnation. Jesus was fully a human being. "He had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect . . ." (Heb. 2:17). Yet we believe God was mysteriously and wondrously present in this circumscribed life. The Bible, then, is an historical book. Its viewpoint is regularly limited by the understandings and even prejudices of its time. And, we also believe, God spoke through these very circumstances and continues to speak to us today. We call Scriptures the Word of God because we may hear God's Spirit speaking to us through the Bible, but the Bible functions as a kind of icon, pointing its hearers through its words to the Word of God--to the Divine--revealed particularly as the eternal, incarnate, and risen Word of God.

.c3.Interpreting the Scriptures

Anglican and catholic theology has always understood the importance and the necessity of interpreting the Scriptures. Although some passages may or may seem to speak more directly than others, there is still the task of setting them within the larger context of the entire biblical drama and revelation. In this sense, no one passage or verse can tell the whole story or be interpreted in isolation. What gives the Bible its ultimacy is its overarching narrative

1 power for shaping our understanding of life and of God's purpose and
 2 character--its telling of how God's reign can be already present in a world
 3 which often seems inchoate and broken.

4 The tradition of the Church, together with human reason reflecting on
 5 experience, are the means of interpretation. Tradition is a word used several
 6 ways in the Church, with different levels of authority.¹ The Tradition (capital
 7 T) is the risen, living Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. The process of
 8 tradition is the natural mechanism through which the Spirit of God works in
 9 every place and in every age of the history of the Church, the process by
 10 which the faith is transmitted from generation to generation and from culture
 11 to culture. In recent years women and others, whose predecessors might at
 12 first not seem to have played that great a role in the Bible or tradition, have
 13 helped bring a hearing of other voices within the Bible and tradition. They
 14 have brought new perspectives and insights. The traditions (lower case and
 15 plural) of the Church are our fallible human attempts to express the living
 16 Tradition, in response to the urgings of the Holy Spirit in our faith community,
 17 in different times and places and cultures.

18 Reason has provided the means by which we express and communicate
 19 God's revelation. Reason is the divinely implanted faculty for receiving the
 20 divine revelation. Reason, however, is much more than logical analysis. It is
 21 best understood as prayerful, rational reflection on the Scriptures in the light
 22 of human experience and sound learning; it is also prayerful, rational reflection
 23 on human experience and sound learning in the light of the Scriptures. Reason
 24 is one means by which the Holy Spirit works to enable us to discern the mind
 25 and will of God in our day. Reason is not a distinct source of knowledge
 26 unrelated to the Scriptures, nor is reason infallible.

27 The Bible may regularly be used to critique tradition and reason, but
 28 it never can be heard without them. It is not a matter of whether we will use
 29 them to be part of the conversation with the Scriptures. They are always
 30 present. The important question is whether we will use them in a conscious,
 31 mature, and prayerful way.

32 The biblical writings were formed in communities. While individuals
 33 can read and study the Bible for themselves, and so be edified and spiritually
 34 nourished, it is through the hearing of and reflection upon the Bible in
 35 communities of faith that the Bible has its most important role in convicting,
 36 guiding, inspiring. The Spirit takes what is of Jesus, "declaring it to you,"
 37 and, indeed, brings deeper understanding of truth. (John 16:12-15)

38 The Scriptures themselves contain many voices and perspectives. It is
 39 often pointed out that the four Gospels give us a much richer view of Jesus
 40 because of their differences. This diversity is true of all of the Bible.
 41 Religious practices and even many beliefs vary and change from the time of
 42 a wandering desert tribe to the era of temple worship, through exile and return,
 43 with emphases on kingship, prophecy, priesthood, and wisdom teaching. Even
 44 in the New Testament, written over a much shorter period of time, we find
 45 that the church for whom the Gospel of John was written was quite different
 46 from those churches out of which the Gospel of Matthew emerged, and that

47 the church of Corinth was clearly quite different than the one to which the
48 Letter to the Hebrews was written.

49 What gives the Bible its unity throughout all these changes and
50 variations is its constantly recurring and passionate call to worship the one and
51 only God, the holy God who is both demanding of justice and righteousness
52 while full of compassion and mercy. This God calls the people of God to "be
53 holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2) The calling to follow
54 the ways of God and to know God's holiness comes for Christians to its
55 fullness through the life, death, and risen life of Jesus.

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57

58 Human Sexuality in the Scriptures

59 It is not, then, surprising that the biblical views about sexuality are
60 thoroughly enmeshed in cultural and historical circumstances and describe
61 some considerable diversity of practice. Polygamy, for example, is not only
62 known but at times presented as quite acceptable. Women and children are
63 virtually or actually treated as property in highly patriarchal cultures (although
64 patriarchy seems to be viewed as the result of sin in Genesis 3:16). Sexual
65 mores are governed or influenced by various taboos and concerns about ritual
66 purity which are believed to be important, sometimes for health reasons, and
67 also in order not to confuse lines of inheritance and the bloodlines of clan and
68 group. Procreation and the continuation of the people are, understandably,
69 important concerns.

70 Numerous biblical stories reveal a quite straightforward and realistic
71 view of sexuality. It is a powerful human drive which can lead to sin and
72 even disaster for individuals and the community. Although the view of
73 sexuality as bordering on the sinful, which came later to play a strong role in
74 some Christian traditions, is not a significant part of the Bible, there is
75 certainly the recognition that sexual practice needs to be restrained and
76 controlled to be beneficial. Sexuality is, therefore, always a matter of concern
77 for the community and never a matter just of individual choice or behavior or
78 of concern only to a man and a woman. In this context the nurture and right
79 upraising and teaching of children are a primary interest in which both mothers
80 and fathers are seen to have important roles.

81 From the beginning--from the early chapters of Genesis onward--there
82 is also a sense of mystery and awe that "male and female God created them."
83 (Gen.1:27) There is not only the marvel of being able to share in the process
84 of bringing new life to the world, but the wonder of the two who are different
85 joining together. Jesus speaks of this wonder when he says, "For this reason
86 a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two
87 shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh" (see Mark
88 10: 7-8 and Gen. 2:24).

89 Never viewed apart from human animality, sexual behavior also gains
90 a purposefulness and character which, with all else that is human, takes on a
91 potential for self-giving love and beauty. The Song of Songs celebrates its

erotic aspects, and there develops in the New Testament a strong sense of the sanctity of marriage and its solemnity and mutuality. Although not fully emergent from its patriarchal acculturation, the view of marriage and the Christian household found in the Letter to the Ephesians (5:21-6:4) describes both a tenderness and a self-giving love that shares in Christ's way of loving.

It is, however, Jesus himself who moves both the solemnity and mutuality of marriage to a new level in his teaching about divorce (see Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-9). He is clearly critical of the earlier biblical teaching. It is "because of your hardness of heart that Moses wrote this commandment . . . allowing a man to write a certificate of dismissal and divorce his wife" (see Deut. 24:1-4). Instead Jesus emphasized that the two became one flesh. "Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." Men, in other words, are not to divorce their wives, leaving them in many ways helpless in such male-dominated society. Whoever does this, Jesus said, commits adultery against his wife when he marries another woman, and also makes his former wife an adulteress, should she be forced to join herself to another man as the only way to find support and protection.

While it would be hard to weaken the solemnity with which Jesus evidently viewed the marriage covenant, Jesus elsewhere teaches about forgiveness and new beginnings. His remarkable (astounding for his time) acceptance of women into his company and ministry suggests that his prophetic attitude toward women and his concern with male indifference and cruelty were paramount in his teaching on divorce. Similarly his sharp saying, ". . . that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28), seems intended to challenge his male followers to control their sexuality and so not need to inhibit the lives of women in order to protect men from their own lusts.

The biblical books occasionally consider other forms of sexual behavior along with abstinence. Eunuchs, either from birth or due to castration, are heard of from time to time. Celibacy is recognized as a proper vocation for those called to it, strong friendships are exemplified, and a chaste life is held up for all. While adultery is the worse sin because of what it does to the marriage covenant and community, fornication is also disapproved of, especially when it is linked to a general kind of licentiousness often associated with the gentile world. It was seen to show a lack of seriousness about the community, about the vocation of marriage, and the care of progeny. Prostitution is known and particularly condemned in connection with false and idolatrous worship of other gods. A view of purity, on the other hand, is upheld--one which sees sexuality as good when it is used and enjoyed for the procreation of children, the benefit of the covenant of marriage, and the strengthening of the community.

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134

135 **Homosexuality in the Scriptures**

136 We now turn to seven specific passages in Scripture which refer to

137 homosexual practice. In doing so, we recognize the danger inherent in
138 isolating specific texts and acknowledge that we must look to the witness of
139 Scripture as a whole. We also acknowledge that there is significant
140 disagreement among us as to how scripture is to be used and interpreted as we
141 seek to apply it to this complex subject.

142

143 **Genesis 19:1-29**

144 Interpreters will disagree about the "sin of Sodom." Some hold that
145 the offense of Sodom is to be understood with specific reference to sexuality,
146 others that the offense centers on the theme of hospitality. But even if the
147 story centers on hospitality, there are those who contend that the
148 homosexuality issue clearly lies behind it and is not excluded by it. The force
149 of the word "know" (*yada*) cannot be overlooked so that the sexual element
150 is removed. The offense against hospitality is so starkly evil precisely because
151 it involves sexual behavior which is taken for granted to be wrong. The
152 violent aspect of the gang-rape of guests is the issue, and Lot attempts to
153 protect his guests by making the atrocious offer of his virgin daughters to the
154 men of Sodom. The parallel story in Judges 19-20 tells of a Levite who was
155 a guest in Gibeah. The men of the city wanted to have intercourse with him,
156 so his host offers his virgin daughter and his guest's concubine as substitutes.
157 The men of the city rape and kill the concubine. Chapter 20 recounts the
158 vengeance taken on the men of Gibeah for their actions. In both cases, the
159 proposed rape of the guest and the rape of the concubine is called vile--a "vile
160 thing" (19: 23, 24) and a "vile outrage" (20:6). We cannot claim it is this evil
161 or that: it clearly is both, with the sexual fault making more blatant the wrong
162 of inhospitality.

163 But many interpreters point out that the story of Sodom is of little help
164 in our contemporary discussion of homosexuality, since the moral debate today
165 revolves around lifelong, committed, and stable relationships between people
166 of the same sex. The intent of the men of Sodom to humiliate Lot's guests,
167 who were angels sent by God in the appearance of men, by gang-raping them
168 would presumably be condemned by everyone.

169 There are those who would argue that the "sin of Sodom" is not
170 specifically a sexual sin but a general disorder of society. Ezekiel 16:49-50
171 understands the evil of Sodom to be pride, greed, and neglect of the poor, as
172 does Isaiah 1:9-31. In Isaiah 3:9 the reference is to injustice, and in Jeremiah
173 23:14 the prophets have become like the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorra:
174 "they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evil
175 doers, so that no one turns from wickedness." Here as elsewhere,
176 homosexuality is not raised as an issue. Jesus, when referring to the
177 mistreatment of his own disciples, seems to stand in a line of interpretation
178 which views the sin of Sodom as inhospitality (Luke 10: 10-12; Matt. 10:14-
179 15; see Luke 17:29 and Matt. 11:23-24). However, while the disorder is a
180 general one, human sexuality is one of the specific manifestations of that
181 disorder and cannot be discounted.

182

183 **Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13**

184 The Holiness Code in Leviticus explicitly prohibits male homosexual
 185 intercourse: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an
 186 abomination" (Lev. 18:22). In Leviticus 20:10-16 the same act is listed as one
 187 of a series of sexual offenses--along with adultery, incest, and bestiality--that
 188 are punishable by death.

189 Some point out that these passages occur in a context of teaching about
 190 ritual and moral holiness, a number of which would not seem applicable to life
 191 today. Readers are told, for instance, that it is an abomination to sow fields
 192 with two kinds of seed or to put on a garment made of two different materials
 193 (Lev. 19:19). Menstruation is seen as a sickness, and if a man and a woman
 194 have intercourse during this period, both of them are to be cut off from the
 195 people (Lev. 20:18). A man maimed or deformed in any way cannot be
 196 ordained as a priest (21:18-21), and pork and seafood without fins and scales
 197 must not be eaten (Lev. 11:7, 10-11). There are those who remind us that
 198 although it is always good to pay close attention to wisdom from the past (and
 199 Christians continue to follow a number of teachings from the *torah* of the
 200 Hebrew Scriptures), many of the understandings of earlier peoples about
 201 purity, order, and sex having to do with property rights, are quite different
 202 from our own. When, led by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Peter turned from the
 203 exclusiveness of the Levitical code and accepted Gentiles into the Church, the
 204 message of Christianity took on new power and invitation.

205 Others put more weight on the authority of the moral codes of the
 206 Hebrew Scriptures. They point out that as Jesus criticized food laws but
 207 upheld the Ten Commandments, mainstream Christianity has always
 208 recognized the authority of the ethical commands of the Old Testament. Thus,
 209 the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion lay down that while Christians are not
 210 bound by the ceremonial, ritual, and civil laws of the Old Testament, no one
 211 is free from the commandments which are called "moral" (Article 7).

212 That part of Leviticus which has as its theme the necessity for Israel
 213 to be holy because the Lord who is in the midst of them is holy mixes together
 214 a wide variety of commands: dietary regulations or laws against occult
 215 practices appear alongside rules for honesty in commerce or injunctions to
 216 honor the elderly and to love as yourself even the foreigner who lives in your
 217 community. The fact is that the Old Testament does not make distinctions
 218 between moral goodness and ritual purity in the way the New Testament does.
 219 Yet portions of the Holiness Code were used in the catechetical instruction
 220 preserved in some Pauline epistles and in I Peter.

221 However, there are those who question not only the appropriateness of
 222 the ritual regulations of the Hebrew Scriptures for Christians but, since ritual
 223 and moral codes are woven into one fabric, they also question the application
 224 of some aspects of the moral code, e.g., punishing those guilty of incest,
 225 adultery, and homosexual acts by being put to death.

226 An anthropological argument for this biblical prohibition against
 227 homosexual activity has to do with ensuring offspring. This prohibition,
 228 especially for males, is based on the assumption among ancients that all
 229 potential human life is contained in the semen. In this view, the woman is

230 merely the receptacle. Where the viability and continuity of the tribe is at
 231 stake, any wasting of the semen--having sex with a menstruating woman,
 232 bestiality, masturbation, or homosexual activity--which precluded procreation
 233 is forbidden.

234 From a theological perspective, the climactic handiwork of God was in
 235 the creation of male and female "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27). God's
 236 command and blessing is, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Any
 237 activity on the part of males to thwart this command is seen as contrary to
 238 God's creative purposes.

239

240 Romans 1:18-32

241 The most significant passage is Romans 1: 18-32, in which Paul views
 242 male homosexual behavior--and perhaps female as well--as more evidence of
 243 the moral depravity which has befallen Gentiles as punishment for their
 244 idolatry. Paul's warning in this passage is not that wrongful practice leads to
 245 false worship, but that false worship leads to wrongful behavior. The main
 246 concern is with wrong worship, a concern central to the whole biblical witness.
 247 Worshipping any god other than the holy God of righteousness would lead
 248 people astray. As a result, "God gave them up to dishonorable passions."
 249 There are two meanings of the Greek word for "gave up" (*paredoken*). One
 250 translation is that "God abandoned them," i.e., God stood back and let the false
 251 worshippers have their own way. As a result, freedom is not grace at all but
 252 self-imposed bondage. The other translation for *paredoken* is "God delivered
 253 them over." The consequences, the "dishonorable passions," are imposed by
 254 God as a punishment. For Paul, the fundamental human sin is the refusal to
 255 honor God and give God thanks (1:21); consequently, God's wrath takes the
 256 form of letting human idolatry run its own self-destructive course.
 257 Homosexual behavior, then, is not a *provocation* of "the wrath of God" (Rom.
 258 1:18); rather, it is a *consequence* of God's decision either to "give up" on his
 259 rebellious creatures or to "hand them over" to their own passions.

260 But just as Paul has his readers reveling in indignation at the behavior
 261 of some, he reminds them of other kinds of wickedness, evil, covetousness,
 262 and malice. There is envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, gossip, slander,
 263 insolence, God-hating, haughtiness, boastfulness, rebelliousness toward parents,
 264 foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness, ruthlessness. And so, as the second
 265 chapter of Romans begins, he administers the final *coup de grace*: ". . . you
 266 have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing
 267 judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing
 268 the very same things." In fact, no one can boast. All are called to repentance.
 269 That is the point. "There is no one who is righteous, not even one" (Rom.
 270 3:10).

271 Some interpreters point out that Paul focuses on women exchanging
 272 natural intercourse for unnatural (the only reference to lesbian sexual behavior
 273 in the Bible), and men giving up natural intercourse with women (Rom. 1:26-
 274 27) because it is a particularly graphic image of the way in which the fallen

275 state of humanity distorts God's created order. God the creator made man and
 276 woman for each other, to cleave together, to be fruitful and multiply. In
 277 Paul's view, when human beings engage in homosexual activity they enact an
 278 outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality: the rejection of the
 279 Creator's design. They embody the spiritual condition of those who have
 280 "exchanged the truth about God for a lie."

281 Others, however, hold that Paul is talking here about heterosexuals
 282 who are committing homosexual acts. While it is unlikely that Paul knew of
 283 what we today call "homosexual or heterosexual orientation" (even the term
 284 "homosexual" was not coined until the nineteenth century), we must be careful
 285 not to minimize the main point of the text, which is God's judgment upon
 286 idolatry--and this extends to every area of human relationships.

287

288 I Corinthians 6:9 and I Timothy 1:10

289 The early Church did, in fact, consistently adopt the Old Testament's
 290 teaching on the matters of sexual morality and on homosexual acts in
 291 particular. In I Corinthians 6:9 and I Timothy 1:10, we find persons who
 292 commit homosexual acts in lists of persons who do things unacceptable to
 293 God.

294 In I Corinthians 6, Paul, exasperated with the Corinthians--some of
 295 whom apparently believe themselves to have entered a spiritually exalted state
 296 in which moral rules no longer apply--confronts them with a blunt rhetorical
 297 question: "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of
 298 God?" He then gives an illustrative list of the sorts of persons he means
 299 "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers"--and for the next two words we have no
 300 precise translation--"effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind" (KJV)
 301 or "sexual perverts" (RSV) or "male prostitutes, sodomites" (NRSV). The
 302 words in the Greek original are *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, and herein is the
 303 problem and the debate.

304 The word *malakoi* is not a technical term meaning "homosexuals," for
 305 no such term existed either in Greek or Hebrew, but it appears often in
 306 Hellenistic Greek as pejorative slang to describe the "passive" partners--often
 307 young boys--in homosexual activity. In the Greek and Roman cultures it was
 308 not unusual for men to have a same-sex partner, usually a youth or an
 309 effeminate person. The word *malakoi* means "soft." The man was not looked
 310 down upon as long as he was not the passive partner. There was abroad in
 311 first and second century society a tendency to regard women as weaker, less
 312 rational, and inferior to men. As Peter Brown points out, a man "had to learn
 313 to exclude from his character and from the poise and temper of his body all
 314 telltale traces of 'softness' that might betray in him the half-formed state of a
 315 woman."² Some suggest that what Paul was talking about in these passages
 316 is pederasty, a common practice in the culture of his day, and in all likelihood
 317 prevalent in Corinth.

318 The rarely used word *arsenokoitai* may refer to a male prostitute at the
 319 service of either sex. The Hebrew word *mishkav zakur*, "lying with a male,"

320 in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is translated in the Septuagint (Greek Old
 321 Testament) as *arsenos koiten*. Paul's use of the term presupposes and
 322 reaffirms the Holiness Code's condemnation of homosexual acts. Paul, as a
 323 Jew, may have found homosexuality particularly foreign because it was more
 324 widely known in the Hellenistic world and because it often involved
 325 prostitution and pederasty.

326

327 Mark 10: 6-8

328 Perhaps the most significant passage for our discussion is when Jesus
 329 addresses the fundamental meaning of sexuality by appealing to Genesis 1 and
 330 2: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'
 331 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his
 332 wife, and the two shall become one flesh'" (Mark 10:6-8). Thus, heterosexual
 333 love is the normative expression of sexual love according to the testimony of
 334 Scripture. Yet, Jesus' own celibate life witnesses to the fact that while
 335 intimate sexual relationship is a wonderful gift from God, it is, as Jesus is
 336 presented in the gospels, not necessary in order to be fully human.

337

338

339 For some Christians, the biblical verses cited above are heard in the
 340 context of the larger Christian teaching about the primacy of agape love and
 341 the radical, inclusive character of the Christian community. They remember
 342 Jesus' reaching out to those whom many religious people of the time had
 343 difficulty accepting. They know how the Bible has been used to exclude
 344 people. For others, these verses remain decisive against all homosexual
 345 practice, or at least they raise questions of such weight that they believe
 346 Christians should not affirm even the most committed gay and lesbian
 347 relationships. They are also concerned that the authority of the Bible, as they
 348 understand it, be upheld against interpretations based on contemporary mores
 349 and understandings.

350

351

352 Conclusion

353 Throughout the Bible, sexuality is seen as an important aspect of being
 354 human and of being the people of God. Faithful living is all of a piece, and
 355 all human relations are meant to find their deepest value in the context of their
 356 response to God's love. "We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
 357 Sexuality is never to be considered apart from the call to worship the holy
 358 God of justice and compassion and to respond in community with lives of
 359 sacrificial giving, peacemaking, mercy, fairness, honesty without hypocrisy,
 360 kindness, purity, generosity, and courage. Clearly Jesus has strong expectations
 361 that those who followed him in responding to the in-breaking of God's reign
 362 would lead such disciplined and obedient lives--lives that did not just follow
 363 natural impulses, but were to be characterized by gracefulness. His disciples

364 were and are to be a different kind of people.

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368 ¹P. C. Rodger and Lukas Visser, eds., *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*
369 (New York: Association Press, 1964), pp. 50-61; "Tradition and Traditions, *Faith and*
370 *Order Findings*, Faith and Order Paper No. 40 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing
371 House).

372

- ¹ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Man, Woman, and Sexual Renunciation in Early*
² *Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 11.

4

A TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE

It is our purpose in Chapter Four of this document to present the traditional teaching of the Episcopal Church on human sexuality and marriage. Since all Church doctrine must be rooted and grounded in Holy Scripture, we will seek to discern in the Bible the foundations of our understanding today. We will also examine the tradition of the Episcopal Church as it is embodied in the Declaration of Intention from Canon I.18(e) and the Exhortation at the beginning of the marriage liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer.

.c3.The Witness of Tradition

The present tradition of the Episcopal Church on human sexuality and marriage is our expression, in doctrine and worship, of the mind of Christ as we perceive it today from our understanding of Holy Scripture, from our understanding of earlier traditions of the Church, and in reasonable acceptance of the best scientific knowledge of our day. Within this process of tradition, Holy Scripture bears a special authority and status.

As we strive to interpret the Scriptures in our day, we need to take seriously the Church's various interpretations throughout history, with special attention to the early Church fathers, the creeds, and the ecumenical councils. We also need to understand both the historical context of the biblical writers and of our present cultural situation through which we perceive and experience what the Christian life of faith means. And when we study and interpret Scriptures we need to be aware of our current situation, contemporary experience, modern biblical and theological scholarship, and the revelations of God's truth in other disciplines of human inquiry.

The Scriptures, however, do not speak plainly or unconditionally about all matters. The traditions of the Church, therefore, also supplement the Scriptures. They are alive and, therefore, always changing. These traditions are not a separate or independent source of authority, but are a record of the various and changing interpretations of Scripture and the establishment of truth in areas with which the Scriptures do not deal, so long as they are not contrary to the Scriptures. Further, they include, for Anglicans, bishops' pastorals, the actions of General Conventions and Lambeth Conferences, the canons of the Church, Catechisms, and documents such as the Articles of Religion.

Further, it includes the various editions of the Book of Common Prayer

1 and the Church's authorized hymn books. All these are intended to inform us
 2 as we try to understand the Scriptures and to interpret their meaning for our
 3 day. But, of course, tradition is not self-evident and needs to be interpreted
 4 also. Further, while they too are always changing, traditions do provide us
 5 with the wisdom of the community over time and in continuity with the past.

6

7

8 **The Witness of Scripture**

9 The witness of the New Testament on human sexuality and marriage
 10 brings us the ideal of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual union as God's
 11 intention for the development of women and men as sexual persons. Any
 12 sexual activity outside of marriage, is seen as sinful. Holy Scripture also
 13 recognizes that God calls some to celibacy for particular vocation and service.

14 These boundaries point toward an understanding of holiness which is
 15 fundamental to the Church's teaching on marriage and human sexuality,
 16 though some traditional boundaries are being challenged by today's realities.
 17 The present teaching of the Episcopal Church on human sexuality and
 18 marriage is our expression, in doctrine and worship, of the mind of Christ as
 19 we perceive it today from our understanding of Holy Scripture, from earlier
 20 traditions of the Church, and in reasonable expression of the scientific
 21 knowledge of this day.

22 It is our faith as Christians that all truth comes from the one God.
 23 Facts discovered by reason are only one dimension of this truth, as science
 24 seeks to explain what happens and how it happens. By its nature, science
 25 cannot discover the meaning and purpose of life. The *facts* of human sexuality
 26 and how it functions are areas for scientific exploration. The *meaning* of our
 27 sexuality may be known only in our relationship with God, and most
 28 completely in our relationship with the self-revelation of God in Christ. The
 29 Church looks first to Holy Scripture for the standard of this revelation, then
 30 to the traditions which we have attempted to express in terms compatible with
 31 reason, logic, and the best scientific knowledge available. Scripture, reason,
 32 tradition: three ways by which truth comes to us, but all truth is one in God.

33

34 **A Story of Creation**

35 The first chapter of Genesis contains a creation story which in its
 36 present form is a product of sixth-century Judaism, the period of the
 37 Babylonian exile and return. It affirms the goodness of all creation, including
 38 human sexuality, which is emphasized in this account: "... it was very good."
 39 (Gen. 1:31) Other aspects of sexuality presented here include creation in the
 40 image of God, the simultaneous creation of female and male, and the divine
 41 command for men and women to use their reproductive powers to increase in
 42 numbers, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to dominate the rest of creation.

43 The image of God in which we are made is not here defined. We

44 assume it must mean other than physical similarity, and include powers of
 45 reflective and abstract thought and communication, the gift of freedom, and
 46 the moral responsibility it entails. Perhaps when we consider it in the light of
 47 Jesus' life and personality, the image of God may best be described as our
 48 capacity to know the love of God and to respond. Man and woman are
 49 created simultaneously in this image. Equality of the sexes is clearly implied,
 50 as well as complementarity. Female and male are of equal dignity. They are
 51 interdependent, for together they are a representative of the wholeness of the
 52 divine image. Here is the foundation for the emphasis upon the
 53 companionship of sexual union.

54 Having made them equal and interdependent, the Creator now
 55 commands the man and woman: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth
 56 and subdue it . . ." (Gen. 1:28a) Later we shall see that the command to
 57 procreate can be and was interpreted in ways destructive of human life and
 58 dignity and of earth's ecology. For now, however, let us explore the more
 59 positive aspects of the reproductive function of human sexuality.

60 Natural science has made clear to us the importance of sexual
 61 reproduction in the evolution of life on earth. Probably the Lord God could
 62 have created us in some other way. But the fact is that sexual reproduction
 63 is the way God has chosen to create all complex life-forms on earth. We are
 64 all creatures of sexual reproduction, both in our species and in our individual
 65 persons. Creation continues today, both on the biological and the personal
 66 level. The word "procreate" means literally "forth to create." Perhaps it is on
 67 the personal level that parents, through faith in God, can begin to appreciate
 68 the miracle in which they have been invited to participate. It is a miracle of
 69 the creation of a new human person. This is an experience both humbling and
 70 exalting, to hold a newborn child and to realize that only God can make such
 71 a wonderful being, but that God, through our sexuality, permits us to share in
 72 our Creator's act of creating. "Be fruitful and multiply . . ." It is a blessing.

73

74 **An Older Creation Story**

75 When a group of Pharisees asked Jesus his opinion on the Mosaic law
 76 permitting divorce, Jesus responded: "But from the beginning of creation,
 77 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his
 78 father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one
 79 flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has
 80 joined together let no one separate." (Mark 10:6-9) Jesus here quotes from
 81 the older of the biblical creation stories, found in the second and third chapters
 82 of Genesis. This account was written in its present form two or three centuries
 83 before the account in Genesis 1.

84 In this creation story, for the man [*adam*], "there was not found a
 85 helper as his partner." (Gen. 2:20b) So God takes a rib from *adam* and from
 86 it creates woman. The man then says, "This at last is bone of my bones and

87 flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman [*ishshah*], for out of Man
 88 [*ish*] this one was taken." (Gen. 2:23) Here *adam* is humankind, man in a
 89 generic sense which includes both female and male in one. From humankind
 90 the Lord draws forth the female [*ishshah*], leaving the male [*ish*]. In this is
 91 found the biblical foundation and meaning of human sexuality and marriage
 92 in the Jewish tradition: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and
 93 clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were
 94 both naked, and were not ashamed." (Gen. 2:24-25) Having been created
 95 from one flesh, in sexual union without shame woman and man again become
 96 one flesh. Companionship joins procreation as a God-given purpose for sexual
 97 intercourse. Marriage is endorsed by our Creator for the mutual re-creation of
 98 the wholeness of humankind, one flesh.

99 Realistically, the actual working of human sexuality in this world does
 100 not always reflect the goodness intended by our Creator. We live in a fallen
 101 world where sin distorts every part of God's creation, including our sexuality.
 102 Sexual abuse, exploitation, male dominance, rape, incest, pornography,
 103 prostitution, promiscuity, pedophilia--all are facts of life. The biblical
 104 explanation for these corruptions is called "evil imagination," the misuse of
 105 our God-given creativity to imagine and do that which is contrary to the will
 106 of God. Genesis expresses it this way: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of
 107 humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts
 108 of their hearts was only evil continually." (Gen. 6:5) The story of Genesis 3
 109 is a dramatization of this doctrine of evil imagination. Because humankind
 110 turns away from God, all of God's best gifts, including human sexuality, are
 111 corrupted. The pain of childbirth is attributed to the fall, yet woman's sexual
 112 desire continues to be for the man. The dominance of men over women is
 113 blamed on the fall: ". . . and he shall rule over you." (Gen. 3:16b) These
 114 twin biblical truths, the goodness of sexuality and of all God's creation, and
 115 the corruption of sexuality and of all God's creation, are both dealt with in
 116 many ways in Jewish and Christian traditions, in the Bible, and in history.

118 **Some Jewish Traditions**

119 Non-theological factors drove much of the development of the Jewish
 120 traditions of sexuality and marriage. The need for increase in population to
 121 compete with the neighboring nations made procreation far more important
 122 than companionship as a purpose for sexuality and marriage. In the early part
 123 of Israel's history, polygamy was accepted for those men able to afford more
 124 wives, so that they might produce more children. Slavery was accepted, and
 125 sexual relations between free men and female slaves were assumed and
 126 regulated. It was a male dominated society in which men alone had property
 127 rights, which included not only real property but extended to the lives and
 128 bodies of women and children as well. Divorce was a male prerogative, and
 129 female barrenness was a cause for divorce. Adultery, seduction, and rape were
 130 condemned as abrogations of the property rights of men.

131 The Song of Solomon is a folk song in praise of sexual love,
 132 celebrating youthful passion, with no reference to God or to marriage. Taking

133 the form of a dialogue between a young woman and a young man in love with
 134 each other, this book probably had its origins in the early influence of the
 135 fertility cults of their neighbors upon Jewish culture and was then assumed into
 136 annual Jewish festivals and so into the Bible. It affirms that sexual love is in
 137 itself good and beautiful.

138 Just the opposite tendency can be seen in the later Holiness Code in
 139 Leviticus (Lev. 17-26). Here the priests of Israel were struggling to
 140 differentiate themselves from the sexually promiscuous practices of Canaanite
 141 religion. Incest, adultery, homosexual relations, sexual relations with animals,
 142 child sacrifice, resorting to mediums and wizards, sexual relations during a
 143 woman's menstrual period, and many other "abominations" are prohibited
 144 because these are the things the Canaanites do, for, "You shall not do as they
 145 do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in
 146 the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you." (Lev. 18:3) For Christians,
 147 such practices must be judged not by their Canaanite connections, but by our
 148 understanding of the mind of Christ.

150 **Jesus and the New Covenant**

151 Jesus is not a reformer of Jewish sexual ethics. He is a revolutionary.
 152 His teaching calls for a radical cleansing of temple idols and a return to the
 153 foundations of God's intentions in creation. Jesus overturned the Mosaic
 154 divorce law, rejected men's prerogative to divorce at will, and asserted the will
 155 of the Creator: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male
 156 and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be
 157 joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'" (Mark 10:6-8a)
 158 Companionship seems far too weak a synonym for this doctrine of "one flesh,"
 159 the primary purpose intended by God for marriage and sexual union. The
 160 purpose of procreation, which predominated in both Jewish and Christian
 161 teaching, no longer stands alone.

162 Jesus rejects divorce absolutely. It may be a fact of life, but divorce
 163 can have no divine sanction in the teaching of Christ: "So they are no longer
 164 two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let no one
 165 separate." (Mark 10:8b-9) This teaching of Jesus is a call to radical new
 166 freedom in the reign of God. It is part of a new vision which had power to
 167 survive government persecutions and to prevail as the faith of the Empire.
 168 Elaine Pagels has observed, "By subordinating the obligation to procreate,
 169 rejecting divorce, and implicitly sanctioning monogamous relationships, Jesus
 170 reverses traditional priorities, declaring, in effect, that the other obligations,
 171 including marital ones, are now more important than procreation."¹

172 If applied legalistically, this could be harsh, puritanical, unloving,
 173 inhuman ethic. But Jesus never uses it that way. Think, for example, of his
 174 gently dealing with the woman caught in the act of adultery, and with the
 175 Samaritan woman at the well, who had been married to five husbands and was

176 living with one to whom she was not married. The Church, in producing the
 177 New Testament, remembered these as typical of Jesus always upholding the
 178 absolute standard of the will of God, while gently accepting people as they
 179 are. It is an example for the Church to follow in both ethical teaching and in
 180 pastoral application.

181 Jesus then offered an even more radical teaching, going beyond the
 182 Jewish tradition exalting marriage and family above all else. Jesus told his
 183 disciples, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it
 184 is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are
 185 eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who
 186 can." (Matt. 19:11-12) Jesus does not prohibit marriage, and marriage is
 187 certainly not an impediment to entering the kingdom of heaven. Marriage and
 188 family and sexuality are all good, all gifts of God.² Jesus' own human life
 189 is our supreme example of a holy single life dedicated totally to God. Nothing
 190 in the world can be more important than that hidden treasure, that pearl of
 191 great price, the reign of God.

192 Paul, in those letters generally attributed to his authorship, gives
 193 practical advice to Christians which generally follows Jesus' radical teaching.
 194 In Romans 1, Paul believes homosexual conduct is the defilement of the body
 195 that God gave him, a body that is in some sense stamped with God's image.
 196 Paul felt strongly about all types of sexual sin, but regarded the homosexual
 197 lifestyle as far worse than simple fornication. This is a crucial teaching on
 198 homosexual behavior and is the basis for much of the received tradition.
 199 Homosexual behavior is one sign of creation falling away from God's intention
 200 for it. In his first letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul advises, "A man does
 201 well not to marry." (1 Cor. 7:1b) It seems better to him that everyone should
 202 follow his example and devote all his time and energy to the mission of Christ.
 203 "But because there is so much immorality, every man should have his own
 204 wife, and every woman should have her own husband." (1 Cor. 7:2) He
 205 forbids divorce on the part of Christians, but if an unbelieving spouse wishes
 206 to leave a Christian, so be it. Marriage is upheld as honorable, but the
 207 kingdom always comes first. Therefore Paul teaches it is better not to marry,
 208 but it is also better to marry than to "burn with passion." (1 Cor. 7:9) This
 209 view was certainly conditioned by Paul's belief in the imminent Second
 210 Coming. In contrast to the radical teachings of Jesus and Paul, the letter to the
 211 Ephesians (Chapter 5) and the Pastoral Epistles return to extolling the virtues
 212 of the family, of companionship, and of procreation.

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 215

Post-Apostolic Developments

216 While the teachings of Jesus and Paul concerning marriage and thus
 217 human sexuality were in great measure shaped by their belief in the imminence
 218 of the Kingdom of God, later generations saw the matter in a different light.
 219 For example, when the persecution of Christians came to an end at the
 220 beginning of the fourth century, and with it a virtual close to the list of
 221 martyrs, a new situation presented itself. As greater and greater numbers of
 222 people presented themselves for baptism there was a gradual lowering of

223 Christian ideals and laxity in discipline that inevitably follows mass
 224 conversions.³ This lowering of Christian ideals brought forth a new hero to
 225 replace the martyr--the ascetic.

226 The rise of monasticism coincided with the increased secularization of
 227 the Church brought on by the end of persecution and the establishment of
 228 Christianity as the state religion. In this context the ascetic replaced the
 229 martyr as the hero who gave up all for the sake of the kingdom of God. At
 230 the top of the list of those things included in this spiritual martyrdom was the
 231 maintaining of virginity and the valorization of celibacy. Thus the list of
 232 virgins joined the list of martyrs as the heroes of the Church.

233 We see then the gradual movement toward the recognition of those
 234 leading lives without sexual activity as somehow living a higher or more
 235 perfect kind of Christian life. True asceticism meant living without sex. This
 236 asexual asceticism was eventually to have a major influence on the doctrine of
 237 Original Sin--the Fall. The scriptural basis for the development of the
 238 theology of Original Sin is found in the Pauline teaching that "sin came into
 239 the world through one man" so that "many died through the one man's
 240 trespass" (cf. Rom. 5:12-21).

241 This doctrine underwent further development in the late second century
 242 as the Church struggled against the dualistic heresies. But in the late fourth
 243 and early fifth centuries, under the influence of monastic asceticism, human
 244 sexual desire had become a primary focus of the Fall. While most writers on
 245 the subject believed that Adam and Eve had fallen from a kind of asexual
 246 "angelic" state to a lower material mode of living in the hierarchy of the
 247 created order, one theologian had a different view. Augustine of Hippo came
 248 to believe that, even without the Fall, Adam and Eve would have
 249 consummated their marriage and brought forth children. The result of the Fall
 250 for Augustine was not that men and women became sexual beings, but that
 251 "the uncontrollable elements in sexual desire revealed the working in the
 252 human person of a *concupiscentia carnis*, of a permanent flaw in the soul that
 253 tilted it irrevocably towards *the flesh*. . . . With Adam's Fall, the soul lost the
 254 ability to summon up all of itself, in an undivided act of will, to love and
 255 praise God in all created things."⁴ For Augustine, sexuality was a part of
 256 creation and not the mark of an imprisoned soul. At the same time, however,
 257 sexuality was forever flawed by the sin of Adam. Sexuality, therefore, "spoke,
 258 with terrible precision, of one single, decisive event within the soul. It echoed
 259 in the body the *unalterable consequence of mankind's first sin*."⁵ It is this
 260 view of sexuality that we in the Western Church have inherited and which still
 261 informs our thinking today.

262 However today we note with commendation the many Christians, both
 263 ordained and lay, who have taken vows of celibacy in order to better serve
 264 their callings as Christians. Many such persons serve with dignity and honor
 265 in our religious orders.

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The Teaching of the Book of Common Prayer

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The Declaration of Intention

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The Augustinian understanding of sexuality was institutionalized in the Church. The celibate, monastic vocation was considered a higher calling than marriage. Marriage, though, was still a good, as it served the ends of procreation and companionship while providing the remedy of sin. This is to say, marriage provided a context in which sexual desire, concupiscence, was properly restrained and served the human goods of the procreation of children and the companionship between husband and wife. This understanding of sexuality and marriage was first fully expressed in the Fourth Lateran Council of the Roman Catholic Church in 1214. It was, in turn, adopted in Anglicanism in the 1549 Prayer Book.

This understanding has since been modified. Title I, Canon 18, of the Episcopal Church requires that the priest shall ascertain that those to be married understand ". . . that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be lifelong." Before being married, the woman and man are required to sign the following declaration:

We, A.B. and C.D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.

We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body, and mind, is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

As we have seen, this tradition of sexuality and marriage is biblically based. It is especially grounded in the teaching of Jesus that marriage is a lifelong union. This Church has chosen to deal pastorally with those who divorce, but to be married, the intention must be lifelong union.

The canon declares that the purposes of marriage are companionship for mutual help, comfort, and joy; and for procreation and nurture of children, when God wills that the couple have children. This is the order of Genesis 2,

312 endorsed by Jesus. It is a reversal of those Jewish traditions which considered
 313 the marriage a failure if there were no sons, and of those Christian traditions
 314 that have tended to consider sexual joy to be sinful, and procreation to be the
 315 only legitimate purpose of sex.

316

317 **The Exhortation at a Marriage**

318 The tradition of the Episcopal Church on human sexuality and marriage
 319 is embodied in the Exhortation read by the Celebrant at the beginning of the
 320 liturgy. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman in a covenanted
 321 relationship established by God in creation. Although the equality of the
 322 woman and man is assumed, the "giving away" of the bride is still present as
 323 an option which may be used. (The first option, moreover, is a "presentation"
 324 in which both the bride and the groom may be presented for marriage.) Paul's
 325 teaching that the relationship between Christ and the Church is like that
 326 between bride and groom is cited to the honor of the marriage union.

327 Beginning the marriage service by reading the Exhortation to the
 328 congregation makes a definitive statement as to our understanding and teaching
 329 regarding marriage. The Exhortation is based upon Scripture of the Old and
 330 New Testaments and it is rooted in our tradition. Massey Shepherd, in his
 331 commentary on the 1928 Book of Common Prayer services, says:

332

333 The Exhortation is a solemn and emphatic
 334 pronouncement of the sacredness of marriage, both as a divine
 335 institution given to humanity at its creation (Genesis 2:18, 24;
 336 cf. Matthew 19:5) and as a society redeemed and hallowed by
 337 Christ to be a type of that perfect love He has for His Church
 338 (Ephesians. 5:22-23).

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340 As Marion Hatchett points out in his commentary on the 1979 Book of
 341 Common Prayer, the 1549 Book of Common Prayer's Exhortation lists three
 342 reasons for the institution of marriage: (1) for the procreation of children; (2)
 343 as a remedy against sin (to avoid fornication); and (3) for mutual society, help,
 344 and comfort. The American Prayer Books did not include these purposes of
 345 marriage until the revision of 1979, and it was not until 1949 that the purpose
 346 of marriage was stated in a Declaration of Intention. Although our present
 347 Prayer Book omits "to avoid fornication" as one of the purposes of marriage,
 348 it does include as God's purposes for marriage mutual joy, help, and comfort
 349 given to one another, and the procreation of children.

350 The 1549 and successive English and American Prayer Books state that
 351 marriage is honored or honorable. This elevates marriage to the same status
 352 as was held by celibacy in the sixteenth century. It should be noted that the
 353 milieu of the early Church assumed an imminent eschatological end. In this
 354 context, and along with a negative view of sexual intercourse, celibacy was

355 honored as an especially virtuous state, and marriage was somewhat of a
 356 concession for those who were burning with passion (1 Cor. 7:9). Clearly, the
 357 Book of Common Prayer holds up the covenant of marriage as a gift of God,
 358 intended to be entered into advisedly, reverently, deliberately, and in
 359 accordance with God's purposes.

360 Anglican thought no longer considers the procreation of children to be
 361 the sole purpose of sexual intercourse. As long ago as 1958, the Lambeth
 362 Conference stated:

363 [T]he procreation of children is not the only purpose of
 364 marriage. Husbands and wives owe to each other and to the
 365 depth and stability of their families the duty to express, in
 366 sexual intercourse, the love which they bear and mean to bear
 367 to each other. Sexual intercourse is not by any means the only
 368 language of earthly love, but it is, in its full and right use, the
 369 most intimate and the most revealing; it has the depth of
 370 communication signified by the Biblical word so often used for
 371 it, "knowledge"; it is a giving and receiving in the unity of two
 372 free spirits which is in itself good (within the marriage bond)
 373 and mediates good to those who share it. Therefore it is utterly
 374 wrong to urge that, unless children are specifically desired,
 375 sexual intercourse is of the nature of sin. It is also wrong to
 376 say that such intercourse ought not to be engaged in except
 377 with the willing intention to procreate children.⁶
 378

379 In fact, the one petition that may be omitted from the prayers in the marriage
 380 liturgy is, "Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children
 381 . . ." (BCP, p. 429). Apparently, the couple, even if not past child-bearing
 382 years, have some choice in the matter. The ready access to contraception in
 383 the twentieth century has made this choice a reality, and the Church in its
 384 official teachings has urged its members to make that choice responsibly. This
 385 is especially imperative in light of the growing crisis of overpopulation,
 386 particularly in the Third World, as it relates to the well-being of the family.

387 The words "one flesh" are not used in the Exhortation, but the idea is
 388 clearly stated: "The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is
 389 intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one
 390 another . . . and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and
 391 their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord." Christian marriage is
 392 clearly a covenanted relationship that includes not only the woman and man,
 393 but also God and the Church. This is not a private contract as might be drawn
 394 up by the individualistic secular culture in which we live. God has determined
 395 the nature of this institution, not we. Therefore the Church continues, in a
 396 changing secular world, to develop norms for life-long marital chastity and
 397 abstinence for the unmarried.

¹Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 16.

¹ ²This teaching is reflected in the attitudes of present-day members of the Church. More
² than 95% (over 14,000 persons) of those participating in the human sexuality discussion
³ questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Human Sexuality is a gift
⁴ from God and it is good."
⁵

¹ ³ J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church*, pp. 244-245.
²

¹ ⁴Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p.
² 418.
³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.
²

¹ ⁶*The Family Today* (1958), p. 13.

5

THE DISCONTINUITIES

The 70th General Convention in Resolution A104sa, while affirming the Church's traditional teaching, speaks of "the **discontinuity** between this teaching [the traditional teaching of the Church] and the experience of many members of this body."

Christian marriage, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God and the only context the Church has recognized as appropriate for sexual intercourse. As witnesses to this covenant and by promising to uphold the two persons in the marriage, the parish community makes its own covenant with them, locating both the ceremony and the marriage itself in the context of Christian community and ongoing support (in intent if not always in reality). But what of the large number of persons and couples whose experience and relational status put them outside this covenant and in the state of discontinuity referred to in Resolution A104sa? Should the Church's agenda be set entirely by Scripture and tradition? Some say "yes"; others think informed reason and experience also have a role to play.

In this chapter we will look at the experience of those who have received God's gift of sexuality but are outside the covenant of marriage and we will also examine some of the findings of those social and biological scientists and psychologists whose work has challenged the traditional stance of the Church with regard to human sexuality.

Adolescent Sexuality

Adolescence is a time of intense interest in sexuality and of emerging sexual feelings, a time of curiosity and excitement, of apprehension and fear. At this time of sexual exploration and activity, which is natural and expected, the Church teaches that abstinence before marriage is virtuous. Intercourse, however, among teenagers is a problem. If adults refuse to acknowledge the occurrence of this sexual behavior, they cannot teach healthy, responsible behavior and decision making. Disconnected from these realities, we leave our teenagers to deal with their sexuality, a central aspect of their lives, with too little guidance from the Church. How might we better help and teach our children?

In contrast to the experience of previous generations, a large number of American teenagers are now sexually active. Figures released early in 1992

1 by the Division of Adolescent and School Health of the Centers for Disease
2 Control show that 54% of high school students have had sexual intercourse.
3 Boys are more likely than girls to have had sex, 61% to 48%.¹ Other federal
4 findings indicate that the incidence of teenage pregnancy continues to rise. In
5 1989, 36.5 of every 1,000 girls ages 15 to 17 had a baby--up 8% from the
6 previous year.²

7 Such figures are not surprising when we consider the ways in which
8 young people are socialized to sexual activity in our society. Young boys are
9 pressured to "score" and young girls are pressured to comply. For boys,
10 sexual activity signals manhood. For girls, the defining event of womanhood
11 is menstruation. Girls do not need sexual intercourse to convince them that
12 they are women. While capable of powerful sexual arousal, they tend to be
13 less interested in intercourse than in closeness and tenderness--in being loved.
14 Girls have the most to lose as a result of pregnancy, but they are socialized to
15 accommodate themselves to male wishes and desires. They have also
16 traditionally been taught that they should preserve their virginity for their
17 husband, and so they find themselves caught in the discontinuity of our
18 society's mixed messages. Masturbation is also a phenomenon of sexual
19 activity, one which has sometimes been seen as taboo or been associated with
20 childhood sexual explorations, adolescence, and immaturity. Generally today
21 in society, masturbation is recognized as part of both adolescent and adult
22 sexuality. Unless it becomes compulsive, masturbation is not seen as
23 physically and mentally harmful, but as a normal aspect of sexuality.

24

25 According to a new study of 34,706 Minnesota students in grades 7
26 through 12, more than one in four boys and girls enter adolescence unsure of
27 their sexual identity, and by age 18, all but a few consider themselves either
28 heterosexual or homosexual. Our society, however, acculturates all youth to
29 presume they are heterosexual. Advertising, movies, romance novels, and
30 virtually all of our educational programs (secular and religious) presume
31 heterosexuality. For most of those adolescents who are homosexual, the
32 already difficult adolescent experience becomes a nightmare.³

33 Unless gay/lesbian teenagers are fortunate enough to be associated with
34 an unusually sensitive family, or school, Church, or community-center staff,
35 they are likely to be surrounded by evasion and silence and to be consumed
36 by inner and outer terror. Peer pressure leaves little space for anything but
37 conformity, and most of the gays and lesbians who successfully negotiate their
38 high-school years become expert at disguising their sexuality. For those who
39 do not hide their identity, school days are filled with dirty looks, catcalls, half-
40 whispered epithets, and cruel jokes, if not outright violence.⁴

41 Unfortunately, too many do not successfully negotiate these traumatic
42 years. A study of youth suicide released in 1989 by the U.S. Department of
43 Health and Human Services found that "gay youth are 2 or 3 times more likely
44 to attempt suicide than other young people. They may comprise up to 30%
45 of completed youth suicides."⁵ Too many gay and lesbian youth face physical
46 and verbal abuse and rejection from both peers and family. Having
47 internalized societal negativity about homosexuality and not yet having
48 sufficiently strong ego development and maturity to withstand the onslaught
49 of abuse, gay youth are especially vulnerable to simply giving up on life.

50 When everything you hear says that you are sick, bad, and wrong for being
51 who you are, you can come to believe it.

52 Some religious groups are prominent among those who depict
53 homosexuality as evil and sinful. Such religious beliefs may cause parents to
54 force gay and lesbian youth to leave home and/or feel wicked, condemned to
55 hell, and generally without hope. At present, many religious leaders are the
56 least likely persons to be turned to for help in this situation and may be the
57 least able to be truly helpful even if they are asked for assistance by youth
58 and/or parents.

59

60 Both adolescent sexual identity and activity are pastoral matters to be
61 addressed with compassion and informed concern. Through frank discussions,
62 unhealthy behavior can be made conscious, and thus subject to responsible
63 decision-making. In this way we help adolescents find the tools to make
64 appropriate decisions. Church leaders, lay and ordained, willing to foster and
65 facilitate such talk and learning within and among families and in youth and
66 young-adult groups can begin the process by providing a safe environment in
67 which young people can explore their sexual identities. Our challenge is
68 pastoral: to help all youth, whatever their sexual identity and behavior,
69 navigate the difficult journey from adolescence to adulthood.

70

71

72 **Pre- and Postmarital Sexuality, Cohabitation, and** 73 **Extramarital Sex**

74 While the age at which teenagers become sexually active is declining,
75 the average age for marriage is rising.

76

77 -- Among women in general, the median age for
78 first marriage in 1991 was 24.1--up from 20.8 in 1970.

79 -- Among men, the median age was 26.3 in 1991
80 compared with 23.2 in 1970.⁶

81

82 Moreover, the number of people who are not married is increasing. In 1989
83 there were approximately 40 million single persons over the age of 18 in the
84 United States, up from 21.4 million in 1970.⁷ *The Janus Report on Sexual*
85 *Behavior* (1993) reports that even among their respondents who classified
86 themselves as "very religious," 70% acknowledged that they had premarital
87 sexual experience. Among women who have never married, a 1992 survey
88 indicated that 23.7% are mothers, up from 15.1% in 1982, with a particularly
89 steep increase among educated and professional women (from 3.1% in 1982
90 to 8.3% in 1992).⁸

91 Census figures indicate that, as of 1989, there were 2,764,000

92 unmarried and unrelated opposite-sex couple households in the United States,
 93 as compared with 523,000 in 1970. Of these households, 858,000 contained
 94 children under 15 years of age (up from 196,000 in 1970).⁹ Most of these
 95 cohabiting couples had never married but some, of course, included divorced
 96 and widowed individuals. (Data from the human sexuality dialogues in our
 97 own Church indicate that 87% of those responding know persons of both sexes
 98 living together without marriage. More than 70% of respondents said it was
 99 possible to be a faithful Christian and live with someone of the opposite sex
 100 without marriage.) Within the post-marital population of the U.S. in 1989,
 101 there were 14.6 million divorced persons (up from 4.3 million in 1970) and
 102 13.8 million widowed persons (up from 11.8 million in 1970).¹⁰ These
 103 statistics seem to indicate that many in our society--divorced, widowed, old,
 104 young, inexperienced--enter into relationships seeking to achieve intimacy
 105 without sacrificing independence.

106 Surveys indicate that many older persons today continue to experience
 107 sexual intimacy, continue to find it an important part of their lives. While
 108 frequency of sexual activity tends to decline and arousal tends to need
 109 increased interpersonal stimulation, older persons questioned say that their
 110 ability to reach orgasm has diminished little with age. Research indicates that
 111 more study needs to be done with regard to sex and the elderly, but it is at
 112 least clear that older persons should not be criticized for continuing to have
 113 sexual needs and interests.¹¹

114

115 According to the National Opinion Research Center's General Social
 116 Survey, 71% of Americans believed in the early 1970s that extramarital sex
 117 was "always wrong." In the late 1980s, the percentage had increased to 76%.
 118 It is also the case that adultery appears in the criminal codes of many of the
 119 states, although these statutes are seldom, if ever, enforced.¹²

120 Apparently there is at least some discrepancy between belief and
 121 behavior, because affairs are not uncommon. A 1983 study found that 11%
 122 of husbands and 9% of wives reported at least one instance of extramarital sex
 123 in the previous year.¹³ And a 1990 survey indicated that 31% of married
 124 Americans had had or were currently having an affair. On average these
 125 lasted almost a year. Only 17% of the men and 10% of the women then in an
 126 affair intended to leave their spouses. Even fewer (9% of men and 6% of
 127 women) planned to marry their current lovers. Two thirds of the men and
 128 57% of the women said they didn't love their current lovers; "just a sexual
 129 fling," was said more often by men than women. Two thirds of the men and
 130 40% of the women reported having had more than one affair. The surveyors
 131 also concluded that, "Adultery in contemporary America is as likely to occur
 132 in Manhattan, Kansas, as it is in Manhattan, New York."¹⁴ Nevertheless, the
 133 Church and most of the population see it as still reasonable to expect fidelity
 134 within relationships once they are covenanted. Expectations about
 135 monogamous behavior, however, are best discussed openly rather than being

136 assumed silently. Honestly admitting that all sexual behavior does not take
 137 place within marriage can open up the possibility of discussions about
 138 expectations during premarital counseling sessions as well as during the course
 139 of marriage.

140

141 A generation ago, most Episcopalians probably believed the Church's
 142 teaching confining sexual activity to marriage was being faithfully followed
 143 by the majority of its members. Some still believe this to be the case, but
 144 many know that it is not so. (Too many sons and daughters are or have been
 145 involved in live-in relationships without the benefit of marriage.) In some
 146 parts of the country, the vast majority of people marrying in the Church have
 147 been living together long before the service or are accustomed to sexual
 148 intimacy even if they don't live together. It is increasingly common, in fact,
 149 to see references to premarital sex being included within the protective cover
 150 of a "stretched" covenant of marriage--it's all right, as long as there is an
 151 "intent" to marry. Of course, many unmarried persons, whether living together
 152 or alone, have no such intention.

153 The popularity of social arrangements does not make them acceptable,
 154 but given the large number of single and cohabiting persons (whether by
 155 choice or circumstance), the need to postpone marriage for education and
 156 economic reasons, and birth control that works when properly used, many
 157 think it exceedingly optimistic of the Church to expect its young adults to
 158 refrain from sexual activity. Many also see it as unrealistic to expect all older
 159 single persons, divorced persons, and widowed persons to refrain from sex.
 160 (Those who participated in our human sexuality dialogues were about evenly
 161 divided on the question whether single persons should abstain from genital
 162 sexual relations, with about half saying yes and half saying no.) And given
 163 the current fragility of marital relationships and high divorce rates, some argue
 164 that it is undesirable for the Church to pressure people into hasty marriages
 165 and remarriages in order for them to feel comfortable about being involved in
 166 responsible, intimate sexual relationships. Others continue to follow the
 167 teaching that under no circumstances may Church people be sexually active
 168 except within Holy Matrimony.

169

170

171

Adult Bisexuality and Homosexuality

172 The word "homosexuality" was first used in English in 1892; before
 173 that the terms used were "sexual inversion" or "sexual deviance." And not
 174 until the late 1940s, with the publication of Alfred Kinsey's 7-point scale, was
 175 there any general recognition among Americans of the complexity of sexuality.
 176 Based on his observations of sexual behavior and experience, Kinsey saw
 177 sexuality as a continuum rather than an either/or experience. He
 178 conceptualized a numerical scale ranging from exclusively heterosexual (to

179 which he assigned the number 0) to exclusively homosexual (to which he
 180 assigned the number 6). In between came: (1) predominantly heterosexual,
 181 but incidentally homosexual; (2) predominantly heterosexual, but more than
 182 incidentally homosexual; (3) equally heterosexual and homosexual; (4)
 183 predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual; and (5)
 184 predominantly homosexual and incidentally heterosexual.

185 As Kinsey's scale approaches the half-century mark, it is useful for its
 186 simplicity, but specialists have begun to see it as an oversimplification. Over
 187 the years a number of other variables and elements for measuring sexual
 188 orientation have supplemented Kinsey's original model. Important among
 189 these findings is the observation that sexual orientation may be dynamic, not
 190 static, and that people, through inner-directed processes, may change with
 191 respect to their sexual orientation over time.¹⁵ Sexuality is experienced
 192 differently by everyone and "may be as changeable and unpredictable as other
 193 human appetites."¹⁶

194 Along with asexuality, bisexuality encompasses the middle range of
 195 Kinsey's scale. There are probably relatively few people who fall exactly in
 196 the middle, being equally attracted to men and women, falling in love equally
 197 with men and women, and having an equal number of male and female
 198 partners. In truth, bisexuality covers a wide range of experience/attraction
 199 from almost exclusive heterosexuality or homosexuality to occasional behavior,
 200 and persons in prisons who act homosexually only because heterosexual
 201 partners are unavailable. The issue is complicated by the fact that many
 202 people who engage in sexual activity with both men and women think of
 203 themselves as either heterosexual or homosexual, rather than bisexual. And
 204 a bisexual may recognize the possibility of being sexually intimate with either
 205 males or females but choose to act upon only sexual impulses with either
 206 same-sex or opposite-sex partners--or neither. It seems likely that persons who
 207 are bisexual more easily than others will be able to change their sexual
 208 behaviors by acts of choice and will.

209 True bisexuals often feel discriminated against and misunderstood by
 210 both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Being truly in the middle is a painful
 211 place. One interpreter has said that bisexuals do not so much escape the
 212 gay/straight split as "manage it"--or attempt to manage it--without having a
 213 consistent social experience upon which to build a consistent social identity.¹⁷
 214 However, as bisexuals grow older they tend to focus more and more
 215 exclusively on one sex or the other.¹⁸

216 Recent studies indicate a high level of bisexuality among women. One
 217 estimator has said that "on the basis of same- and opposite-sex behavior in
 218 adulthood, approximately 15% of women are bisexual and less than 1%
 219 exclusively homosexual."¹⁹ It is possible, however, that pressure to marry
 220 may account for much of the heterosexual and bisexual behavior in the young
 221 adult lives of many lesbians. It is also possible that some of the dynamic
 222 nature of sexual orientation reported by some researchers and the element of

223 change over time is, in fact, an aspect of the fluidity in the middle range of the
 224 Kinsey scale. Current research simply cannot provide certainty about these
 225 matters.

226

227 Homosexuality is one expression of sexuality, and the homosexually
 228 oriented person is one who is consistently attracted affectionally, romantically,
 229 and erotically to persons of the same sex. Persistent patterns of homosexual
 230 attraction, enduring experience of intimacy, and continuing manifestations of
 231 devoted love are the most trustworthy signs of sexual orientation, not simply
 232 genital activity.²⁰

233 Contrary to popular belief, simply having homosexual fantasies,
 234 participating in oral and anal sex and/or having a homosexual encounter do
 235 not in and of themselves strongly suggest that one is homosexual.
 236 Heterosexuals may have both hetero- and homosexual fantasies and
 237 homosexuals may have both as well. Oral and anal sex are often associated
 238 with homosexuality, but, in fact, both are widespread practices among
 239 heterosexuals. It is also the case that the incidence of homosexual encounters
 240 on the part of heterosexuals is quite high.²¹

241 For both the heterosexual and homosexual person, the sexual aspect of
 242 one's being is only one portion of a complex identity and personality structure.
 243 Being primarily defined by their sexual orientation and behavior is distressing
 244 to most gays and lesbians, just as it would be for heterosexuals.

245

246 Determining the prevalence of homosexuality in the general population
 247 is very difficult, in part because of the complexity of determining who should
 248 be counted as homosexual. Should it be only those rating 4-6 on the Kinsey
 249 scale? Or should 2's and 3's be included? Furthermore, because of societal
 250 attitudes, vast numbers of gays and lesbians hide their identities from even
 251 those closest to them. (Contrary to popular stereotypes, homosexual persons
 252 are not easily distinguishable from heterosexuals.) How then does one
 253 determine the true prevalence of homosexuality?

254 In spite of the difficulties, various estimating efforts have been made.
 255 For many years it was estimated, based on early Kinsey research, that up to
 256 10% of the population may be homosexual. Given a population of 250 million
 257 in the United States, this means that upwards of 25 million people would fall
 258 into this category. Dr. Paul Gebhart, who continued Kinsey's work, suggested
 259 in the 1970s that a more likely estimate of the number of exclusively and
 260 predominantly homosexual persons would be in the range of 4% of adult males
 261 and 1-2% of adult women. Two surveys released in 1993 produced disparate
 262 results: *The Janus Report on Sexual Behavior* estimated that 9% of men and
 263 5% of women are homosexual, while the Alan Guttmacher Institute estimated
 264 1% for exclusively homosexual men.²² Existing surveys do not provide
 265 information about the extent of homosexuality among ethnic groups in the

266 United States. Also, in Central and South America, studies of actual sexual
 267 behavior, as distinct from officially recognized behavior, simply have not been
 268 made.

269 Casual homosexual contact and experimentation are not necessarily an
 270 indication of latent homosexual orientation, although these experiences often
 271 precipitate such fear. The estimates of incidental homosexual contact (one
 272 quarter to one third of all males having had one same-sex experience leading
 273 to orgasm since puberty) suggest one of the problematic areas of dealing
 274 frankly and honestly with the subject of homosexuality in our culture. It
 275 stands to reason that such anxieties will influence, if not compromise, reactions
 276 to suggestions that homosexuality be legitimized by the Church and by society.
 277 Of course, anxieties and fears faced and worked through with the help of
 278 priests, spiritual directors, and counselors can, in and of themselves, foster
 279 growth in self-understanding and be a channel of God's grace.

280

281 Homosexuality is found in all races, nationalities, ethnic groups and
 282 social classes, and in all periods of history from archaic civilizations to the
 283 present. But however universal and ancient the existence of homosexuality,
 284 it is also clear that the way in which sexual behaviors and orientations are
 285 lived out will not be the same in all cultures and moments in history. Sexual
 286 practices will not be the same, and the social forces that encourage or
 287 discourage them will not be the same. Anthropologists have shown us that
 288 many cultures around the world accept some form of homosexuality
 289 (transgenerational, transgenderal, or equalitarian), but the acceptance of one
 290 form does not imply the acceptance of other forms.²³

291 Attitudes about homosexuality have varied greatly at different places
 292 at different times. (Among those who participated in the human sexuality
 293 dialogues in our own Church, 80% agreed or strongly agreed that
 294 homosexuality is a genuine orientation for some people and 66% said that gay
 295 men and lesbian women can be faithful Christians.) Oppression and tolerance
 296 have waxed and waned over the centuries as a consequence of social and
 297 economic developments, class anxieties and pressures, gender stereotypes, and
 298 notions of unequal power relations, domination, and exploitation. Ancient
 299 Greece, for example, countenanced homosexual relationships between married
 300 men who functioned as mentors and postpubescent youths. Important to this
 301 relationship was the disparity in age and the fact that the youth was always the
 302 passive partner. In the late Middle Ages, however, homosexuality was
 303 increasingly suppressed, a trend which has been linked to two distinct but
 304 related sources: a "growing preoccupation with homosexuality" as "an indirect
 305 and unanticipated consequence of the efforts of Church reformers to establish
 306 sacerdotal celibacy" and a middle-class morality that "became increasingly
 307 forceful in its opposition to a life-style of luxury and excess as class divisions
 308 widened."²⁴ In the first instance, clerical celibacy and the all-male
 309 communities it produced made homosexual activity more attractive and

310 available. In the second instance, homosexuality had become identified with
 311 the wealthy and cultured classes. Historically, homosexuality has been deviant
 312 largely to the degree that society, at any given moment in time, has defined
 313 it as such--in other words, the status of homosexuality is historically and
 314 culturally conditioned.

315

316 Are homosexual persons born that way or are they the product of their
 317 environment or some combination of these factors? This vexing question,
 318 which is integral to our dialogue, remains unanswered at this writing, in spite
 319 of active research efforts in several fields, proliferating theories, and much
 320 interest from professionals and lay observers of all sexual orientations. In the
 321 physical sciences, researchers have explored hormonal links, differences in
 322 brain structure, and the possibility of a genetic component. The latter
 323 possibility has increased with the recent announcement that researchers have
 324 located the chromosomal area where they believe they will eventually isolate
 325 one or several genes that may predispose some men toward homosexuality.
 326 A recent study of the sexual orientation of twins suggests lesbianism also has
 327 a genetic basis.²⁵ Social scientists have offered explanations that include
 328 environmental factors and the role of social learning. Dr. John Money of
 329 Johns Hopkins University and others emphasize the interaction between
 330 biological and psycho-social factors. "Heterosexuality, homosexuality, and
 331 bisexuality," says Money, "all have both prenatal and later causes, which
 332 interact during critical periods of development to create a long-lasting or even
 333 immutable sexueroetic status." Money also points out that it is incorrect to
 334 view prenatal influence as biological and postnatal as nonbiological.
 335 "Influences that reach the brain through the senses during social
 336 communication and learning are just as much biological as those that reach the
 337 brain through hormones circulating in the bloodstream of a fetus." William
 338 Byne and Bruce Parsons propose another interactional model "in which genes
 339 or hormones do not specify sexual orientation per se, but instead bias
 340 particular personality traits and thereby influence the manner in which an
 341 individual and his or her environment interact as sexual orientation and other
 342 personality characteristics unfold developmentally."²⁶ Some contend that the
 343 experience of incest, sexual abuse, and rape are important determinants of
 344 homosexuality. To date there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the
 345 extent of this influence. It does seem clear that the experience of abuse affects
 346 the choices of some bisexuals and persons in the mid-range of the Kinsey
 347 scale.

348 The political stakes and anxiety levels are high with regard to this issue
 349 of "cause" both in the Church and in society. Polls show that Americans who
 350 say individuals cannot change their homosexuality are much more affirming
 351 and supportive of gays and lesbians. On the other hand, many would like
 352 some one thing, social force, or group to blame. Mothers and fathers are
 353 always handy scapegoats and all too frequently impose that unhelpful burden

on themselves. Many gays and lesbians report wanting desperately to understand "Why me?" at some stage of their coming to terms with the reality of their sexual orientation. Later in their journey, they frequently cease to care very much about how they got that way and focus instead on leading a happy, well-adjusted life and, for Christians, a life focused on relationships with God, partner, family, and the community at large. Often, members of the Church community in seeking "the cause" are really wanting "a cure." Might the Church's energy, instead, be focused on the persons who need to be loved, nurtured, cherished, accepted, and supported, including gays, lesbians and their families?

Regardless of one's sexual orientation, the development of sexual identity, while intense in adolescence, is a lifelong process. Even if one is "certain" of one's identity in early adulthood, it is not uncommon to make unexpected discoveries about oneself later in life. Gay men and lesbians often, even as young children, have a feeling of being different from their same-sex peers. They often feel like "outsiders" in relation to peers and even to family. Progress in self-discovery for some people is slowed or thwarted entirely by patterns of denial fostered and exacerbated by Church and societal negativity. Women may identify their same-sex feelings as "special friendships" and men as "normal" male bonding. "Feeling in love" is a common beginning point for the struggle with homosexual-identity issues. But, even if there are no such feelings, no actual change in sexual identity, the process of integration of identity for everyone goes on throughout adulthood. Often the process moves from a period of identity confusion through stages of increasing awareness, toleration, acceptance, and pride to a synthesis in which sexual orientation is seen as important but as only one aspect of the self. Self-disclosure becomes almost automatic as a greater security is felt in the identity, and interaction in the heterosexual world is experienced as generally rewarding.

In the best of situations, Christians will see this process as one aspect of their lifelong spiritual journey. Clergy and Church friends can play an important role in creating a safe environment and supporting gay/lesbian parishioners through this critical life passage. Sometimes the Church as institution and Church people are more hindrance than help. Making an effort to understand the process of identity formation is one step toward learning how to care pastorally for gays and lesbians.

390

391

392 **An Examination of Some Assumptions Concerning** 393 **Homosexuality**

394 **Assumption #1: Homosexuality is a choice.**

395 While there is not yet agreement on its cause, recent research does not

396 suggest that homosexuality is a **choice**. Dr. John Money puts it this way:
 397 "Despite popular assumptions, homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality
 398 are not preferences. Each is a sexueroetic orientation or status. They are no
 399 more chosen than a native language is."²⁷ "Choice" may enter the picture for
 400 bisexuals, who often attempt to choose either a heterosexual or a homosexual
 401 way of life.

402 It is very difficult, especially considering the particular way in which
 403 women have been socialized to accommodate themselves to family and societal
 404 expectations, to determine what really is "choice" and what is social
 405 conditioning. But women's sexual orientation seems to have a fluidity that
 406 leads some researchers to speculate that bisexuality may be more common
 407 among women than men and therefore more "choice" is available to women
 408 than to most men. At this point, there is no knowing if this is true.

409 It is frequently the case that homosexual persons feel social pressure
 410 (both internalized and externalized) to repress or deny their sexual feelings.
 411 This can be very harmful because repression tends to intensify feelings; it can
 412 also cause depression, disassociation, and other problems. Social and religious
 413 pressures are especially problematic if homosexuals are counseled or pressured
 414 into marriages that may eventually fail or continue amid much emotional pain,
 415 leaving human wreckage along the way.

416

417 **Assumption #2: Gays and lesbians are marginal members of society,**
 418 **both in numbers and contributions.**

419 Any subset of American population that accounts for anywhere from
 420 2.5 to 25 million people cannot be considered insignificant. (There are
 421 approximately 2.4 million Episcopalians in the United States.) Even though
 422 homosexual persons remain invisible for the most part, gays and lesbians are,
 423 in fact, everywhere. They may be your own child, your doctor, your lawyer,
 424 your psychologist, your carpenter, your electrician, your colleague at work.
 425 They are among the business people, teachers, social workers, nurses, and
 426 hospice volunteers of our communities. And they are in our churches--in the
 427 pew and in the pulpit. The business community is increasingly interested in
 428 homosexual couples as an important market--"double income, no kids"--
 429 although estimates of the number of children being raised by homosexual
 430 parents, the majority of whom are "invisible," range from 6 million to 14
 431 million.

432

433 **Assumption #3. Gays and lesbians are psychologically "sick."**

434 In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality
 435 from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders, its official
 436 list of mental illnesses. The American Psychological Association adopted a
 437 similar resolution in 1975. In addition, researchers have failed to discern any

demonstrable psychopathology in their homosexual samples, nor have they been able to differentiate homosexual from heterosexual subjects, suggesting that there is no greater pathology or tendency toward psychological maladjustment among homosexuals than heterosexuals. Other studies have found that adolescent gays, as we have already indicated, may be very vulnerable to suicide.²⁸ Finally, new studies show that children raised in gay and lesbian households are no more likely to have psychological problems than those raised in more conventional circumstances.²⁹ Even so, some Freudian-based theory still considers homosexuality immature, although Freud himself made it clear that homosexuals must not be treated as "sick" simply because of their homosexuality.³⁰

Assumption #4. Gays and lesbians are child molesters.

Numerically, far more child molesters are heterosexual than homosexual. Recent studies indicate that only 6.8% of those who molest male children are homosexual, while 38.6% are exclusively heterosexual, and 54.4% are bisexual. For those who molest female children the number who are homosexual is 2.6%, while 63.6% are exclusively heterosexual and 33.8% bisexual.³¹ Reliable studies indicate that most child molesters are married and that most victims are female children, although some men victimize both boys and girls. Pedophilia is a serious psychological disorder whose victims repeatedly molest prepubescent children because they are sexually attracted to children. Molesters, who are most frequently male, are sometimes attracted to adults as well as children but most often to children alone. Among other sexual exploiters are ephebophiles—those adults sexually attracted to postpubescent teenagers.

Assumption #5. Gays and lesbians are sexually hyperactive.

An investigation of sexual activity in lesbian, gay, heterosexual-cohabiting, and married couples published in 1983 found that for the first several years of a relationship gay men had sex with their primary partner more often than heterosexuals did, but later on male couples showed a reverse pattern of lower sexual frequency than heterosexuals. In all four groups frequency declines with the duration of the relationship, leading the investigators to conclude that both physical aging and habituation independently acted to reduce sexual frequency.³² There is evidence that "average sexual frequency is lower among lesbian couples than among gay male couples, heterosexual cohabiters, or married heterosexuals." Researchers trace this to traditional socialization that represses women's sexual expression (in lesbian couples both partners have been so socialized) and the fact that women place more emphasis on such non-genital sexual activities as hugging and cuddling.³³

480 It is also the case that single lesbians have less frequent sex and fewer
 481 different partners than gay men, at least prior to the AIDS crisis which has
 482 changed sexual patterns for gay men. Lesbians have about the same rates of
 483 non-monogamy in long-term relationships as do heterosexuals--28% report at
 484 least one extrarelational episode. Before the AIDS crisis, gay males had the
 485 highest rates of extrarelational sex and often did so by mutual agreement,
 486 minimizing the breakup of relationships.³⁴

487 It should also be noted that society contributes to patterns of
 488 homosexual behavior by driving it underground due to fear of discovery and
 489 the social sanctions that would result.

490

491 **Assumption #6. Gays are feminized men and lesbians masculine**
 492 **women.**

493 Scientists reject as too simplistic the equation that masculinity in a
 494 man and femininity in a woman equals heterosexuality and that the reverse
 495 equals homosexuality. It is sometimes the case that gender uneasiness or
 496 dissatisfaction occurs with a homosexual orientation but by no means always.
 497 A 1979 study of college students, for example, found no relationship between
 498 sexual orientation and masculinity or femininity.³⁵ There does seem to be a
 499 connection between early gender nonconformity (such as a boy preferring to
 500 play with dolls instead of engaging in rough, aggressive games) and the
 501 development of sexual orientation, but it is not a necessary determinant.³⁶

502 Stereotypes would have us believe that within homosexual relationships
 503 "butch-femme" roles, modeled on a heterosexual frame of reference, are
 504 widespread. There is some evidence that this was the case in an earlier era,
 505 at least for women. But current research suggests that lesbians and gays
 506 actively reject rigid conformity to traditional husband-wife roles. Instead,
 507 there tends to be a sharing of responsibilities, household tasks, and decision
 508 making. Specialization occurs, but it develops individually, according to skills
 509 and interests.³⁷

510

511 **Assumption #7. Gays and lesbians can be "reoriented" to**
 512 **heterosexuality.**

513 Freud grew to believe that it was as difficult to convert a "fully
 514 developed homosexual into a heterosexual" as to do the reverse."³⁸ Indeed
 515 there is no convincing evidence that homosexuals who are 5 and 6 on the
 516 Kinsey scale can be truly reoriented. Some are convinced, however, that with
 517 sufficient religious motivation, genuine shifts can and do take place. Some
 518 Christians involved in ministries such as Exodus and Regeneration have
 519 experienced such shifts in behavior and have given clear testimony to Church
 520 bodies on the subject. In the early 1970s psychiatrist Jerome Frank estimated

521 that somewhere between 10 and 20% of exclusively-homosexual persons "can
 522 be helped to shift significantly." He also estimated that for bisexuals, up to
 523 40% could become "essentially heterosexual." The absolutely essential
 524 element, he said, to any shift is a "high degree of motivation and
 525 cooperativeness." That the motivation is so crucial suggests that under no
 526 circumstances should anyone be coerced into treatment.³⁹

527 Clinical studies indicate, however, that such treatment may result in
 528 serious problems such as severe anxiety and depression due to the disruption
 529 of a lifelong process of sexual identity formation and from injury to the
 530 patient's self-esteem. Richard Isay of the Cornell Medical College and the
 531 Columbia Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research recommends
 532 analysis carried out with "appropriate neutrality" and "positive regard" for the
 533 client as a way to "ease the burden that society has imposed" and help the
 534 homosexual person resolve conflicts.⁴⁰

535

536 **Assumption #8. Gay men hate women and lesbians hate men.**

537 The vast majority of gay men have exceptionally good relationships
 538 with women, gay and heterosexual, and lesbians with both heterosexual and
 539 gay men. One of the outstanding characteristics of these relationships is the
 540 absence of sexual suggestion or innuendo. Often they are refreshingly
 541 ordinary relationships; sometimes deep friendships are involved and sometimes
 542 very comfortable brother/sister-like sharing becomes possible.

543 The relationships between gay men and heterosexual men are
 544 sometimes strained by sexual anxiety and psychological conflict. As
 545 mentioned above, the incidence of casual homosexual encounter is high for all
 546 men, especially among youth, and this fact makes uneasiness all the more a
 547 potential among adult males. The fact is that these relationships are probably
 548 no more sexualized than male/female relationships. And, fortunately, it is
 549 often not a factor at all, and fine, nonsexual friendships--personal and
 550 professional--are not uncommon for gay and heterosexual men. Lesbians and
 551 heterosexual women often seem to feel less anxiety relationally, probably
 552 because women are so highly motivated to make connections and to be related.

553

554

555 **Homosexual Relationships**

556 Since 1976, persons of homosexual orientation have been considered
 557 by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church to be "children of God
 558 who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love,
 559 acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church." At the same time,
 560 many in the Church are deeply troubled about open homosexual relationships,
 561 which are the visible expression of homosexuality. Single gays and lesbians,

562 for the most part, blend into the primary heterosexual culture and go about
 563 their sexually active or inactive lives in an unobserved manner, just as do the
 564 millions of single heterosexuals. Gays and lesbians who are openly coupled
 565 bear the burden of their visibility, acting as lightning rods and attracting the
 566 "electricity" of censure. This has put the Church in the position of advocating
 567 committed, long-term, monogamous relationships (i.e., marriage) and, in fact,
 568 seeing them as the only legitimate context for sexual expression--but
 569 exclusively for heterosexuals.

570 All people have a need for acceptance, approval, affiliation, and deep
 571 connection. Close relationships have been heralded in verse, song, literature
 572 of all kinds--including Holy Scripture--throughout human history. They are
 573 heralded as well by health professionals as being important to health and well-
 574 being. Dr. Blair Justice, a psychologist at the University of Texas School of
 575 Public Health in Houston, observes, "It may be more important to have at least
 576 one person with whom we can share open and honest thoughts and feelings
 577 than it is to have a whole network of more superficial relationships."⁴¹ As
 578 with all persons, homosexuals need and struggle toward a life of integrity,
 579 wholeness, companionship, and community--with little support from a culture
 580 caught up in the secular spirit of our times. For all baptized persons, the
 581 Church is called to be that support.

582

583 Like their heterosexual counterparts, most lesbian women and gay men
 584 want to have enduring, close relationships--the majority consider it of great
 585 importance to have "a permanent living arrangement" with a partner.⁴²
 586 Researchers have also found that "most gay men and lesbians perceive their
 587 close relationships as satisfying and that levels of love and satisfaction are
 588 similar for homosexual and heterosexual couples who are matched on age and
 589 other relevant characteristics." A study of only monogamous couples found
 590 that "gay, lesbian, and heterosexual married partners were indistinguishable
 591 from one another" on love for partner and relationship satisfaction scores.⁴³
 592 Clearly the desire for, and living-out of, "strength in need, a counselor in
 593 perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy" is far more broad
 594 than many imagine.

595 As is the case with heterosexuals, there are homosexuals who are in
 596 exploitive and/or abusive relationships, and there are, as well, gay and lesbian
 597 couples in growth-fostering relationships. In growth-fostering relationships,
 598 both partners feel a greater sense of vitality and energy. Each feels more able
 599 to act and does act, each has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the
 600 other, each feels a greater sense of worth, each feels more connected to the
 601 other and has a greater motivation for connections with other people beyond
 602 the primary relationship.⁴⁴

603 For homosexuals, as for heterosexuals, the desire to be in a relationship
 604 is not simply a desire for self-gratification and self-pleasure. Rather, it is

605 about "journeying toward and joining in something that thereby becomes
 606 greater than the separate selves."⁴⁵ Relationship is about love, commitment,
 607 sharing activities and spirituality, closeness, touching, hugging, laughing,
 608 thoughtfulness, generosity, trustworthiness--and sometimes sexual intimacy.
 609 Our society's focus on sex in relationships, especially in gay and lesbian
 610 relationships, is out of proportion with reality and should not be used as a
 611 definitional criterion. This is not to say that sexual intimacy is unimportant
 612 in primary, committed relationships. In homosexual as in heterosexual
 613 relationships, intimacy is an important aspect of the bonding and nonverbal
 614 communication that allows relationships to transcend the ordinariness of daily
 615 life and to touch the eternal. In so doing, sexual intimacy strengthens
 616 committed love relationships.

617

618 In heterosexual relationships, women and men agree to love and care
 619 for each other. And no one disputes that such relationships have a spiritual
 620 dimension. The same kind of love, caring, commitment and spirituality
 621 characterize homosexual relationships as well, as has been heard in hours of
 622 Church testimony before Church commissions and conventions. In long-term,
 623 committed relationships--in which love is freely given and freely accepted--
 624 gays and lesbians can and do experience the identification of their love with
 625 Jesus Christ and of their relationships with his life. As it can be for
 626 heterosexual persons, the experience of steadfast love can be for homosexual
 627 persons an experience of God.

628

629

630 **Homosexuals in Traditional Marriages**

631 It is not at all uncommon for homosexual persons to be involved in
 632 traditional marriages. The pressures of peer socialization, family and religious
 633 constraints, and just plain unconsciousness in individuals, all conspire to lead
 634 both men and women to do what is expected of them at a certain age. Some
 635 men and women, unable to accept their homosexuality, intentionally marry
 636 hoping that will "cure" them; others find traditional marriage a convenient
 637 disguise for continued homosexual encounter. Some homosexuals marry and
 638 restrict their sexual contacts to their spouses but while having intercourse
 639 imagine the spouse to be a same-sex partner. Sometimes men, and especially
 640 women, are unaware of their same-sex attractions until later in life, after many
 641 years in a traditional marriage. Their testimony bears witness to the power of
 642 denial and rationalization. Others may recognize same-sex attractions as
 643 episodic or transitional and not necessarily definitive of the marriage.

644 When the homosexual orientation of one partner becomes apparent,
 645 typical reactions are to hide it, attempt to change it, or to pretend it does not
 646 exist. Relationships that take this route very frequently come apart over time,

647 though sometimes couples are able to remain together while living relatively
 648 separate lives. Marriages in which both partners initially are unconsciously
 649 gay/lesbian are not at all uncommon. It seems possible, in fact, that such
 650 persons unconsciously are drawn to one another. Sometimes these
 651 relationships end in separation and/or divorce when awareness dawns, but
 652 sometimes, especially when parental responsibilities are a factor, a way to cope
 653 and stay together evolves. This is most possible when a strong friendship
 654 forms the basis of the relationship.

655 From time to time it is possible for mixed couples, most frequently
 656 heterosexual women and gay men, to learn to meet both partners' sexual and
 657 emotional needs and thus become able to live together very consciously and
 658 contentedly. Sometimes this accommodation is worked out only after
 659 alternating periods of separations and reconciliation. Compatibility, mutual
 660 interests and acceptance, the desire to raise children together, and a shared
 661 need for companionship contribute to the success of such relationships. It
 662 seems evident, however, that a high degree of psychological maturity is
 663 required of both partners.⁴⁶

664 Skillful pastors and counselors can help couples do sexual identity work
 665 before, during, and after marriage. Homosexuality is often an unrecognized
 666 issue in pastoral counseling with the separated and divorced and their children.
 667

Fear and Violence

The fear and intolerance of and violence against gays and lesbians that is growing at an alarming rate is a way of denying that homosexuals are of the same human kind as everyone else. It is also a well-known psychological defense mechanism that assures the perpetrator that he or she is not homosexual and does not share the feelings being observed in gays and lesbians. As one commentator has put it: "As long as we are inculcated with the terror of our own secret desires, we will try to beat them out of others when we cannot kill them in ourselves."⁴⁷ Researchers have shown that the greater the resemblance of the supposed homosexual or homosexuals to the in-group or the attacker, the greater the likelihood of hate-filled reaction.⁴⁸ In addition, new findings by psychologists suggest that the greatest portion of anti-homosexual bias "arises from a combination of fear and self-righteousness in which homosexuals are perceived as contemptible threats to a moral universe." The largest group among people who are biased, says Dr. Gregory Herek, a psychologist at the University of California at Davis, are those for whom homosexuals "stand as a proxy for all that is evil. Such people see hating gay men and lesbians as a litmus test for being a moral person." Such attitudes are supported, researchers say, by institutionalized bias which makes it officially permissible to hate gays and lesbians. All too often, attitudes in the Church contribute to this institutionalized bias and allow people to see homosexuals "as legitimate targets which can be openly attacked."⁴⁹ Observes Virginia Seminary ethicist David Scott, "While one can believe and

teach that homosexual practice contradicts God's will without being homophobic, nevertheless much opposition and violence against gays and lesbians is motivated by irrational fears and hatreds."⁵⁰

¹Robert Byrd, "Most Students Aren't Virgins, CDC Reports," Associated Press, January 4, 1992. The survey included 11,631 high school students.

²Robert Pear, "Bigger Number of New Mothers Are Unmarried," *New York Times*, December 4, 1991.

³Report of article from *Burlington Free Press*, April 7, 1992, in *Pediatrics*, April 1992.

⁴Mary B. W. Tabor, "For Gay High-School Seniors, Nightmare Is Almost Over," *New York Times*, June 14, 1992.

⁵Paul Gibson, "Gay Male and Lesbian Youth Suicide," *Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide*, Vol. III (Washington, DC: 1989), pp. 110-142.

⁶Sara E. Rix, Ed., *The American Woman, 1990-91: A Status Report* (New York, 1990), Table 6, p. 369; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1991* (Washington, DC: 1991), Table 50, p. 43.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*New York Times*, July 14, 1993.

⁹*Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1991*, Table 53, p. 44.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Table 50, p. 43.

¹¹Samuel S. Janus and Cynthia L. Janus, *The Janus Report on Sexual Behavior* (New York, 1993), pp. 23-27.

¹²Andrew Greeley, "Sex and Society: Time for a Reappraisal," *Boston Sunday Globe*, September 15, 1991; William E. Schmidt, "Adultery as a Crime," *New York Times*, April 30, 1990.

¹³Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz, "Intimate Relationships and the Creation of Sexuality," in David P. McWhirter, Stephanie A. Sanders, and June M. Reinisch, eds., *Homosexuality/Heterosexuality: Concepts of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 317.

¹⁴James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day American Told the Truth* (New York: 1991), pp. 94-99.

¹⁵Fritz Klein, "The Need to View Sexual Orientation as a Multivariable Process: A Theoretical Perspective," in McWhirter et al., eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 278-81. See also essays by Whalen, Geary, and Johnson; Pillard; Coleman; and Nichols in the same collection.

¹⁶Rebecca Nahas and Myra Turley, *The New Couple* (New York: 1979), p. 8.

¹⁷Mariana Valaverde, *Sex, Power, and Pleasure* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 115-116.

¹⁸Wayne R. Dynes, ed., *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (New York: 1990).

- 1¹⁹Margaret Nichols, "Lesbian Relationships: Implications for the Study of Sexuality and Gender," in McWhirter et al., eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 354-356.
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- 1²⁰James Zullo and James Whitehead, "The Christian Body and Homosexual Maturity," in Robert Nugent, ed., *A Challenge to Love* (New York: 1983), p. 26.
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- 1²¹In 1979, Masters and Johnson reported that the third most frequent fantasy of male homosexuals is of heterosexual contact; the fourth most frequent fantasy of heterosexual males and the fifth most frequent fantasy of heterosexual females is of homosexual activity. William H. Master and Virginia E. Johnson, *Homosexuality in Perspective* (Boston: 1979), p. 178. In 1990, when James Patterson and Peter Kim asked 2,000 at 50 locations across the country about their fantasies, 75% of the men and 14% of the women had fantasies of having anal sex (40% of the men and 34% of the women reporting these fantasies said they had lived out the fantasy). Patterson and Kim, pp. 77, 81. See also June M. Reinisch and Bruce Beasley, *The Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex* (New York: 1990), pp. 132-33, 136, 139-140.
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- 1²²Paul H. Gebhart, "Incidence of Overt Homosexuality in the United States and Western Europe," in National Institute of Mental Health Task Force on Homosexuality, *Final Report and Background Papers* (Washington, DC: 1972), pp. 22-29.
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- 1²³See David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
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- 1²⁴Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 280.
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- 1²⁵New York Times, July 16, 1993; *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 50 (March 1993):217-223. See also, "Is Homosexuality Biologically Influenced?" *Scientific American*, Vol. 270, No. 5 (May 1994): 43-55.
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- 1²⁶John Money, "The Development of Sexual Orientation," *Harvard Medical School Health Letter* (June 1992), p. 7; William Byne and Bruce Parsons, "Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 50 (March 1993), 236-237.
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- 1²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 4; on the subject of "choice," see also Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 296-300.
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- 1²⁸See Evelyn Hooker, "The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual," *Journal of Projective Techniques*, Vol. 21, pp. 18-31; P. F. Reiss, "Psychological Tests in Homosexuality," in Judd Marmor, ed., *Homosexual Behavior* (New York: 1980), pp. 296-311; and Lawrence A. Kurdek and J. Patrick Schmitt, "Relationship Quality of Partners in Heterosexual Married, Heterosexual Cohabiting, and Gay/Lesbian Relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 51 (1986), pp. 715-717.
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- 1²⁹New York Times, December 2, 1992.
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- 1³⁰Richard Isay, "Psychoanalytic Theory and the Therapy of Gay Men," in McWhirter et al., eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 283-284.
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- 1³¹Dr. Gene G. Abel, Behavior Medicine Institute of Atlanta, in a report presented to the American Psychiatric Association, May 1993.
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³²Blumstein and Schwartz, pp. 315; 319, note 5; 316.

³³Letitia Anne Peplan and Susan D. Cochran, "A Relationship Perspective in Homosexuality," in McWhirter et al., *op. cit.*, p. 337; Blumstein and Schwartz, p. 316.

³⁴Margaret Nichols, p. 357.

³⁵Bancroft, p. 104; Louis Gooren, "Biomedical Theories of Sexual Orientation: A Critical Examination," in McWhirter et al., *op. cit.*, p. 72; Michael D. Storms, "Sex Role Identity and Its Relationships to Sex Role Attributes and Sex Role Stereotypes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 37 (1979), pp. 1779-1789.

³⁶Bancroft, p. 104; for an extended treatment of gender nonconformity and homosexuality, see Alan P. Bell, Martin S. Weinberg, and Sue Kiefer Hammersmith, *Sexual Preference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

³⁷Peplan and Cochran, p. 344. See also the series of tables related to this subject in Bell and Weinberg, Appendix C, pp. 323-325.

³⁸Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* (London: 1953-1974), Vol. 18, p. 151.

³⁹Jerome D. Frank, "Treatment of Homosexuals," in National Institute of Mental Health Task Force on Homosexuality, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 66-67.

⁴⁰Isay, pp. 285-86, 287, 300.

⁴¹As quoted in the *New York Times*, February 5, 1992. In a study of heart patients published in early 1992 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers from Duke University Medical Center found that those who lacked a spouse or confidante were three times as likely to die within five years of diagnosis as were the patients who were married or had a close friend.

⁴²Bell and Weinberg, p. 322. In surveys (by Bell and Weinberg and three others), between 40 and 60% of the gay men questioned were currently involved in a steady relationship; in the current AIDS era, the figures are even higher. In most studies, the proportion of lesbians in an ongoing relationship was close to 75%.

⁴³Peplan and Cochran, p. 332-33; Kurdek and Schmitt, p. 717.

⁴⁴These characteristics of growth-fostering relationships were developed by Jean Baker Miller. See her "What Do We Mean by Relationship?" *Stone Center Work in Progress* #29 (Wellesley: 1986), p. 3.

⁴⁵Judith V. Jordan, "Clarity in Connection: Emphatic Knowing, Desire, and Sexuality," *Stone Center Work in Progress* #29 (Wellesley: 1987), p. 11.

⁴⁶See Rebecca Nachas and Myra Tulley, *The New Couple: Women and Gay Men* (New York: 1979).

⁴⁷Darrell Yates Rist, "Sex on the Brain: Are Homosexuals Born That Way?" *The Nation*, October 19, 1992, p. 429.

7 ⁴⁸Dr. Keith Brodie, Address of the President of Duke University to the Freshman Class,
 8 August, 1989. A study of heterosexual male college students found that students who had
 9 negative views of homosexuality were more aggressive toward homosexual targets they
 10 believed to be similar to themselves than toward those they considered dissimilar. When
 11 the targets were heterosexual, the response pattern was just the opposite: subjects were far
 12 more aggressive to those they believed to be dissimilar to themselves than to those they
 13 believed similar. See Christopher L. San Miguel and James Millham, "The Role of
 14 Cognitive and Situational Variables in Aggression toward Homosexuals," *Journal of*
 15 *Homosexuality*, Vol. 2 (1976), pp. 11-27; and Greenberg, pp. 447-448.

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 17 ⁴⁹Daniel Goleman, "Homophobia: Scientists Find Clues to Its Roots," *New York Times*,
 18 July 10, 1990.

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 20 ⁵⁰Letter to the Rt. Rev. Harry W. Shipps, March 4, 1994.

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SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE: The Use and Abuse of Power

Even as we affirm and celebrate the positive, life-enhancing nature of our human sexuality, our discussion is incomplete unless we acknowledge that what God intends for good, we can use for ill. What is meant to be life-affirming can, and does, becoming death-dealing. Violence against women, sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse are issues that demand attention and informed action. Our discussion here, while intentionally limited in scope, is a reminder that more is required. Our purpose in this chapter is to broaden the discourse on human sexuality by looking, however briefly, at how sex is used as a weapon of domination instead of a way of expressing love and mutuality.

A Different Reality

The traditional Christian teaching that human sexuality is a sacred gift from God, and that Christian marriage is created for companionship, mutual help, comfort, and joy, does not, unfortunately, match the experience of many women and their children who live and survive in another reality. Theirs is a reality in which God's gift of sexuality has been desecrated--transformed from a holy, sacred expression of love and connection into a weapon of intimidation and destruction.

Daily media accounts of incest, child sexual abuse, molestations, pedophilia, beatings, rapes, and murders underscore the reality that, for far too many women and children, the home is not a place of comfort, safety, and joy, but rather a dangerous, life-threatening environment. Home in the United States is a place where, according to a 1987 epidemiological study, "wife beating results in more injuries that require medical treatment than rape, auto accidents and muggings combined."¹ And home for children is no safer when 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys are sexually abused before they are 18, most likely by the age of 11.² Lest we think, if we are not victims, we are not affected, Dr. Judith Herman, a leading expert on sexual violence and recovery (writing almost a decade ago), states that, "Rates of sexual assault on women are sufficiently high that [many] women live with a pervasive fear of violence . . . [Such] fear," she concludes, "affects women's psychological development."³ Even if they are not victims, some women can, and do, live lives constricted by this apprehension.

No longer safe, these homes have become a place of terror. Such terror

1 is described in a report from the United States Senate Judiciary Committee
 2 hearings on proposed legislation, the Violence Against Women Act. This
 3 report states that over "1 million women were attacked by their husbands and
 4 lovers last year, and an additional estimated 3 million violent domestic crimes--
 5 -murders, rapes, and assaults--went unreported."

6 7 8 **Power, Not Sex**

9 It is this fear-ridden world of sex and violence that we, as a community
 10 of faith, must confront. Rape, incest, child sexual abuse, and the exploitation
 11 of vulnerable adults or children by clergy and other professionals are not
 12 sexual acts, they are sexualized acts of violence perpetrated by those with
 13 power against those who are powerless and vulnerable. Unfortunately, most
 14 people today do not understand that rape is not a sexual act. Such an
 15 understanding could facilitate society's and the Church's work of reconciling
 16 the discontinuity between Christian teachings that affirm and celebrate human
 17 sexuality as good and the lived experience of millions of women, girls and
 18 boys.

19 20 21 **Clergy Sexual Misconduct**

22 The number of clergy sexual misconduct cases has increased
 23 dramatically in recent years within all denominations. The skeleton is out of
 24 the closet. According to the Church Insurance Company's report on the year
 25 1992, "Sexual misconduct has real costs. In the past ten years, the Church
 26 Insurance Company has paid an aggregate of \$7.9 million on sexual
 27 misconduct cases." While we can measure the cost in dollars it is more
 28 difficult to measure the cost in terms of human loss.

29 How we understand and face up to discussions of why and how this
 30 could happen will determine whether we make real and lasting progress toward
 31 eliminating the sexual exploitation of people who trust us. We have made
 32 enormous strides in how we respond to both the victim and the abuser, but
 33 more can and should be done. Frequently, survivors of incest will describe,
 34 with incredible sadness, feelings of having had their childhood stolen.
 35 Survivors of clergy sexual abuse, in similar fashion, describe feelings of
 36 having had their souls stolen. The betrayal of trust inherent in both incest and
 37 clergy sexual abuse is profoundly damaging to the survivor, the abuser, and the
 38 parish family, who sometimes knows the story but more often feels the pain
 39 without knowing why. The damage to all has serious and long-lasting
 40 implications, for the recovery of trust and the restoration of one's faith is not
 41 easy to achieve.

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Sex as Commodity

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In addition to sexualized violence, sex for money or sex as a commodity is also a perversion of God's gift to us of our sexuality. Prostitution, pornography, and some hard-sell advertising are several ways in which sex is for sale. Sex becomes a commodity--sex sells, we buy. And such sex is big business. In the United States, pornography alone is estimated to be a \$20 billion a year industry, exploiting and dehumanizing women and children.⁴

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Prostitution, the oldest and the most unchanged profession on earth, is as prevalent in Christian countries and societies as in non-Christian ones, and is demonstrably alive and well in 20th-century America. While the prostitute is reviled, we seldom deal with the fact that there are many more customers than there are prostitutes. The alarming connection between prostitution and childhood sexual abuse previously suspected is increasingly supported by research. A report from the National Network of Women's Funds Seventh Annual Conference on Violence Against Women (1991) stated:

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There are approximately 1 million adult prostitutes in the United States. Most were recruited or coerced into prostitution before they reached 18 years of age. . . . Most have run away from home and been forced into prostitution in order to support themselves. . . . Most have been victims of childhood sexual abuse, incest, rape, and/or battery prior to entering prostitution. . . . In addition to the 1 million adult prostitutes, there are approximately 1.2 million children used in the sex industry in this country. Although estimates vary due to the covert nature of child sexual exploitation, without effective intervention most of these children will grow up to be adult prostitutes.⁵

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To live into and out of a Christian understanding, we must both affirm and strive for a full expression of the God-given goodness of our human sexuality and confront and reject the ugly perversion of God's gift that sexualized violence is. Our willingness to live within the tension both actions engender--to stand with those whose lives are shattered--will help us seek out, name, and discard the historical and cultural patterns we have inherited that condone and perpetuate the systems that abuse. Such abuse is not only individual pathology but also corporate dysfunction built around a closely held secret. Approaching our task with both courage and humility may unexpectedly reveal a moment in which we will see clearly how and when we, in the Church, can provide comfort, and when we don't, how we betray the trust given to us. Perhaps then we can choose--as God intends us to--to be a place of healing, a sanctuary, for all.

¹E. Stark and Flitcraft, "Violence Among Intimates: An Epidemiological Review," 1987, quoted in *A Wind of Change: Funders Working to End Violence Against Women*, A Report of the National Network of Women's Funds Seventh Annual Conference, Chicago, April 18-21, 1991.

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²*A Wind of Change: Funders Working to End Violence Against Women*, A Report from the
³National Network of Women's Funds Seventh Annual Conference, Chicago, April 18-21,
⁴1991.

¹Judith Lewis Herman, M.D., "Sexual Violence," Working Paper No. 8, the Stone Center,
²Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, 1985.

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²Michael Gershel, "Evaluating a Proposed Civil Rights Approach to Pornography: Legal
³Analysis as If Women Mattered, quoted in *A Wind of Change*, Fact Sheet.
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¹*A Wind of Change*, p. 18.

7

PASTORAL GUIDELINES

Statements from General Convention

We acknowledge that General Convention has made the following statements concerning issues of human sexuality and the conduct to which we are called:

- A. "Homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral care of the Church." (General Convention, 1976)
- B. "That this [1979] General Convention recommend to Bishops, Pastors, Vestries, Commissions on Ministry and Standing Committees, the following considerations as they continue to exercise their proper canonical functions in the selection and approval of persons for ordination:
 - 1. There are many conditions, some of them in the area of sexuality, which bear upon a person's suitability for ordination;
 - 2. Every ordinand is expected to lead a life which is 'a wholesome example to all people' (*Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 517, 532, 544). There should be no barrier to the ordination of qualified persons of either heterosexual or homosexual orientation whose behavior the Church considers wholesome;
 - 3. We reaffirm the traditional teaching of the Church on marriage, marital fidelity, and sexual chastity as the standards of Christian sexual morality. Candidates for ordination are expected to conform to this standard. Therefore, we believe it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual, or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage."
- C. "Physical, sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong, monogamous union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and

1 their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord as set forth
2 in the Book of Common Prayer, and . . . that this Church
3 continue to work to reconcile the discontinuity between this
4 teaching and experience of many members of this body . . ."
5 (General Convention, 1991).
6
7

8 **Guidelines While We Continue the Dialogue**

9 Community life in our Anglican Communion includes the need to
10 respect both the unity and the diversity of our communion. Respect means
11 that the Episcopal Church will maintain recognizable, faithful Anglican norms
12 in our teaching regarding sexuality. Diversity means understanding with
13 pastoral sensitivity the different experiences of people within our own Church
14 and within other Churches of the Communion. During the continuation of the
15 dialogue and discussion in the Episcopal Church on human sexuality and the
16 Christian response, we are particularly called to live and act in a manner which
17 is both open to the leading of the Spirit and grounded in our historic faith. To
18 that end, and mindful of our collegiality in the House of Bishops, we
19 commend the following guiding principles for our actions as a Church during
20 this period.

- 21
22 1. We recognize that, while our sexuality is a very important part
23 of who we are, it is not all of who we are, or even the most
24 important part of who we are. In fact, it is not necessary to be
25 sexually active to be fully human. It is also the case that moral
26 behavior bears upon the question of sanctity and whether our
27 sexual behavior is or is not consistent with the gospel life.
28
- 29 2. We recognize that while there are a variety of approaches to
30 sexual ethics in the Bible, the standard found in the New
31 Testament of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual union as the
32 setting intended by God for sexual relationships between men
33 and women is the foundation on which the Church's traditional
34 teaching is built.
35
- 36 3. We acknowledge that standards or norms have existed for our
37 sexual conduct, and that these standards or norms--as approved,
38 modified, and amended--are understood as faithful guides for
39 Christians in matters related to sexuality. These standards and
40 norms exist to enable us to act in accordance with the ethical
41 and moral implications of the Christian faith and to shape us,
42 given our natures and circumstances, into the fullness of the
43 stature of Christ.
44
- 45 4. We continue in study and dialogue, seeking to reconcile, to the
46 extent possible, discontinuities which may exist in the area of
47 human sexuality between Scripture, tradition, and informed
48 reason on the one hand, and our human experience on the
49 other.
50

5. We are convinced through our study of human sexuality that a significant minority of persons are homosexual. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to articulate appropriate moral and ethical guidelines for homosexual as well as heterosexual Christians.
6. We believe sexual relationships reach their fullest potential for good and minimize their capacity for ill when in the context of chaste, faithful, and committed lifelong unions between husband and wife. There are those who believe this is as true for homosexual as for heterosexual relationships and that such relationships need and should receive the pastoral care of the Church.
7. We view as contrary to the baptismal covenant, and therefore morally unacceptable, sexual behavior which is adulterous, promiscuous, abusive, or exploitative in nature, or which involves children or others incapable of informed, mutual consent and understanding the consequences of such a relationship.
8. We acknowledge that certain discontinuities exist, in human sexuality as well as in other areas, between the standards and norms set forth by the Church's teaching and the experience of a number of the Church's members. Those discontinuities, of necessity do not interrupt the communion we share. Where we disagree, we need to continue the dialogue. Therefore we commit ourselves to:
 - a. Respond pastorally to those persons whose sexual behavior does not conform to the traditional standards and norms of the Church.
 - b. Continue in trust and *koinonia* ordaining only persons we believe to be a wholesome example to their people, according to the standards and norms set forth by the Church's teaching.
 - c. Hold paramount the belief that we are all loved equally by God and are called to love one another.
 - d. Commit to ongoing consultation concerning these matters with the wider Anglican Communion and with our ecumenical partners.

APPENDIX

A REPORT ON THE HUMAN SEXUALITY DIALOGUES

This Appendix to the Pastoral Study Document was prepared by the National Steering Committee for the human sexuality dialogues at the request of the Pastoral Study Document Committee.

Resolved, That this General Convention commissions the Bishops and members of each Diocesan Deputation to initiate a means for all congregations in their jurisdiction to enter into dialogue and deepen their understanding of these complex issues [regarding human sexuality]; and further this General Convention directs the President of each Province to appoint one Bishop, one lay deputy and one clerical deputy in that province to facilitate the process, to receive reports from the dioceses at each meeting of their provincial synod and report to the 71st General Convention. (The Fourth Resolve of the 1991 General Convention Resolution A104sa)

Background

The 1991 General Convention in the Fourth Resolve of Resolution A104sa assigned to "the Bishops and members of each Diocesan Deputation" the task of developing the means and encouraging "all congregations in their jurisdiction to enter into dialogue" on the complex issues surrounding human sexuality. Furthermore, the Convention took the unusual action of assigning directly to the Provinces the task of facilitating the process, receiving reports from the several dioceses, and reporting back to the 1994 General Convention.

At their meeting in the fall of 1991, the President and Vice-Presidents of the Provinces responded to the Fourth Resolve by agreeing to establish in each Province a Steering Committee made up of a Bishop, one clerical Deputy and one lay Deputy who would oversee the project in their Province. (At least one Province, Province VII, had already begun its work.) Further, the Presidents and Vice-Presidents established a national Steering Committee to be made up of persons serving on the Steering Committees of Provinces II, VII, and VIII. The Rt. Rev. O'Kelley Whitaker, then President of Province II, was asked to chair the national Steering Committee, often called "the Whitaker Committee" to distinguish it from the group dealing with the Fifth

1 Resolve--on the Pastoral Study Document--chaired by the Rt. Rev. Richard F.
 2 Grein, Bishop of New York. The latter committee has popularly become
 3 known as "the Grein Committee." Throughout the process, the chairs of the
 4 two committees have maintained full communication on the work of the
 5 respective groups.

6 The first task of the National Steering Committee on Resolution
 7 A104sa was to develop a clear understanding of its task and to interpret as best
 8 it could for itself and for the Church the intent of General Convention in the
 9 Resolution. To that end, a Context Statement was developed and distributed
 10 to all Bishops and Convention Deputies in a mailing dated March 23, 1992.
 11 This was the first of eight mailings from the national Steering Committee
 12 distributed periodically throughout the study time. However, because of
 13 limited funds available, subsequent mailings were sent only to diocesan
 14 Bishops and to Provincial Steering Committees.

15 The Context Statement sought to be very clear about our task and
 16 responsibilities:

- 17
18 1. We were not being asked to conduct a popular referendum on
19 current attitudes on human sexuality in the Church.
20
- 21 2. We were called to enable and encourage dialogue, including
22 discussions among people who may hold different
23 perspectives.
24
- 25 3. We understood dialogue to be different from debate, the
26 latter being an occasion for trying to convince others of one's
27 own position, and the former being a time for conversation
28 that involves honest listening as well as charitable speaking.
29
- 30 4. While recognizing that issues relating to gay and lesbian
31 persons are of great concern both in the Church and in
32 society in general, we saw our task as much broader,
33 upholding all concerns about sex and gender.
34

35 We saw it incumbent upon us to (a) to develop or identify existing
 36 materials to be made available to the several dioceses to be used at their
 37 discretion; (b) to make possible training opportunities for diocesan leaders
 38 who, in turn, would offer training to leaders in congregations; and (c) to
 39 develop a means by which the learnings from this process could be gathered.
 40 We recognized we were being asked to work in a highly charged area. To
 41 move from the prevailing 'debate mode' into the 'conversational' mode would
 42 not be easy. Everyone would need the opportunity to explore new skills, new
 43 ways of dealing with one another on sometimes volatile issues.

44 Many possible studies on human sexuality were reviewed by the

45 members of the Whitaker Committee. Some were found to be focused upon
 46 one or a few areas of human sexuality. A few, in our opinion, seemed too
 47 narrow in their treatment of the issues.

48 The study, "Human Sexuality and the Christian Faith," prepared by the
 49 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, working in much the same climate
 50 as we were, met our criteria in nearly all respects. Augsburg Fortress, the
 51 Publishing House of the ELCA, was enormously helpful in permitting us to
 52 use this study freely, to replace a chapter with one designed for Episcopal
 53 participants, and even to print the Episcopal Edition at much less cost than we
 54 could have it done elsewhere. We experienced a warm ecumenical spirit of
 55 cooperation in sharing this study.

56 At the same time, Province VII, which had moved ahead in responding
 57 to Resolution A104sa, had already engaged a consultant team to prepare a
 58 special study in response to the Resolution. The national Steering Committee
 59 had the opportunity to join in the process of the development of "Human
 60 Sexuality: A Christian Perspective." The cost of the production of this study
 61 was borne by Province VII.

62 Thus, we had two excellent, yet different, studies to offer the Church.
 63 *At the same time, we made it clear that any diocese that chose to utilize other*
 64 *material should feel free to do so.* The same reporting instrument would
 65 provide the opportunity for input no matter what study material was used.

66 Recognizing that Spanish is the second language most often used in
 67 the Episcopal Church, we proceeded to develop Spanish language translations
 68 of the two studies as well as of the reporting instruments. Here again,
 69 Augsburg Fortress readily made available to us the Spanish language
 70 translation of their material, a great saving to us.

71 The national Steering Committee has operated as an instrument of the
 72 Provinces in their response to General Convention. At the same time, since
 73 General Convention provided no funding for this project and Provinces usually
 74 do not have such resources, we appealed to the Presiding Bishop to seek
 75 funding for a budget of approximately \$30,000, which he was graciously able
 76 to do. Major expenditures included mailings, support of leadership training,
 77 consultancy, and Spanish translations.

78
 79

80 **Data Gathering Process**

81

82 In preparing an instrument to gather data from parishes and dioceses,
 83 the Committee agreed on these principles:

84

- 85 1. The questions should be general in nature so that they could
 86 be responded to by parish participants regardless of the

87 discussion materials the group had used.

88

89 2. The questions, the Committee agreed, were not referendums
90 on Church policy, theology, or legislation. Rather the
91 questions were to gather the opinions of those who
92 participated in the discussion program reflecting ways in
93 which the participants' ideas had been reinforced or changed
94 as a consequence of the discussions. A place for write-in
95 comments and observations was to be included in the
96 questionnaire format as well.

97

98 3. Limited funding and the press of time required that the
99 means of tabulating and collating the individual responses
100 should be rapid and completed with a minimum expenditure
101 of funds or effort on the part of parishes, dioceses, or
102 provinces.
103

104 The Questionnaire

105 The earliest drafts of the questionnaire were prepared by Warren
106 Ramshaw, a lay member of the Whitaker committee. The whole Committee
107 revised question wording, question order, and suggested new questions not
108 previously included. Committee members were asked to try out the questions
109 on parish groups to see if the question wording was clear and unambiguous.
110 The questions were examined and commented upon by parishioners in
111 Southern Virginia, in Central New York, in Rochester, in several places in
112 Province VII and in Province VIII. Additionally, comments and revisions
113 were suggested by participants in the leadership training programs in three
114 different parts of the country. Individuals and groups with special interests in
115 the topics addressed in the questionnaire made further suggestions for
116 improving the questions. Finally, the Committee examined revised drafts of
117 the instrument, paying particular attention to its form, clarity and ease of use.

118 To facilitate the collection of data it was decided to take advantage of
119 the pyramidal structure of the Church as a route of successive levels of
120 reporting. Parishes were provided with a questionnaire tally sheet on which
121 they could indicate the number of persons answering each question and the
122 way the question was answered. Parishes were then instructed to send the
123 individual questionnaire forms and the summary sheet to their diocesan offices
124 where a new set of tallies were made summarizing the responses from all the
125 parishes in the diocese. These forms were sent on, then, to a designated
126 person in each province, reporting the answers given for all the participating
127 parishes in the diocese. The dioceses were asked to keep the individual
128 questionnaires to await later instructions on their disposition.

129 Next, the provinces, using a form especially prepared for them,
130 summarized the numbers of individuals who answered each question in a given

131 way for the reporting dioceses in that province. Finally, the persons in each
 132 province responsible for the compilation of the diocesan data forwarded a
 133 single report with their totals to the Whitaker Committee.

134 This method of summarizing totals on successive levels has the
 135 advantage of being relatively rapid and accomplished with little cost in time
 136 or funds to the participants on any of the three levels. The disadvantage of
 137 that method, however, is that cross-cutting analysis of the data is not possible.
 138 Another method of answering these kinds of questions has been developed to
 139 provide for cross-cutting analysis. For the same reasons, the write-in responses
 140 to the three questions at the end of the questionnaire form cannot be
 141 summarized in this three-level method.

142 For that reason, the Committee asked each participating diocese to send
 143 its individual questionnaire response forms to a central point where they could
 144 be entered into a computer data base. It is fortuitous for the Committee that
 145 a small number of volunteers made themselves available to computerize all the
 146 data from each individual's questionnaire. This has been an extraordinary task.
 147 There were 86 variables for each of the 15,342 persons to be entered, an
 148 operation that began early in July and continued essentially on a daily basis to
 149 the middle of December in 1993. This data collection is independent of the
 150 one developed through the triangulation method described earlier. The
 151 computer based data has fewer individuals included in it than the triangulation
 152 method because we received fewer questionnaires from the dioceses than were
 153 tabulated by the triangulation method. Remarkably, the percentages in these
 154 two data sources are nearly identical on all items. Both sources provide clear
 155 and unambiguous data for our analysis. In this same process the write-in
 156 responses (Part B) have been read and a large sample of them have been
 157 recorded, omitting duplications.

158

159

160 **What the Responses Tell Us**

161

162 **Characteristics of Respondents**

163 Those responding to the human sexuality questionnaire do not
 164 necessarily constitute a representative sample of Episcopalians in all parts of
 165 the country. These responses are not intended to speak for the whole Church
 166 on any of these topics. Rather, these are the responses of those who have
 167 participated in the discussions on human sexuality in our parishes, a program
 168 generally consisting of five two-hour sessions. These persons have read the
 169 material their parishes elected to use and they have completed the
 170 questionnaire form. Moreover, the potential responding population is further
 171 screened by the fact that some dioceses chose to participate in this national
 172 program and some did not. Further, even in participating dioceses some

173 parishes chose to undertake the discussion program and some did not. Finally,
 174 even in participating congregations only a small proportion of the entire parish
 175 membership actually participated.

176 The number of responses reported in studies from groups as large as
 177 those participating in this process are very rare indeed. A measure of the
 178 opinions of this number of Episcopalians on *any* topic has not been undertaken
 179 before. (For a comparison, the studies of the attitudes of the whole Church
 180 membership done by the Committee on the State of the Church and reported
 181 in the *Blue Book* for the 1982 and the 1985 General Conventions were based
 182 on a randomly drawn sample of 1,000 Episcopalians.)

183 Responses were received from 18,219 persons by the triangulation
 184 method and the following general descriptive statements are based on those
 185 responses. (While we have written responses indicating the participation of
 186 between fifteen and twenty thousand persons in the discussions groups, we
 187 estimate that by the sale of discussion guide materials, that nearly 30,000
 188 persons were involved as leaders and participants in some way in this dialogue
 189 process.) As many as 1,128 parishes and slightly more than seventy-seven per
 190 cent of the dioceses participated in discussions and forwarded information
 191 through the provinces to the Committee. The Chaplains of the Armed Forces
 192 participated as well in seven groups in various parts of the world, adding sixty-
 193 three responses.

194 Demographically, half of the respondents are in the age category 40 to
 195 59. Two per cent (358 persons) are over 80 and slightly more than one
 196 percent (208 persons) are under 20 years of age. Ninety-three per cent of the
 197 responses come from lay persons. Seven per cent are from ordained persons.
 198 Slightly more than half of the respondents are married. Eight per cent are
 199 divorced and thirteen per cent are divorced and remarried. Eleven per cent
 200 were never married.

201

202 **Characteristics of the Discussion Groups**

203 Sixty per cent of the discussion groups met for five sessions with
 204 another twenty-three per cent meeting six times. Half of the respondents used
 205 the study guide: "Human Sexuality and the Christian Faith," the ELCA
 206 publication. Thirty-five per cent used the guide: "Human Sexuality: A
 207 Christian Perspective," the curriculum prepared by Province VII. The
 208 remaining fifteen per cent used other material or combinations of these
 209 resources. Just under forty per cent of those responding reported attending five
 210 sessions of the discussion groups and nearly thirty per cent more attended four.

211 The topics most frequently included in the discussions were these:
 212 Biblical understanding of sexuality, Christian marriage and family,
 213 psychological and social aspects of sexuality, and gay and lesbian relationships.
 214 These topics were followed in rank order by discussions of gender--the social

215 consequences of being male or female--and the Anglican/Episcopal views of
216 sexuality.

217 The climate of the discussion groups is described by nearly sixty per
218 cent of the respondents as always free and open. Another thirty per cent report
219 their groups were usually but not always free and open. Only two per cent say
220 their group experience was often or most always painful or difficult.

221 Forty-five per cent say the leadership of their group was very effective
222 (5 on a scale of 5 to 1). Thirty-four per cent rate the leadership as a 4. Thus,
223 nearly eighty per cent of the respondents find the leadership of their groups
224 very good. More than eighty per cent agree or strongly agree that their
225 discussion group is made up of a wide variety of persons with different life
226 experience, people who are quite different from each other. Sixteen per cent
227 disagree with that description of their group.

228

229 **Learning and Outcomes**

230 In naming the topics in which the participants believe that they have
231 grown as a result of the study and discussion program in which they have
232 participated, the most frequent response is Biblical understandings of human
233 sexuality. This response is followed, in order, by the Church's teachings on
234 human sexuality, and by understandings of gay and lesbian relationships.

235 To help participants focus on specific persons they know who can be
236 thought of in sexual categories, they were asked if they know persons--friends
237 or relatives--whom they understand to be in one or another of a listed set of
238 categories. The Committee felt this question was useful to help respondents
239 recall that lists of sexual categories are more than disembodied cells but rather
240 are statements about persons, some of whom the respondents know.

241 In this question the most frequent responses indicate everyone knows
242 persons who are married, divorced, or divorced and remarried. Next most
243 frequently identified as persons they know are those who are single by choice,
244 gay men, persons of opposite sex living together although not married, and
245 persons sexually active outside of marriage.

246 Under what circumstances is it possible to be a faithful Christian and
247 be identified in one or another sexual category? Almost one hundred per cent
248 of the respondents say that one can be a faithful Christian and be divorced or
249 divorced and remarried. Three quarters report that one can be faithful and live
250 with someone of the opposite sex without marriage. Seventy per cent indicate
251 that being sexually active as a gay or lesbian person is not contrary to being
252 a faithful Christian. Respondents are equally divided in affirming or denying
253 that bisexual persons can be faithful Christians.

254 Responses to other items on which the opinions of respondents were
255 asked can be grouped by degrees of agreement or disagreement with a series

256 of questionnaire statements. More than 85 per cent say they *strongly agree* or
257 *agree* with these assertions:

258

- 259 -- Human sexuality is a gift from God and it is good (96%)
- 260 -- Sexual abuse is a major problem in the United States(90%)
- 261 -- The Church should take an active and responsible role in
- 262 teaching young people about human sexual issues (92%)
- 263 -- Women and men should be equals in the Church (90%)
- 264 -- Gender should not be a factor in determining people's daily
- 265 work and vocation (87%)
- 266

267 Less widely affirmed, these statements are *strongly agreed* or *agreed*
268 to by 50 to 85 per cent of the respondents:

269

- 270 -- Homosexuality is a genuine sexual orientation for some
- 271 people (81%)
- 272 -- The chief standard for right and wrong is not specific texts
- 273 but the character of Jesus revealed in the Gospels (80%)
- 274 -- Single people should abstain from genital sexual relations
- 275 (57%)
- 276 -- Supporting committed relationships between gay or lesbian
- 277 persons could strengthen the Christian community (53%)
- 278 -- If I were single, I would abstain from genital sexual relations
- 279 (50%)
- 280

281 At the same time, the respondents disagree with some of these
282 assertions. Respondents *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with the following
283 statements:

284

- 285 -- The Bible teaches that men and women are not equal (87%)
- 286 -- Short term sexual relationships are acceptable if both adult
- 287 parties agree to participate in them (64%)
- 288 -- It is more important for the Church to offer guidance on
- 289 *what* to think about human sexual issues than on *how* to
- 290 think about them (52%)
- 291

292 Further Analysis

293 Using the computer-based data (15,342 persons), a number of other
294 relationships and insights can be gleaned. All of the relationships reported
295 here are statistically significant. (That is, there is less than one chance in one
296 thousand that the reported relationships are produced by chance. Rather, the
297 statements are significant because there is a *real* relationship between the
298 reported variables.)

299

- 300 -- 64% of the lay persons in the study are women and 23% of
- 301 the ordained persons are women;
- 302 -- 75% of ordained persons and 59% of lay persons disagree
- 303 that it is more important for the Church to offer guidance on
- 304 *what* to think on human sexual issues than on *how* to think
- 305 about them;
- 306 -- Women are much more likely (62%) than men (43%) to
- 307 agree that they would abstain from genital sexual relations if
- 308 they were single;
- 309 -- At every age level from 20 to 80, there is increasing
- 310 agreement that the respondents would abstain from genital
- 311 sexual relations if they were single;
- 312 -- A greater proportion of women than men, and ordained
- 313 persons than lay persons believe that homosexuality is a
- 314 genuine sexual orientation for some people;
- 315 -- Agreement with the belief that supporting committed
- 316 relationships between gay or lesbian persons could strengthen
- 317 the Christian community is greater among women than men,
- 318 among ordained persons than lay persons, and among young
- 319 persons than older persons;
- 320 -- Men more than women and young persons more than older
- 321 persons agree that short term sexual relationships are
- 322 acceptable if both adult parties agree to participate in them.

323

324

325 **Summary and Conclusions**

326

327 The responses from thousands of Episcopalians who have participated
 328 in the study and discussion of issues in human sexuality understood within the
 329 context of a Christian perspective show a range of belief and opinion which
 330 exists within the Church today. Those who have completed the study
 331 questionnaire acknowledge that they have grown most in Biblical
 332 understandings of human sexuality, the Church's teachings on those issues,
 333 and in their understandings of gay and lesbian relationships. They affirm that
 334 human sexuality is a gift from God and it is good. While affirming that
 335 homosexuality is a genuine sexual orientation for some people, they also say
 336 that single people should abstain from genital sexual relations, which may be
 337 contradictory conclusions. A slight majority of the respondents say that
 338 supporting committed relationships between gay or lesbian persons could
 339 strengthen the Christian community. A substantial majority reject the idea that
 340 the Bible teaches that men and women are unequal or that short term sexual
 341 relationships are acceptable if they are agreed to by the participants.

342

For all of the respondents these issues of human sexual behavior are

343 personalized by the large number of friends and/or relatives they acknowledged
344 who fitted various sexual categories or descriptions. For such people the topic
345 of human sexuality and Christian perspective is not an abstraction. It is part
346 of their own awareness of these issues while attempting themselves to become
347 faithful Christians.

348 The original Context Statement prepared by the Whitaker Committee
349 as an explanation and guide to the discussion process and released in March,
350 1992, in part, says this:

351

352 We are being called to a dialogue, including discussions
353 with people who may hold different perspectives. A dialogue
354 is not a debate, not an occasion for seeking to convince others
355 of the rightness of our position and the wrongness of theirs.
356 Rather, it is an opportunity to be open with each other, both to
357 share our own insights and to listen carefully to those of others.
358 It is time to discern the leading of God's Spirit.

359

360 The descriptions of their discussion groups by the respondents, the
361 topics they discussed, and the areas in which they claim growth all appear to
362 approach the goals of that statement.

363 One layman from Province VIII, age 20-39, has written this in
364 commenting on his experience in dialogue: "The study itself was quite bold
365 and yet at the same time refreshing to see. The Church has taken its first step
366 in addressing some much needed issues."

HOUSE OF BISHOPS RESOLUTION B1001:
On the Pastoral Study Document on human sexuality

Resolved, That the House of Bishops, affirming the teaching of the Church that the normative context for sexual intimacy is lifelong, heterosexual, monogamous marriage, and pursuing our Anglican tradition of historic truth encountering contemporary life, offers "*Continuing the Dialogue: A Pastoral Study Document of the House of Bishops to the Church as the Church Considers Issues of Human Sexuality*" to the Church as a way for the Church to continue the dialogue on human sexuality; and be it further

Resolved, that the two statements, "An Affirmation" and "An Affirmation in Koinonia," not be an official part of the House of Bishops' Pastoral Study Document on human sexuality; the statements are to be made a part of the minutes with names of signatories attached, but not distributed with the study document.