

THE WITNESS

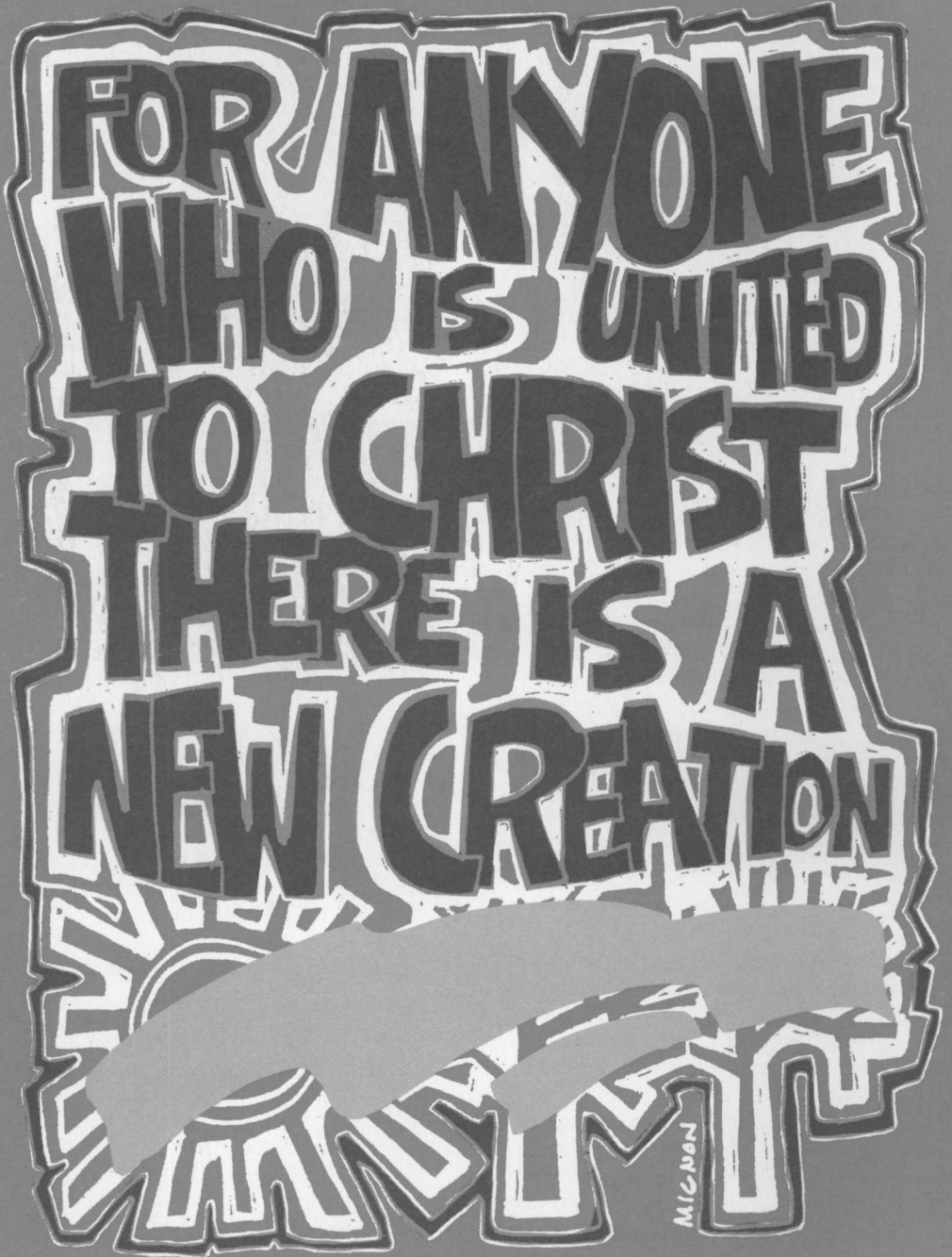


**Family of 1990s:
Challenge to church**
Penny Long Marler

The sexuality of Jesus
Malcom Boyd

**General Convention
roundup**
Susan Erdey

Adieu to Ambler
Mary Lou Suhor



Letters

Abbie Jane revisited

Thanks for Susan E. Pierce's May tribute to the creativity of Abbie Jane Wells and her "ministry of letters." The image of a lone Christian woman at her kitchen table, night after night, reaching out to touch someone (and succeeding) is glorious, and poignant. Wonderful to see it as her spiritual commission!

The only other lobbyist-via-copy I know is Mary Eunice Oliver from San Diego: being on her mailing list is tuning in to a modern-day female St. Paul. Do you suppose this is a peculiarly womanly way of witnessing in the late 20th century? Wonder if there are other such "mothers of us all" we don't know about.

Joanna B. Gillespie
Episcopal Women's History Project
New York, N.Y.

Lauds 'people' testimony

This greeting comes to tell you that I'm greatly appreciating my subscription to THE WITNESS and the book, *My Story's On: Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives*, based on your principle of people speaking for themselves. Mary Lou Suhor's April article on Agnes Bauerlein — "Herstory from Persian Gulf war" was especially appreciated. Thank you and keep on!

Donna Allen, Founding Editor
Media Report to Women
Washington, D.C

Yes to WITNESS boycott

Every time I am sure that the Episcopal Church has lost its mind entirely, THE WITNESS takes a position which convinces me justice is to be found somewhere in our assemblage. I refer to the decision by THE WITNESS staff to honor the national boycott against Arizona. As a resident of a neighboring state, I have had ample opportunity to observe the cruel, reactionary politics visited by that state's politicians upon

blacks, Chicanos (especially the UFW) and women. It's no use saying, as some church people have: "We belong there as an example." Thoreau was nearer the mark when he said to Emerson, "When the government is corrupt, good people belong in jail."

They certainly don't belong in Phoenix.

Leonora Holder
Long Beach, Cal.

Women at Nashotah

I am distressed by the "takeover" of Nashotah House by the ESA, especially by the appointment of persons to the Board of Trustees who have an ecclesiastical/ideological obsession which does not issue from living at the House or from daily worship there for three years.

However, I would like to point out an inaccuracy in Susan Erdey's article on the "traditionalists" in your June issue. In a parenthetical comment, she states, "Nashotah House, which formerly trained men only for the priesthood, just recently proposed policy changes to accept women, a decision prompted by low enrollment, which threatened its future."

As a matter of fact, there were women enrolled when I matriculated in 1981, and there had been for some time. A telephone call to the administration of Nashotah House revealed that the first woman M.Div. student was admitted in 1967, and women have been admitted into the M.Div. and other degree programs since that time.

Nashotah House has troubles enough of

its own without a further disservice done to it by careless misstatement of the facts.

The Rev. Charles Williams
Denton, Tex.

(The parenthetical material was not Erdey's, but was added by THE WITNESS and should have carried an editor's note. We acknowledge the error. Incidentally, the Board of Trustees of Nashotah House passed a resolution May 24 of this year that the seminary "will provide theological education for men and women that will train them for vocations to which they believe themselves to be called; and that until such time as catholic Christendom decides the issue of female ordination, only ordained men will function sacerdotally at Nashotah House." Four faculty members resigned following the Board action, protesting its "continued diminution and demeaning of women" and "ideologizing of theology.") — Ed.)

Not IRD, but 'traditional'

Susan Erdey's WITNESS article listed me as a Board member of IRD and as one planning to be part of its "team" at General Convention. A little research would have revealed that neither claim is correct, though I am on the Board of the Episcopal Committee on Religion and Freedom (ECRF). The article also seeks to make a distinction between "progressive" and "conservative" groups in the church, without indicating what it means by those elusive and overused terms. The agendas of the groups described in the article vary widely and are far from monolithic. As for the term "traditionalist" in the title, if it means what Gabriel Facre recently described as the strong movement in seminaries to recover the classic Christian faith and a clear Christian identity, as opposed to accommodating Christian values to contemporary society, then I at least am happy to be so identified.

Finally, the article's attempt to portray

Credit

THE WITNESS wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Virginia Breeze of Anchorage, Alaska, to our recent tribute to Abbie Jane Wells in the May issue. — Ed.

the several so-called "conservative" groups as "well-funded" and "powerful" remind me of similar unfounded claims about the "powerful church lobby" which I often heard from the other ideological extreme when I represented the National Council of Churches in Washington for five years. As a member of the Standing Commission on Peace for nine years, I am very aware of the unhealthy polarization on a number of issues within the church. Unfortunately, I find that quite often THE WITNESS contributes to that polarization through the ideologically narrow perspective, the not infrequent self-righteous tone, and the sometimes paranoid flavor of many of its articles. Such articles seem at times more interested in demonizing opponents than engaging in reasoned moral discourse rooted in Christian tradition. I hope and believe you can do better.

Allan M. Parrent
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Protestant Episcopal Theological
Seminary in Virginia

Albany not ESA diocese

Life is tough enough. Please correct the statement in Susan Erdey's article in the June issue that Albany is a member diocese of the Episcopal Synod of America. It is not.

The Rev. Andrew C. Hamersley
Albany, N.Y.

Ditto San Joaquin

I enjoyed the various articles in the pre-Convention issue of THE WITNESS and find myself in sympathy with many of the views expressed. But please let it be known that the *Diocese* of San Joaquin is not a member of ESA. While the bishop, the archdeacon, some clergy and one parish have stated their participation in ESA, the Diocese has not, and will not, if some of us can prevent it.

It does a disservice to those of us who hold different views from ESA to have it

assumed that as goes the bishop so goes the diocese.

The Rev. Edgar G. Parrott
Turlock, Cal.

Erdey responds

I do not refer to Allan Parrent as "planning to be part of [IRD's] 'team' at General Convention."

However, the sentence, "IRD board members include Richard John Neuhaus . . . Dr. Allan Parrent . . ." etc. was in error in my final version of the article. My editing mistake. But, for Dr. Parrent to draw such a clear distinction between his involvement in ECRF and IRD is perplexing. The masthead of *Anglican Opinion*, ECRF's magazine, clearly states that ECRF is a "committee of the Institute of Religion and Democracy," and the return address links them "ECRF/IRD."

As to Dr. Parrent's comments regarding the distinctions between "progressives" and "conservatives," the "unhealthy polarization on a number of issues within the church" and of THE WITNESS' contribution to that polarization: Surely the progressive movement in the church is as guilty of "taking sides" as the conservative camp. But readers will have to judge whether THE WITNESS, which openly purports to be an advocacy journal for progressive issues, sins in that area.

I apologize for the error regarding the Dioceses of Albany and San Joaquin's official membership in the ESA. I was working from apparently outdated information. Although, I would point out there can be a fine line between what the bishop of a diocese says and does, and how goes the diocese. If a bishop and a number of the bishop's staff are officially members of the ESA, and the bishop refuses to ordain women, for example, it may be difficult to counteract the impression that the diocese as a whole is of like mind.

Happily, some dioceses whose leader-

ship has supported the ESA seem to be disassociating themselves from their leaders. In the Diocese of Fort Worth, whose bishop, the Rt. Rev. Clarence Pope, is leader of the ESA, All Saints' Cathedral has essentially resigned its status as cathedral of the diocese in protest of Bishop Pope's position. In addition, sources in Fort Worth say that members of the diocese are calling Bishop Pope to accountability regarding how much time he actually spends on diocesan business, and how much time is spent conducting ESA business.

Susan Erdey
Cambridge, Mass.

Lacks largest minority

As a long-time subscriber to THE WITNESS, I commend you and the staff for the excellent June cover that asked whether the Episcopal Church welcomed people of color, gays and lesbians, ordained women, poor people and native Americans. However, as a person with epilepsy who has worked with people with other disabilities, I was disappointed that the cover did not also include people with disabilities. Unfortunately, there is overwhelming evidence that this largest minority group is practically ignored by the church.

Moreover, included among the 43 million Americans with disabilities are people of color, gays and lesbians, ordained women, poor people and Native Americans. Since so many of our churches are inaccessible, I think a more accurate description is that the Episcopal Church welcomes only able-bodied people who are able to negotiate steps or stairs.

At General Convention, a resolution will be introduced expressing support for the recently-enacted Americans with Disabilities Act and stating that the Episcopal Church will voluntarily comply

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On becoming blind

by Sam Day

Since its rebirth in 1974, THE WITNESS has had the guidance and wise counsel of Sam Day, noted journalist, author and peace activist. Day, co-director of Nukewatch, a nuclear disarmament organization, has been jailed many times for non-violent civil disobedience. He is now adjusting to blindness and a new life-style, as the article below, reprinted with permission from Isthmus (6/24/91) reveals. We ask WITNESS readers to keep him in their thoughts and prayers as he begins this new life journey.

Some time ago I began a sudden and unexpected journey into blindness. It began in a Rock County Jail cell in Janesville, where I was completing a four-month term for unlawfully demonstrating against the Persian Gulf War.

On the morning of May 10, three days before my scheduled release, I awoke to discover that my eyes were playing tricks on me. The letters and words on the page in the book in front of me were jumping up and down and moving from side to side. I found I could read only with difficulty. So I put the book away and gave my eyes a rest. Three days later, on my first day of freedom, I made an appointment with my ophthalmologist. On the way over to his office, I told my companion, who was driving, after she had paused for a stop, "You can go forward now, it's only a flashing red light."

Turning to me, she said, "Sam, that light's not flashing — it's a steady red."

Three days later, there came another chilling step in my journey into darkness.

Emerging from my dentist's office, I discovered that I could not see the cars hurtling by on the busy nearby boulevard. Taking my life in my hands, I felt my way across the street to the bus stop. My world was becoming a pea soup fog.

The end of the first step of my journey came on the last day of May, when my eye doctor sat me down and gave me the results of a long series of tests. The verdict was that I had suffered the second in a series of strokes that, in two years, had killed the optic nerve in both eyes, leaving me blind.

As I sat there in the doctor's office, absorbing the impact of the news, I became aware that his hand was outstretched. We shook hands. That was it.

Sometimes I think about the things that I will never see again: a sunset, the ocean surf, the marble steps of the State Capitol, the faces of the people I know and love. I think of the faces of my grandchildren, which will be forever frozen in childhood in my mind. I think of the face of a grandchild still unborn, whose appearance I shall never know. I can feel the grief and sorrow immortalized in the poem of John Milton: *When I consider how my light is spent/Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide/And that one talent which is death to hide/Lodged with me useless . . .*

But my thoughts these days go not so much to sorrow and despair as to the strangeness and wonder of the new world I have entered.

I think of blindness — strangely — as a potentially empowering experience. This journey into the tunnel of darkness seems to be bringing me closer to people. Things that I used to do myself are now necessarily done collaboratively.

No longer having the use of my own eyes, I use the eyes of others, and in the process I become more a part of them.

In the mornings, my oldest son, Philip, reads me the paper for 45 minutes after breakfast. On some afternoons, a next-door neighbor, Jim, drops by to read chapters from a book. My blindness is forging bonds among us.

When I walk to my office in downtown

Madison, clearing a way through traffic with my white magic wand, I enter a new world of collaboration with volunteers, who help me read, write and do my thing.

Their presence gives body and texture to my work. To me, this is a dividend of blindness.

Don't misunderstand me. It's not fun to be blind. There is no joy in losing one's sight. I don't want to sentimentalize the situation. Nevertheless, there are some real compensations for the loss.

To me, jail and prison have never been a hellish world of despair and disempowerment. As one who has gone to jail for reasons of political conscience, I have found it a good place to be. I have looked upon jail as a liberating experience and as a source of strength and insights into the human condition.

Blindness, like jail, can open the door to self-discovery.

The common denominator here is that we are the makers of our own prisons. Whether the prison is the concrete jungle Rock County Jail or the pea soup fog that has descended on my world, it is we who are the makers. And we who imprison ourselves.

For me, jail was a place of freedom and independence during the Persian Gulf War. I felt liberated in the Rock County Jail. I did not feel confined, did not feel myself to be a prisoner.

Perhaps it is the same way now with this new form of incarceration. I'm nouveau blind. Perhaps I'm seeing it through rose-colored glasses. But I'm looking forward to the trip. **TV**

Churches must 'make family' in '90s

by Penny Long Marler

Nostalgia is a hot topic in churches today. Some time ago, I sat in the congregation of a large, suburban Southern Baptist church while a new staff position was being discussed. About half-way through, a prominent professor of Christian Education at a local seminary stood up and said, "We need a strong youth Sunday School program — after all, it is the strong Sunday School program of the '50s that made this church what it is today."

Six months ago, I was interviewing members at one of the largest United Church of Christ congregations in Massachusetts. A good cross-section of members, old and young, expressed the conviction that a chief problem in their plateaued congregation was a "poor youth program." They are convinced that a young, energetic youth minister is the answer to growth concerns.

Family portraits: Past and present

In an address to a major denominational mission board last year, Lyle Schaller, author and leading authority on church growth and planning, stated, "There seems to be a growing amount of evidence that this year is 1991. If that's true, we've got problems. If it were 1951, we might know what to do." Nostalgia is not an altogether bad thing; neither is an exciting youth pro-

gram. But in our hurry to bless the past, the church is in danger of becoming myopically mired in it and increasingly irrelevant.

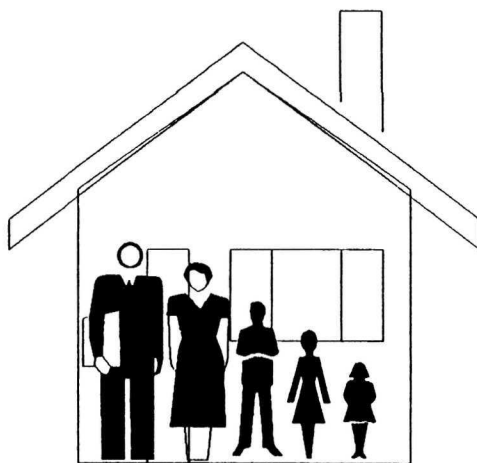
Recent demographic data illustrates the dramatic changes that have occurred in American society since the pew-packed fifties. Such changes underline the problems that beset the church today, and open up new opportunities for truly responsive ministry. The proper focus for '50s nostalgia is not "how good it was" but "how good we were." For the most part, the churches responded creatively to changing social realities and social needs.

The '50s church catered to growing numbers of young families with children. The "market" — as it were — was driven by a large group of consumers with similar family characteristics. If church leaders, editors, writers and educators are to be as responsive today, the task is not to recap-

ture the family of the past but to rediscover the family of the present and redefine the task of ministry in *this new context*.

Fifties' families were well-scrubbed, orderly, and predictable. There was a working dad, a homemaker mom, a tall, earnest (if sometimes rebellious) teenage son, a moody and obedient middle daughter, and a capricious and spoiled youngest girl. They may have had an aunt and uncle who were childless (but they were trying) and probably had a grandmother and grandfather who lived nearby. Most likely, however, they all had (or knew) a few older widowed women — either their grandmothers or church members.

Most of the kids went to church with friends who also attended their school. In fact, church, school, and family were the major socializing agencies of the '50s. In the family, children developed a sense of "we-ness." There were family suppers,



The family of the '50s

Dr. Penny Long Marler is director of the Parish Profile Inventory Service, Center for Social and Religious Research at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. This article is adapted from an address she gave at the recent Associated Church Press annual meeting in St. Louis, Mo. This address has also appeared in the *Military Chaplain's Review*.

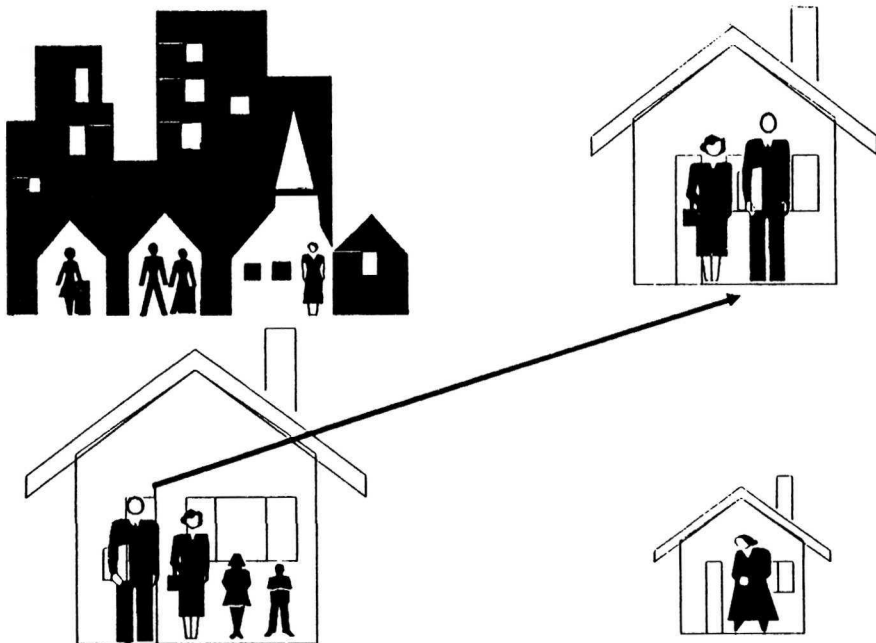
family vacations, family outings, and family reunions. At school with their peers, children sharpened their sense of autonomy and identity. Finally, taking its cue from age-graded education, the church also reinforced “me-ness” through adult and children’s Sunday school, youth programs, children and youth choirs. The church was the “family place” because we were all under one roof — but for the most part, the family “split up” the minute they entered the doors.

The '90s family looks very different: Roseanne Barr is no Donna Reed; and, as far as the atypical family goes, “My Three Sons” can’t touch “My Two Dads.” The single, career mom of “Who’s the Boss?” has little in common with the quietly wise and stable Robert Young of “Father Knows Best.” The raucous, irreverent — and laughingly tolerated — Bart Simpson makes “the Beave” look angelic and highly domesticated. The Golden Girls’ vivacious and unusual household makes '50s T.V. seniors seem dependent, at worse, cranky and eccentric, at best. Further, while the *Cosby Show* may fit the demographic picture of the '50s family — many children, wise and witty parents (in their first marriages) — the picture is different because mom is a career woman, a lawyer, no less.

Media-stereotypes of the family have changed markedly. And while media images are not the only measuring sticks, they are important ones. Cultural images both form and are informed by social reality.

The '90s portrait of the family is really a composite of many family-types. Indeed, there is no demographic norm. There is still the traditional family — but it is smaller. In addition, Mom and Dad probably both work. And, the chances that Mom and/or Dad will separate or divorce at some point have drastically increased.

The children are involved in a variety of school-related and other extra-curricular activities — and so are their parents. If they go to church, their attendance is most



The family of the '90s

likely sporadic. For example, children may alternate weekends with a divorced parent. Or, working parents skip Sundays because they need the “family time” to go on promised outings with their children — or, they simply decide to “sleep in.”

Another typical family pattern is the married couple with no children. This family type — DINKS: double income, no kids — includes empty nesters and younger to middle-aged working couples. All these married couples may choose church — but the competition is stiff: leisure pursuits and work get in the way.

Single-parent families are also a growing family type. Most single-parent families are headed by women; some are divorced, others never married. Many work long hours for less-than-adequate pay (certainly less than most of their male counterparts), and others receive government assistance in order to feed, clothe, and care for their children. Church may be an option for some single moms — but many find it difficult to get the kids up and ready early for another day. In addition, adult

education classes and fellowship groups at churches are often programmed around the interests and needs of couples. A single parent may feel like a “fifth-wheel.”

Finally, in addition to parents and children, married couples, and single parents are increasing numbers of “nonfamily” households. They include persons who live alone (elderly and widowed persons or working singles) and a vast array of unrelated persons who live together (young professionals, retirees, etc.). The lifestyles of persons in these nontraditional families vary widely — and we don’t know much about their attendance and participation patterns.

There is little doubt that the traditional family has become fragmented. The individual is increasingly isolated in modern society. Intimacy and connectedness are found in new contexts if they are found at all. The increasingly fragile web of family life raises new questions about the sources of healthful relationships.

Where do young children get to know older persons who pass along a sense of

history, who serve as models of aging, coping, and surviving? Where do young professionals mingle with and learn from middle-aged persons who are not their bosses? Where do teenagers without fathers find older male friends or guides? Where does the dual career family — badly in need of time together — find that refreshing space, that oasis? Do these stretched and stressed persons find intimacy and necessary cross-generational involvement at the church? Or, is the church still following a program that banks on the personal networks of support and nurture once found in nuclear families? Unfortunately, while the church claims that it is a family place, it is rarely the place for the family (traditional or not) to be together.

The traditional family is no longer the sociological norm in this country. The alternate families have become *the* family of today.

The changing family structure

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, at the close of the '50s almost half of all households consisted of married couples with children. By 1990, a little over a quarter of the households were made up of two parents and their children — a 20% decline in 30 years.

The proportion of U.S. households that consist of married couples only, however, has remained virtually stable. So, where has the difference been made up? In two areas: the rise of "other family households" which include single-parent families, and the increase in nonfamily households.

While single-parent households have increased their share of the overall household structure portrait by 4% — the nonfamily category has increased by 15% overall. In fact, in 1990 there were about 27.3 million nonfamily households — almost 3 of every 10.

The largest category of nonfamily households are persons living alone. This type has nearly doubled since 1960. Those living alone include two major subgroups:

never-married young adults (18-24) and widowed, elderly women (65+).

The remaining category, "other nonfamily households," has more than doubled since 1960. The pattern includes families like the "Golden Girls" — which is a nonfamily household with a family subgroup.

In summary, by 1990 no category of household structure dominates — and the nonfamily category represents about 30% of the whole. The normative '50s family is no more: the family today is pluriform.

Not only have the proportions of family and nonfamily household changed — but

*"The '90s family
looks very different:
Rosanne Barr is no
Donna Reed . . ."*

the size of these units has changed. Interestingly, not only has the proportion of traditional families decreased, but they have also become smaller.

Fewer children per family, more single-parent families, and larger numbers of people living alone contribute to the decline in household size.

So, families and households are both getting smaller. Concurrently, natural webs of intimate social relationships are limited. With the breakdown of the extended family, cross-generational relationships are also less available. And, even in more traditional families, other demographic factors are at work which further disrupt and fragment family life.

Fewer mothers stay at home to "raise the kids." Primarily driven by a stagnant economy, the proportion of married women with children in the labor force (full and part-time) has increased dramati-

cally. Since 1960, the number of working moms with preschool children has doubled; the number of working moms with children 6 to 17 is about one and a half times larger.

More working moms mean additional income for the family and less parental time with the children.

In a recent study published in *Social Forces*, Steven L. Nock and Paul Kingston found — quite as expected — that parents in dual-earner families spent markedly less time with their children. Comparing the longest work day and Sundays, the authors discovered that working dads triple and working moms double their time involvement with their children on Sundays. Perhaps even more telling is the differential between single-earner parents and dual-earner parents in time spent with children "having fun" on Sundays. Dads in dual earner families spent 30% more time on Sundays "having fun" with their preschoolers than their single-earner counterparts. Moms in dual earner families spent 50% more time on Sundays "having fun" with their preschoolers than their single-earner counterparts.

Other disruption factors for the modern family are separation, divorce, and remarriage. According to Suzanne Bianchi in the *Population Bulletin*: "Between 1950 and 1981, the number of divorces increased from 385,000 to 1.2 million annually and the divorce rate more than doubled. Since 1981, the number of divorces and the divorce rate have leveled but remain high."

Another trend that has changed the configuration of American family life is a marked increase in the number of children born to unmarried mothers. In 1960, one in 20 births was to an unmarried mother; in 1987, the statistic was one in four.

Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of children living with one parent — usually the mother — increased from 9 to 22%. The percentage living with their father increased from 1 to 3%; and 3 to 4% lived with another relative.

Family disruption has become the norm rather than the exception.

What is the future of the family on the U.S. demographic horizon? There is little reason to believe that a return to a traditional family-centered culture is likely, at least not for the *next* 30 years. The aging of the baby boom — as well as their pluriform family structures — will continue to make an impact. Even the current “boomlet” is not expected to be strong or lasting enough to change the trend toward aging in this country.

Interestingly, by 2020 demographers project that the proportion of the American population under age 18 (children and youth) and 65 and over (older adults) will be approximately the same: 20%. What does this trend suggest? Bottomline, it is likely that the nonfamily household will increase — this is, those who live alone or who share living space with persons other than kin or spouses. It also means that at least 30% of our entire population (children and the elderly) will be dependent on the production capacity of the remainder of us.

The coming strains on our overall economy will certainly not encourage larger families or stay-at-home parents. While this trend hardly portends the demise of the family, it does signal the end of *one* normative type of family.

How can these remarkable changes in American family life be summarized? First, the sociological family portrait is increasingly plural. These families include: married couples with children, married couples without children, single-parents, persons living alone, and persons living together without blood or marriage ties. No one constellation dominates American households.

Second, all families and households are becoming smaller. Third, families of all types are experiencing increasing disruption through separation, divorce, remarriage, and the pressures of dual careers. The web of social life that is the family is more fragile. Yet, despite this fragmenta-

tion, the importance of family life and parental involvement for the health and well-being of children and youth — indeed, of everyone — remains.

Implications for the church

The intent in presenting this data is twofold: one, to raise awareness about the changes that have occurred in the structure of American family life over the last 30 years and two, to stir a healthy suspicion in the minds of church people about the kind of programming churches and denominations promote.

Has the church adjusted to these changes in family structure? If so, are current efforts sufficient to reach, touch, and teach the pluriform American family of the 21st century? If not, the religious establishment sorely needs to get on board or else greet a new century approximately 50 years behind.

As a sociologist and a churchwoman, I would like to suggest three major implications for the church. First, the church must redefine the notion of family. The normative, '50s pattern of family is only applicable to a quarter of all American households. This means more than adding a few specialty programs for singles, the elderly, or single-parents. It means changing the whole picture.

If the family is reconceived (literally) as pluriform, then the church may be the place where family is made. The '50s programming goal of serving the family is turned upside-down. Instead of serving the family, the church must be in the business of “making family.”

To fill the gaps in their shrinking social web, unchurched persons in nontraditional families do tend to “reach out” to the church. I am suggesting that the church *may be* a place where people “make family,” although traditionally (and programmatically) it is not. Programming directions that are responsive to the dilemma of the fragmented family must target the gaps in these fragile webs of social life and find creative ways of filling these gaps,

strengthening these relational webs.

In fact, many of the fragments naturally go together. A widowed woman with no family nearby may provide needed richness and generational depth to a family with no living grandparent or no grandparent in town. A single male might be the perfect “big brother” for a fatherless child. A group of empty-nesters with grandchildren faraway might reap mutual benefit from a year-long project with a preschool class. Or, dual-earner couples might blossom in a church school class with their younger children — not as teachers, but as co-learners. Or, a congregation might institute new rituals to mark significant life transitions other than birth, marriage, and confirmation.

What about rituals to mark entry into a new job or career? to mark retirement? or widowhood (something beside a funeral for the spouse)?

Again, I am suggesting a church-wide change in approach — not just a few, experimental classes or activities. Obviously, every congregation is unique; depending upon its context, a congregation may have a larger concentration of one family type. I am not suggesting that a congregation in a traditional-family, suburban enclave cease to program for the traditional family. What I am suggesting is that congregations be aware that that type of family is no longer the norm — and to rethink who they are, what they are doing, and who they are trying to reach.

So, first, the church must redefine the family. Second, the church must discover new and creative ways to “make family.” Third, the church must cease debating about whether or not people will come back to church when they have children. In fact, most research does show that some people *do* come back when they have children — and to our credit, they may come back because we have much to offer parents and their children. This data indicates that the proportion of American house-

Continued on page 16

False hopes for Salvadoran election

by Josie Beecher

I really had no idea what my father was talking about when he called me recently here in El Salvador and said, "We sure are pleased with the good news coming from there." He's not a soccer fan so I doubted that he was referring to the Salvadoran victory over a Washington, D.C. team. Then I talked with another friend who had worked here for years and she said she had heard the government-FMLN negotiations were going very well.

My growing sense of incredulity and dismay was capped when I read an Episcopal News Service release in which the Rev. Robert Brooks, head of the Episcopal Church's Washington office, was reported as saying "All indications are that the election has advanced the peace process," and that in a meeting with Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani "[he] said that they are very close to a political settlement."

I am afraid that all this optimism fills a need in the consciences and political priorities of Americans but is a long way from the current reality in El Salvador.

The spring elections which Brooks officially observed were certainly significant in the participation of leftist political parties and their constituents, but calling them "free and fair" is wishful thinking.

During the election campaign the opposition parties were prevented from holding rallies by the military, who tore down stages, occupied public plazas in which rallies were to be held, confiscated or cut off power to sound equipment, and

often turned back candidates at military checkpoints, not allowing them to campaign in certain parts of the country. The Democratic Convergence coalition headquarters was broken into in two cities. In addition to this harassment, a UDN (Nationalist Democratic Union) candidate and his wife were shot and killed two blocks from the U.S. Embassy in an area strictly controlled by U.S. and Salvadoran security forces.

The United Nations sent no election observers, acknowledging that the peace process was not advanced enough to provide conditions for free and fair elections, nor could the security of the U.N. observers be guaranteed.

The Organization of American States (OAS) did play a significant and conscientious role, sending approximately 200 observers several weeks in advance of the election date. I accompanied a caravan of buses from Chalatenango province which was bringing people to a Democratic Convergence rally at the close of the campaign. At each turnoff for the towns from which buses were coming there were OAS observers in identifying T-shirts waiting to escort the buses. Although army tanks met the buses coming out of the communities and followed them for a short stretch, the buses were allowed to pass the checkpoints that are usually so difficult and dangerous.

The voting was conducted without violent incidents for the most part. Accusations of fraud arose when a large quantity of ballots were found in a ravine after the election, all marked for the Democratic Convergence, and there were complaints of right-wing ARENA poll-watchers voting more than once. But the main flaw was that thousands of voters who had registered or had repeatedly attempted to

register to vote were not allowed to do so — most because their names did not appear on the master lists at each polling place, even though they had the required voter registration card in hand. The military had surrounded communities known to sympathize with the opposition and threatened them or their families with death if they voted. In one town the people were told that if they went to the provincial capital to vote the army would kill any child or old person left in the town. The FMLN for its part encouraged people to vote and declared a unilateral truce for Saturday, Sunday and Monday, but did not allow polling stations (with the army to guard them) to be set up in territory under its control.

Official election results were not released until two weeks after the elections. The final count fell one seat short of giving the leftist Democratic Convergence a seat in the Central Electoral Council which oversees voter registration lists, inscriptions of parties and candidates, and electoral procedures in general.

All in all, this dubious and stumbling effort at an election did have the effect of putting about four significant national opposition leaders in the Legislative Assembly of 84 members, where it remains to be seen what role they will be able to play.

Significant steps towards peace are being made, not in the voting booth (or rather at the open voting table) but at the negotiation table, where the government and the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) are meeting for lengthy talks with the active mediation of the U.N. Secretary General's personal representative, Alvaro deSoto. These talks have been taking place for almost a year and a half and have resulted in only

Josie Beecher lives in San Salvador, El Salvador, and works for the Christian Committee for the Displaced of El Salvador (CRIPDES), an ecumenical organization that assists refugees fleeing the civil war in the countryside.

two signed agreements.

One was the agreement on human rights signed in Costa Rica by both parties a year ago, agreeing to respect internationally recognized human rights, particularly the rights of the civilian population in conflict zones and to the rights of returned refugees. A mechanism was established for verification of compliance with this agreement by a mission of the United Nations. I have been documenting human rights violations since the date of those accords and can provide voluminous evidence that violations have continued unabated, with army and security force massacres, assassination and torture and a resurgence of Death Squad activity. The FMLN, while generally not violating human rights, including those of prisoners, in territory under its control or during its normal military operations, recently has caused several civilian deaths and injuries near military installations which it has attacked in the city.

"The Crusade for Peace and Work" (a group which has no office and no public existence) has stated that the U.N. veri-

cation mission is unconstitutional. Another group took out an anonymous ad in the obituary section of the paper saying that this space was reserved for any legislative deputies who voted in favor of the constitutional reforms agreed on in the negotiations. The constitutional reform package was agreed upon by the two sides about 48 hours before the old Legislative Assembly term ended.

The as yet unratified reforms concern the judicial system, the electoral system and the "security forces" — all of which are areas in which deep discussion and reflection must take place. But the reforms agreed to by the government and the FMLN and passed by the out-going assembly are just Band-Aid solutions or stepping stones to larger issues.

The most significant agreement reached was to create a Commission of Truth, consisting of three appointees of the U.N. Secretary General. The purpose of this commission is to investigate and bring to judgement those responsible for the most significant massacres and assassinations that have taken place through-

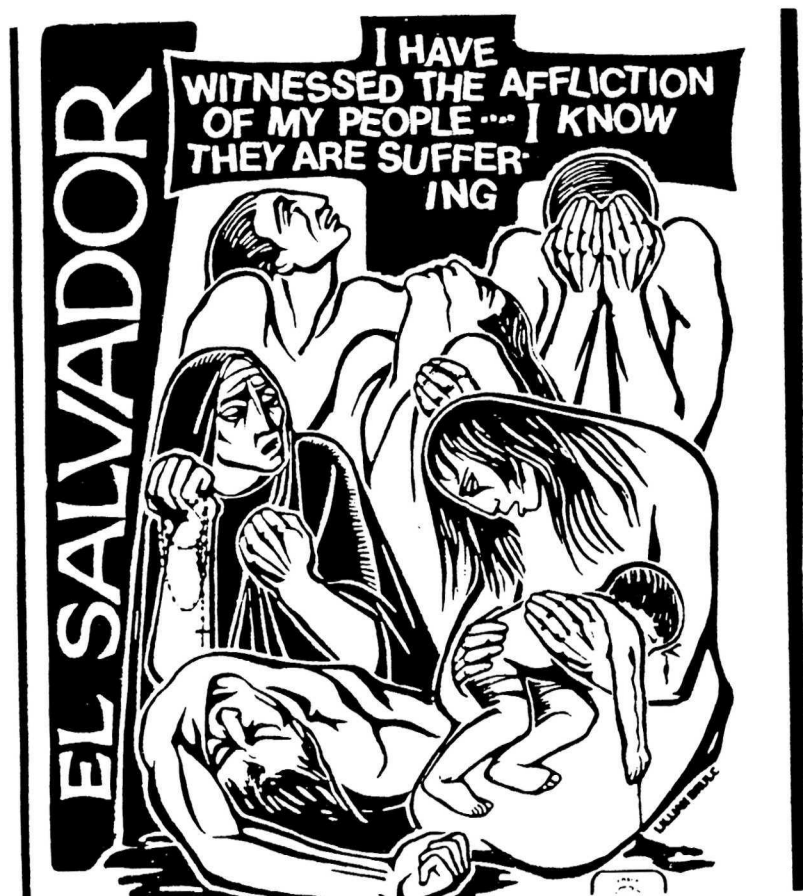
out the course of this long war. Unfortunately, after signing the agreement in Mexico, the government now says that it wants to put two military officers on this commission.

So, serious negotiations are taking place, but the air is thick with threats of violence rather than promises of peace.

The people, however, have an immense sense of optimism about what the U.N. verification mission, ONUSAL, can do, and a determined faith that even if these talks take five years a just peace will be negotiated. In spite of Death Squad threats against national and international non-governmental organizations, the popular organizations are talking about a "new economic order" and dedicating much of their energy to the solutions necessary to bring about the social changes for which they have struggled during these 12 years of civil war.

It is far too soon for the U.S. churches to congratulate themselves as Brooks did for having "tipped the balance for a peaceful settlement to the civil war." That balance ultimately will be tipped by the blood and sweat of the Salvadoran people. Democracy cannot be built from paper ballots but must be built on the foundations of freedom, equality, and respect for human rights.

What the U.S. church community can pride itself on is its constant accompaniment of the Salvadoran people as they have suffered during these years of civil war — from the church workers waiting on the Honduran side of the border to succor refugees fleeing the early massacres, to the accompaniment by church groups of these same people as they dared to return home in the midst of the conflict of the late '80s; for their willingness to witness for truth and justice at the risk of jail in the sanctuary movement and in front of the U.S. military and governmental institutions which have fueled this war; and for their constant material support of the people trying to build new life in this country. TW



Mary Lou Suhor: Past, present, future

by Peg Ferry, Harry Strharsky, and Bob DeWitt

The following piece is a tribute to retiring editor Mary Lou Suhor that scheming friends, fans and staff managed to sneak past her into the magazine. It had to be a surprise, because had she known, she would not have permitted this story to appear.

However, Robert L. DeWitt, WITNESS editor from 1974-81, Harry Strharsky, a computer consultant in California, and Margaret Ferry, a health care specialist and educator in Florida, presuming on their decades-long association with Mary Lou, decided to write a story revealing that the same energy, talent and commitment that transformed THE WITNESS from a modest "movement"-type publication into a nationally-recognized, award-winning journal, has also been lavished on her friendships. It's all here for inquiring minds — her fierce dedication to social justice, her devotion to the craft of journalism, and her love of flying and terrifying amusement park rides.

Before anyone at THE WITNESS knew Mary Lou Suhor, she worked in both Washington, D.C., and New York City. Harry Strharsky, a close friend and colleague from those days, describes his family's association with Mary Lou:

Throughout the 20 years we've grown closer together, though often miles apart, Mary Lou has always been a venturesome family member, a steadfast friend, a staunch and dedicated ally.

Our sons have asked, "Mary Lou is part of our family, isn't she?" And of course, the answer is yes. "Well, she's a sister for Mother and me — not the way your aunts are our sisters — but family, nonetheless." "Yes," they reply, "we know. She writes for birthdays, she sends treasures. We write to her. Sometimes we visit each other. It's like friends, only different." They have it right about Mary Lou — friend, yet family.

Anyone who knows Mary Lou knows she has always provided opportunities for those around her to get involved with something to which she was already com-

mitted. In Washington, D.C., it was the U.S. Catholic Conference Division for Latin America. Then it was the Cuba Resource Center in New York, an interdenominational program which sponsored ecumenical trips to Cuba.

"Let's plan this next trip," she would say. "There's a trip to Cuba for community organizers and church people that I wish you'd consider" . . . "We need some serious letter writing to Congress" . . . "I need someone to make a presentation on women in Cuba" . . .

These requests were always presented without pressure, but with much urgency and concern. How could one not participate? In each successive venture to which she became committed in the '70s, the '80s and into the '90s, Mary Lou invited others to step forward to join her.

Next it was the Episcopal Church Publishing Company (ECPC). Who but Mary Lou, after working in the nation's capital, and in its largest metropolis, would venture to Ambler, Pa. with only a Volkswagen and a suitcase full of energy and commitment, to accept the challenge of THE WITNESS?

The move was initiated by Ben

Bagdikian, then managing editor of the *Washington Post*. He knew this persistent, persuasive woman. He also knew THE WITNESS and its search for a managing editor. Editor Bob DeWitt was not on the ropes, exactly. He had assembled a competent staff to revive the magazine after it had lain fallow following the death of Bill Spofford, his renowned predecessor. The journal was again being written, printed and mailed out.

As the presses continued to roll, however, it was evident that something was amiss. Needed was a professionally trained and experienced journalist — just what Bagdikian had recommended in the person of Mary Lou Suhor.

After meeting her in 1976, the Search Committee wasted little time. It was a hasty decision, but proved a good match. Her Roman Catholic background had nurtured in her a deep faith which committed her to the religious dimension in the social witness of the church.

Mary Lou had long since come to terms with the hierarchic structure of her own church. This did little, of course, to put her at ease when she discovered the Board she had come to work for con-



WITNESS editor Mary Lou Suhor and managing editor Sue Pierce (left) outside the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, after helping Barbara Harris deal with the media blitz on the day following her historic election as the first Anglican woman bishop.

sisted of six Episcopal bishops and Dr. Joseph Fletcher! But the anglicanization of Mary Lou Suhor soon resulted in easy first name relationships, and in her counting among her close friends a goodly number of women priests.

As Managing Editor, it also fell to Mary Lou to manage the editor. And this she did nicely, gently encouraging him to do things for THE WITNESS more in line with his experience and capabilities. Together, however, they made the tough decisions — such as whether to run an article by William Stringfellow calling for the resignation of the Presiding Bishop in 1980. (They ran it.)

Together, also, they goaded people into involvement. “We’d like to do a study guide for the Christian community, sponsored by ECPC,” they said. And thus was born *Struggling with the System*, a study/action guide more familiarly known as “that green book,” and so referred to by Ronald Reagan when he condemned it on his radio broadcast.

This may have been the advertisement which exhausted the supply of “that green book” and brought about another

venture. More people were organized into an Inter-religious Task Force for Social Analysis to produce *Must We Choose Sides?* and *Which Side Are You On?* — Christian commitment for the ’80s. Then later, a feminist publication, *My Story’s On: Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives* was published, put together by a women’s collective.

So Suhor and DeWitt made a good team, and under Mary Lou’s management the magazine has become a formidable factor in the life of the Episcopal Church and beyond. And of course it has received more than its share of journalistic awards. When DeWitt retired the Board quickly appointed Mary Lou editor.

This transformation of title only enhanced her persuasive ways. Countless WITNESS contributors over the past decade continued to respond to the call, “Couldn’t you just write a short piece for us about . . . ?” Whether Latin America, U.S. policy, racism, women’s issues, prison life, gay and lesbian rights, war — Mary Lou led the way to progressive Christian action and reflection. And her vehicle was THE WITNESS. From a moribund church journal with only a noble past, Mary Lou has created a vibrant and influential church journal with a great future. People in the Episcopal Church, and beyond, are greatly in her debt.

But who is this competent editor when not on duty in the Ambler office, talking with bishops or other potentates, taking notes and photos at interviews and meetings in the United States, the Soviet Union, Central America, Cuba or Europe? Snippets of Mary Lou’s more personal life are revealing. Did you know that some 50 years ago a little girl in New Orleans was an organizer of the Justice Society of America, headquarters of which was located under the front porch of her home?

A few years later that same girl, now a teenager, and her father went to claim the Spanish language contest scholarship she

had won to Loyola University. They learned this scholarship could not be awarded to a female. Of course such rejection did not stop Mary Lou from working her way through the University. It was after graduation she experienced raw racism: BB guns and “22” caliber rifles in the hands of racists were fired at the interracial children’s play group with which she was working. Bigotry and advocacy were early realities in Mary Lou’s life.

That play group, however, was also indicative of her on-going delight in children. Did you know that this editor worked in the Ambler office with a not always silent baby who accompanied a co-worker, along with all the “fixins” a baby travels with? Out of that association grew her yearly presence at a family Memorial Day picnic where Mary Lou has been playing with that child and her friends for 12 years while the other grown-ups play catch-up on family news.

It should come as no surprise that a venturesome, adult woman with the expectant zest for life of a happy two-year old dotes on the arcade games at the yearly hospital fair. Nor that she plays with her customary persistence until she wins — and gives her trophies — dolls, teddy bears, goldfish — to admiring children.

Then she gets to the real business of the fair, the spinning, whirling, scary, speedy, death-defying rides! It’s probably tame entertainment for a woman who pilots a plane, and realized a long-time dream when she completed a parachute jump in 1987. Even the price of a broken back didn’t spoil the joy and wonder of that achievement.

And now we see her off to New Orleans, her suitcase again full of energy and commitment, and bid her Godspeed. The Suhors, and all of Louisiana, are lucky to have Mary Lou coming home. The family ring has come full circle — another venture begins. We will see you there, Mary Lou. We’ll always know that your friends are welcome.

TW

The sexuality of Jesus

by Malcolm Boyd

Jesus appears to us as a singularly androgynous man. He was sensitive, vulnerable, knew how to receive as well as give to another, and was relaxed about his body. Jesus was not afraid of intimacy, shared his feelings, and empathized with those of others. Since he embodied unconditional love in a universal sense, his sexuality surely embraced both women and men. He exalts the spiritual dimension inherent in a truly liberated expression of sexuality.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, basic to the Christian faith, refers to the embodiment of God in the human being of Jesus Christ. To be human is to be sexual. Sexuality is a part of God's creation and is healthy, vital and good. Since the church claims Jesus was fully human as well as the Son of God, I believe he was a fully sexual human being. However, his sexuality is a subject swept under the rug by an ecclesiastically dominated and rigidly controlled society. People were condemned for even thinking of Jesus as caring about or having sex.

We have no documentation of his personal life pertaining to sex. He lived much of his adult life in the company of men; his relations with women were frank, open, startlingly honest. The musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* went so far as to imply Jesus had a relationship with Mary Magdalene.

Commenting on this, the Rev. James Conn, former mayor of the city of Santa Monica and pastor of the Methodist

Church in Ocean Park, Calif., says, "I've always assumed Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene was hands-on stuff. And I have always been intrigued by the closeness between Jesus and his beloved disciple, John. John was apparently young and strong and handsome. What does it all mean? Hard to know. The dribbles of evidence certainly seem provocative. Except no one talks about it very much because the subject is so taboo in the church."

Precisely. The church's fence-sitting about sexuality in general, and Jesus' sexuality in particular, has caused untold suffering for countless people. Ironically, the patriarchal religious system adopted the very legalisms condemned by Jesus. So an abyss has been created between the human body and spirit.

I found a glaring example of this in a personal story told me by a heterosexual man who said, "When I have sex with my wife, God turns his back." I find this an outrageous thing to say about sex, God, the wife in the story, and the utterly confused man. Clearly, much remedial work needs to be done by the church in the area of human sexuality.

And, in order to recognize Jesus' reality we need to prove the question of his own sexuality. The Rev. Nancy Wilson, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles, says: "Presuming (since there is no evidence to the contrary) that Jesus was not sexually dysfunctional, normal human sexual arousal was a part of his reality. Did Jesus long to know the special appreciation of another's smell, taste and touch? Did he know the feeling of passionate abandon where the difference between bodies/selves joyously blurs? Did he know the God-created capacity for deep, cleansing sexual pleasure, healing and renewal? Did Jesus know the tender vulnerability of

naked sexual giving and receiving? And if he did not, how can Jesus, as the Risen Christ, be with me in my own sexuality?"

The Rev. Robert Kettelhack, a gay priest, taught theology for nine years and was later on the staff of St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church in Hollywood, Calif. before dying of AIDS in 1989. He said, "For modern and post-modern people, we must insist on the presence of sexuality in the archetypal Person who is Christ. It's very likely that Jesus had homosexual urges and orientation. I don't find that at all a problem. I remember when Bishop John Robinson, author of *Honest to God*, asked the question, 'Did Jesus have an erection?' It upset some people so much. But sexuality is part of the Incarnation, a big part.

"If you page through the Gospels and see the difference between Jesus and the Pharisees, you'll notice that Jesus paints in very broad strokes the necessity of love. The irony he was working with was his almost violent offensive against almost any kind of hypocrisy, his impatience with religious rules and statutes. This is very comforting to a gay person. Jesus introduces the primacy of love, the primacy of justice, into the midst of all ethical problems. This is essential for gay people looking for the ultimate criterion of Christian life."

Bill Johnson, sexologist and United Church of Christ minister who was the first openly gay person ordained to the Christian ministry by a mainline denomination in modern times, says that he always assumed Jesus freely expressed himself sexually with both men and women.

"As the gynandrous personification of Spirit in human flesh, Jesus was the paradigm of male/female Godliness fully experiencing life on this physical plane," ex-

The Rev. Malcolm Boyd is author of *Take Off the Masks and Gay Priest: An Inner Journey*. A writer/priest-in-residence at St. Augustine by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Santa Monica, he serves as chaplain of the AIDS Commission of the Diocese of Los Angeles and co-chair of the Gay/Lesbian Task Force of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

plains Johnson. "If Jesus was bisexual, the men and women who intimately shared his earthly sojourn could well have been a significant lesbian/gay/bisexual community. Indeed, if modern priestly and religious communities have historically descended from such a community of early Christians, we gain some insight into the rabid homophobia that characterizes those communities today. Such a descendancy may be one of the great 'secrets' of Christianity."

Many lesbians and gay men share an experience of rejection by churches. But the other side of the coin is their own dismissal of a lukewarm "churchianity" too timid about sexuality to offer intelligent and needed theological/pastoral guidelines about it.

James B. Nelson, professor of Christian ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in Minnesota, affirms that "for the most part, the church has presented Jesus as sexless." He continues: "If we are not really sure about the full humanity of the One whom we call Truly Human, we can only be confused about what authentic humanity might mean for us."

"If we try to take Jesus with utter seriousness and yet uneasily retreat from

thoughts of his sexuality, or even recoil with repugnance, it is also likely that we shall either deny much of our own sexuality or else find considerable difficulty integrating our Christological beliefs into the reality of our lives as body-selves."

Former Jesuit John McNeill, author of the classic, *The Church and the Homosexual*, points out: "Jesus was a sexual being; he underwent circumcision. If Jesus accepted and rejoiced in an embodied, sexual existence, then we should be able to accept and rejoice in our sexual bodies."

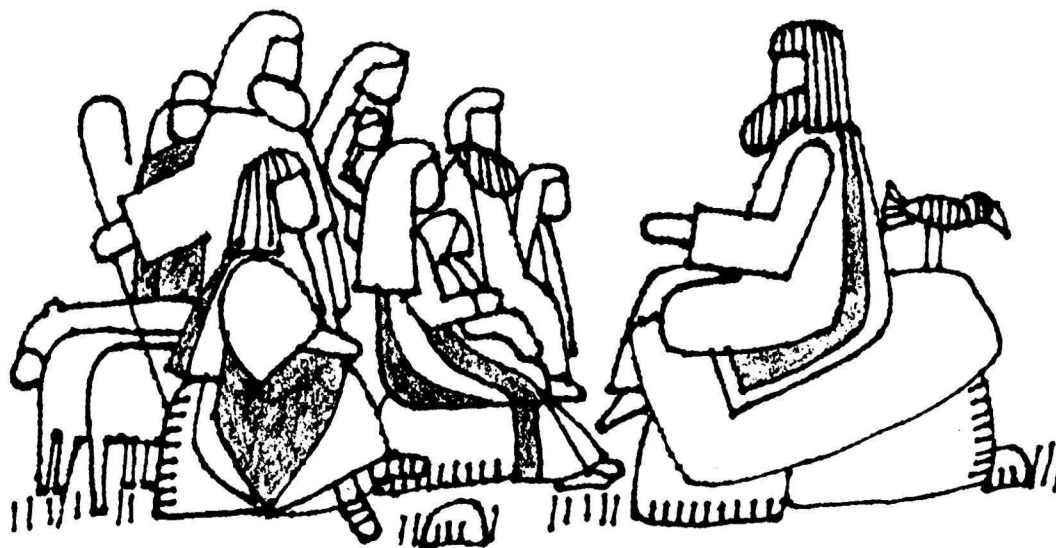
If Jesus lived today, he would certainly be accused of being gay, according to the Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. "He never married. John the Beloved lay on his breast at the Last Supper. Jesus was betrayed by a kiss from another man. The only time Scripture points out that Jesus had physical bodily contacts with another human being was with other men. The sole deviation was with a woman prostitute who came into a room where he was eating, washed his feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair."

Chris Glaser, Presbyterian author of *Uncommon Calling: A Gay Man's Struggle to*

Serve the Church, attributes to Jesus qualities that he associates with being gay: "Sensitivity, affection, sensuality, humor and vision." To Glaser, Jesus' affectionate nature was revealed in his love for Lazarus as well as for his people "whom He wishes to embrace as a hen gathers her brood." Glaser sums up: "To me, it doesn't matter whether Jesus was gay. What matters is to believe, as I do, that he understands me as a gay man and accepts me as his own."

In this era of AIDS, an increasing number of gay men and lesbians seek spiritual answers to questions about life's meaning. One burning question for gay people is how to integrate one's sexuality and spirituality. The Rev. Sharon L. Robinson, dean of Los Angeles' Samaritan College, says: "I never knew how to separate my spirituality from my sexuality. Sleeping with a man was not a good or natural thing for me, and made me feel dirty; sleeping with a woman was both natural and fulfilling."

"I've never had a problem being loved by God as a lesbian. It's unthinkable to me that Jesus could be uncomfortable with my lesbianism. Above all others, he understands fully that being lesbian or gay isn't simply a matter of genital behavior, but is



in fact a whole way of being.”

Was Jesus gay?

“Jesus was certainly not homosexual — that cold, unfeeling fabricated word,” Robinson continues. “Yet he was certainly gay in the sense of the psyche. This seems clear in his actions and the way he lived. Jesus was just as queer in his time as we are in ours. What a gift!”

The church seeks to evangelize post-modern urban culture, yet more often than not refuses to bless lesbian and gay unions, ordain gay people, or even acknowledge sexuality as a God-given part of a loving relationship between people of the same

gender. The church is shooting itself in the foot because, on the one hand, it manifestly wants growth while, on the other hand, it denies loving acceptance to a major and creative segment of the population.

The ecclesiastical structure has long had closeted homosexuals in the ranks of its priests and ministers, including its prelates. But closet doors are opening because the tension inherent in trying to live a double life is crippling and self-destructive. Even more to the point, the closet door has become an image of duplicity when it conceals truth. More and more people cry out for honesty, openness and a

shared pilgrimage toward God in the light of mutual confession and renewal.

The church blatantly lied when it ghettoized lesbians and gay men by denying their equality in the sight of God. It is an act of heresy to consign gay people to the strait-jacket of enforced celibacy; it is a denial of God’s act of creation in which our common humanity includes our sexuality.

As an inquisitorial persecutor the church contradicts its own mandate to exemplify God’s love in the world. Jesus Christ’s own humanity and sexuality is a role model for gay men and lesbians that repudiates the church’s sin of lovelessness. **TW**

Family . . . Continued from page 9

holds that are expected to “come back” is shrinking and will continue to shrink.

Has the church really offered very much for nontraditional families? Or have religious leaders assumed that they were inconsequential, too hard to reach, or that they were coming back eventually anyway? Perhaps Americans continue to claim high rates of affiliation — despite consistent declines in denominational tallies — because of the strong baseline faith that our good youth programs promoted in the ’50s and ’60s. But, the churches have not consistently kept (or held) many of these persons because they have not offered them very much.

At the end of a discussion with a Doctor of Ministry class concerning the above data, one student commented, “Well, it seems to me the real question is whether the traditional concept of the family is the

ideal.” That is a very appropriate question — and a place to conclude.

In a review of New Testament teaching in the book, *The Church’s Ministry with Families*, David Garland states that Jesus’ words about the family are part and parcel of his understanding of the “coming crisis of God’s reign which would turn ordinary life on its head.” In that “revolutionary context,” the family no longer provides “true security and absolute trust.” Garland concludes that while Jesus did not hold a subversive view of the family, he did maintain that in the Kingdom of God the ties of blood and marriage alone were not enough. The ultimate source of intimate parenting, *Abba* relationships, are to be found in God. The will of God, Garland observes, can be done within and without the structure of the biological family.

In the Christian tradition, the church is a family whose ties transcend those of blood and marriage. The biblical concept of church as family is especially germane in the modern American context. When ties of blood and marriage are fragmenting and changing, people are searching for other bases of intimate relating and sacrificial commitment. The church, I believe, can offer a new kind of family where blood, marriage and even ethnicities are blessed, shared and transcended.

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MOVING?

Keep **THE WITNESS** coming by sending a corrected mailing label from a recent issue to: **THE WITNESS**, 1249 Washington Blvd., Suite 3115, Detroit MI 48226-1868. Please send it at least six weeks before you move.

WITNESS wins again

Following on the heels of its success at the Associated Church Press awards, THE WITNESS walked away with three firsts and two awards of merit during the Episcopal Communicators annual Polly Bond Awards dinner in May in New York City. The Episcopal organization celebrated its 20th anniversary this year.

One "first" included the coveted General Excellence award presented to THE WITNESS for the fourth year in a row. The three judges commented: "Professional, attractive and powerful — wow!" . . . "Hard to improve upon — congratulations!" . . . "In a tough, competitive group, this is still a winner."

In this category, THE WITNESS tied with *Cathedral Age*, publication of the Washington National Cathedral. The

team of Sister Helen David Brancato, artist, and designer Beth Seka of TSI Visuals created the April 1990 cover which won THE WITNESS another award of excellence. The cover art illustrated a quote by Jesuit peace activist Dan Berrigan.

The judges remarked on the high contrast pink, gray and black cover: "Symbolic use of light and dark fits the theme. Good art; excellent use of design elements."

Also in the April 1990 issue, a news story by Jan Nunley, "On the night she was betrayed," about the racism and fear following the Carol Stuart murder case in Boston, won first prize. Judges said the article was "was well-written, logical, flowed well."

A photo by Shonna Valeska featuring

Mario DiBlasio in the November issue won an award of merit for single photo, and the July/August issue on sexual abuse, "Breaking Silence," took the award of merit for in-depth coverage of a current issue.

Over the past 14 years, THE WITNESS has won a total of 49 prizes in competitions sponsored by the Associated Church Press and Episcopal Communicators. Since 1984, the magazine has captured 47 consecutive awards — 28 firsts and 19 honorable mentions — for an average of almost seven per year, in categories reflective of cover to cover acclaim. Of the 28 firsts, 12 were awarded by ACP and 16 by Episcopal Communicators; of the honorable mentions, seven came from ACP and 12 from Communicators. TW



Polly Bond General Excellence award-winning editors include THE WITNESS for the fourth year in a row: (front row, from left) Canon Leonard Freeman, former editor, *Cathedral Age* (tied in magazine category); Marcy Darin, *Journal of Women's Ministries*; David Lovett, *Ascension Banner*; Mary Lee Simpson, *Southwestern Episcopalian*; (back row, from left) Jay Cormier, *Episcopal Times*; Ruth Nicastro, *Episcopal News*; Susan Pierce, managing editor, THE WITNESS; and Kay Collier-Slone, *The Advocate*.

Adieu to Ambler: A 17-year tapestry of advocacy

by Mary Lou Suhor

Removing personal effects from an office preparatory to a move can prove to be a wrenching moment in one's life. And especially when the transition ends a rich, 17-year segment of history — such as the retirement of the Ambler office of THE WITNESS as it moves to Detroit.

No Ambler staff members are able to move with the magazine. Therefore, this July-August issue, the last to be produced in Pennsylvania, was assembled while we threaded our way through boxes of materials to be transported to new headquarters, old papers to be trashed, and documents to be turned over to historians.

Closing an operation would be far easier for one more ruthless about throwing things away; but this editor constantly experienced “stops and starts of the mind,” as T. S. Eliot put it. Our offices are haunted by ghosts from WITNESSES past, loving memories, old photos and correspondence, and numerous files from our corporate entity, the Episcopal Church Publishing Company (ECPC).

From a top shelf I gingerly finger a bound, yellowing volume of the first issues of THE WITNESS published by Bishop Irving Peake Johnson in 1917, sent to us by former Presiding Bishop John Hines, our beloved chair of the '74 ECPC Board . . . and next to it is a copy of our study/action guide *Struggling with the System* which was used and underlined by Pauli Murray, noted author, co-founder of NOW, and first black woman priest — passed on to us after her death by the Episcopal Women's Caucus. Now I find a letter from Pauli to me from seven years ago; it ends, “Ain't being a Christian hard work these days? More

power to you.”

On my wall is the late Sister Corita Kent's artwork for a 1981 WITNESS cover, with her invoice and signature . . . and here is a book personally autographed by Archbishop Tutu, praising the ministry of THE WITNESS staff . . .

Through misty eyes I read over old correspondence, revealing letters from those no longer with us. Theologian Bill Stringfellow confides, prior to ECPC's honoring him at its General Convention Awards dinner in 1982: “I have had a retinal hemorrhage which has seriously impaired my vision. There has been surgery twice and may be more. Meanwhile I am apt to be clumsy and have asked a friend to accompany me to New Orleans. See you (figuratively speaking) soon.”

A note from former ECPC treasurer Robert S. Potter congratulates us for the awards we won in 1985: “It is always nice to have the ego itched, particularly when compensation isn't the full reward. Best regards, Bob” . . . Extraordinary artist Rini Templeton, whose work championed struggles of Mexican Americans and Central American liberation movements, drops a line from Mexico thanking us for a check: “I am always glad to see my drawings used well, as you always do”. . . a June, 1990 note from Bishop Edward Welles carries the blessed assurance that I am still remembered by name on his daily prayer list; ECPC award honoree Jean Dementi, the Episcopal priest who shook hands with Pope John Paul in Alaska and courageously slipped him a note saying: “Your Holiness, we women priests bring a new dimension of wholeness to Our Lord's ministry,” writes me saying that it is 23 below zero in Alaska; she is

dying of cancer at the time, but her notepaper says: “Every night I turn my worries over to God; God is going to be up anyway” . . . and I constantly come across old minutes from staff meetings in the handwriting of the late Bonnie Pierce-Spady, who wore several hats here and whom all of us remember for her cheery presence.

What to do with the banners from peace and justice marches we've participated in and covered for THE WITNESS, and buttons we've worn and hats proclaiming pro-choice, and the poster in our workroom announcing, *The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable*, willed to us by former secretary Kay Atwater?

Have mercy, we have accumulated mountainous and formidable memorabilia lo these many years since 1974 when Bishop Bob DeWitt revived THE WITNESS following the death of the irrepressible Bill Spofford!

DeWitt's first WITNESS

Here's a copy of DeWitt's first issue, announcing the “irregular” ordination of the first women priests — the Philadelphia 11 — whom he had consecrated, along with Bishops Dan Corrigan and Welles, in defiance of a church ban. DeWitt's first secretary, the remarkable Lisa Whelan, organized an office from scratch, setting up files and rolodex cards, handling correspondence, and in general staying apace, and sometimes ahead of, DeWitt.

A study in kinetic energy, (he always bounded up steps two at a time) DeWitt used the Ambler office as a launching pad, setting up a national publishing operation as well as a Church and Society

Network of Episcopalians coast to coast, both endeavors devoted to bringing about systemic change for justice and peace. Assisting him was the Rev. Hugh White, who maintained an ECPC office in Detroit. DeWitt, White, and Roy Larson, then religion editor of the *Chicago Sun Times*, handled WITNESS editorial functions and made decisions as a "troika." A Philadelphia advertising agency completed layout, printing and mailing functions.

My job when I came on in 1976 was to produce the magazine inhouse, through the stages of layout and camera ready copy.

To my chagrin, I soon learned that

new gleam in Bob DeWitt's eye meant that he was planning a book to be used by the Church and Society network and others throughout the country — a study guide to analyze social issues — and it was to be out in four months, for General Convention!

My nerves still jangle when I think of how that would conflict with WITNESS deadlines. I sent an SOS to my friend Harry Strharsky in Washington, D.C. to coordinate the publication of what was to become *Struggling with the System*. Building on this success, Harry ended up organizing the Interreligious Task Force for Social Action, which produced two more ECPC study volumes: Christian

Commitment for the '80s: *Must We Choose Sides*, and *Which Side Are We On*. The books remaining in my office are collector's items. Some 25,000 copies of the three study guides were printed, and all sold out — an enviable record for a fledgling publishing company.

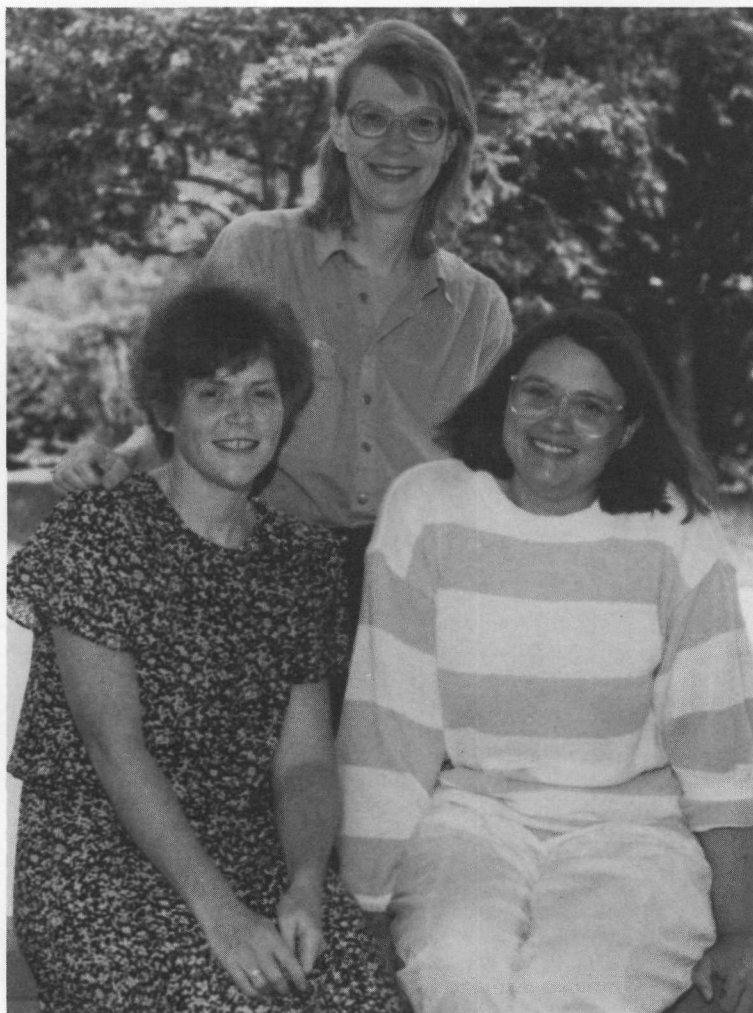
Given the simultaneous "happenings" in the late '70s of the production of the study guides and THE WITNESS magazine, and the urban bishops hearings on the crisis of the cities, for which White and DeWitt were seconded in key roles, I remember us being involved in endless meetings across the country. My own apartment seemed destined to be carpeted with wall-to-wall paper, various book chapters in inchoate stages stretching from bedroom to living room.

Vital to the promotion of the study guides was senior WITNESS staffer Susan Small, who has been with ECPC for 16 years.

From a modest apprenticeship as mailer and clerk (accomplished during her first pregnancy), Susan has gone on to become layout artist, bookkeeper, editorial assistant — absorbing jobs as other staff left over the years. Only a woman of her remarkable good nature, talent and flexibility could have carried the shifting workload, raised a family, and managed a small farm after hours with her husband Ray. (Their first goat was named Mary Lou after me.)

The Smalls also raised Araucana chickens which lay colored eggs. We have often laughed about the day Lisa Whelan tried to transcribe a tape dictated by DeWitt "on the road," as she struggled to hear his words over the sounds of a crowing rooster and cackling chickens. He was trucking a gift of Araucanas from the Smalls to his home in Isle au Haut, Maine.

Here's another treasure. A photo and story naming the Rev. Richard Gillett to the executive staff in 1980, to be an ECPC presence on the West Coast. His



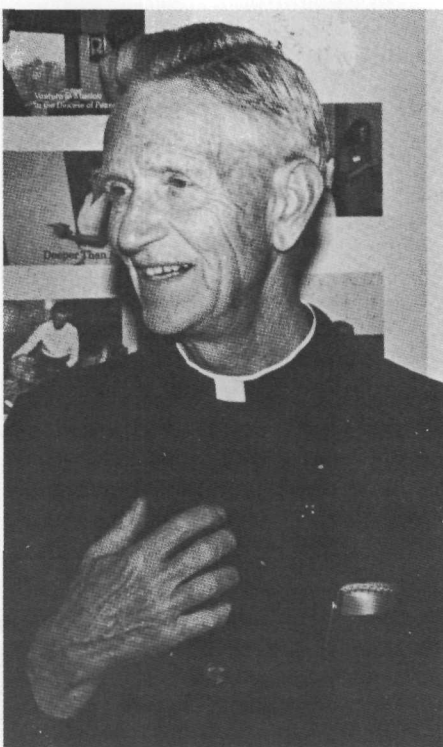
WITNESS staffers, Ambler office, from left, Susan Pierce, managing editor; Susan Small, editorial assistant, and Lynne Hoekman, promotion manager. (Michael Heayn photo.)

Los Angeles office became a beehive of activity around economic justice issues, minority rights, and site of publication of the Church and Society Newsletter. Cleaning a nearby closet, I find pillows and blankets used by Gillett and White when they slept overnight on canvas cots in the Ambler office when here for staff meetings. Our WITNESS lifestyle certainly did not rival that of the rich and the famous.

Wow, here's a file marked Grand Jury. During the late '70s and early '80s, ECPC became heavily involved in confronting Grand Jury abuse. The magazine took up the cause in 1977. DeWitt wrote an editorial alerting Episcopalians to the fact that Maria Cueto, who directed the Church's National Commission on Hispanic Affairs, and her secretary Raisa Nemikin, had been subpoenaed to testify before a Federal Grand Jury investigating the FALN, an alleged Puerto Rican terrorist group. Also at issue, DeWitt's editorial said, was a November, 1976 after-hours visit by the FBI to the Episcopal Church Center in New York, with the permission of the administration, for an office and file search.

The Church and Society Network joined the National Council of Churches in defending the women and in protest of such "covert activity" with its dire consequences to minority groups and constitutional rights. I relive countless trips to New York to cover meetings and court appearances . . . Cueto and Nemikin were to serve 10 months in jail as prisoners of conscience for refusing to testify before the Grand Jury.

A second incarnation of that Grand Jury caught in its net not only Cueto again, but also then-ECPC Board member Steven Guerra, who, with Cueto and other Hispanics, served another round of jail sentences for refusing to testify. THE WITNESS covered both events, and was visited by the FBI after I interviewed Maria and Raisa in jail. Bob Pot-



Robert L. DeWitt

ter served as amicus for ECPC during the trials, and Dick Gillett, a founder of the Puerto Rican Industrial Mission during his service there, wrote copiously about the issues involved, a major piece appearing in the *Christian Century* in 1984. Maria Cueto currently works with Gillett in Hispanic ministry in Immanuel parish, El Monte, Cal., a post he accepted after the ECPC Board phased out the Los Angeles office.

Next I find photos of Padre Miguel D'Escoto and our ecumenical group which joined his 1985 fast for peace in Nicaragua when he was Sandinista foreign minister. These others I took upon returning to Nicaragua with a delegation to bury the ashes of one of the fast participants, noted peace activist Sister Marge Tuite. And there's the orphanage she befriended in Yali near the border, which we had to cross five military checkpoints to reach.

Hey, here are my press credentials for the 1983 World Council of Churches

sixth assembly in Vancouver — gee, I look far less gray there; I discover old copy from an award winning issue of THE WITNESS on "God and Mother Russia" following a memorable trip I made with the National Council of Churches to the Soviet Union. And these old manuscripts are from the feminist study guide, *My Story's On: Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives*. Our plucky women's collective, spurred on by editor Paula Ross, was enabled in putting the book together by an ECPC grant, and the book still sells.

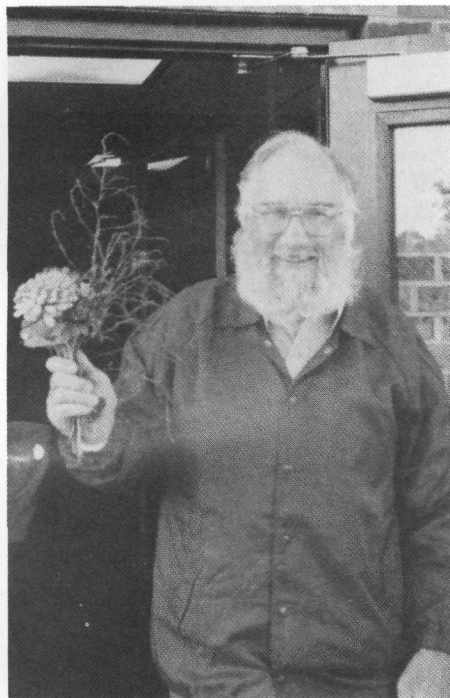
Now emerges a file of ECPC minutes revealing how the Board sought a full-time executive director to supervise the many activities which it had undertaken and to raise the visibility of ECPC. That task fell to the Rev. Barbara C. Harris. While her accomplishments were many, it was her leaving that was most spectacular. She skyrocketed to fame when elected first woman bishop of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion Sept. 24, 1988, turning the Ambler office into a veritable mission control station. Our telephones rang continuously with calls from across the nation and internationally until she left for her Diocese of Massachusetts. How's *that* for raising visibility!

Fortunately, Susan Pierce was on the job. Bearing the journalistic legacy of her mother, Jan Pierce, beloved managing editor of *The Episcopalian* until her death in 1988, Susan swung into action. My friend Jan had introduced me to her creative young daughter when we were producing THE WITNESS marking the 10th anniversary of the first Episcopal women priests, "Daughters of Prophecy" (the title was Susan's).

Susan had joined the team to write for that issue, and signed up fulltime as assistant editor shortly after producing the monthly series commemorating the 70th anniversary of THE WITNESS in 1987. Her stories about national and international events have added sparkle to our

pages and to our promotion efforts throughout the years. What better assistant to handle the press about Barbara's election — and to help coordinate the special April issue about her consecration. Susan has served as managing editor of THE WITNESS for more than a year now.

I walk about the office to take a breather . . . A whole panoply of family members beam down at me from photos on a pegboard on my wall — parents, siblings, nieces and nephews — a merry company who gladdened my heart during tense deadlines. Next to them is Sam Day, friend, confidante and consultant to THE WITNESS since its revival. Bob DeWitt sent Sam, then managing editor of *The Progressive*, to interview me in New York for the managing editorship of THE WITNESS. We met in a bar in Penn Station. As the second drink came and went, Ambler (where?) looked better and better to me and I suspect my quali-



Sam Day emerging from prison after serving time for civil disobedience. (Photo courtesy Nukewatch.)

fications also grew in Sam's estimation.

Sam, a noted peace activist (see page 5) set up a promotion schedule for THE WITNESS. With the competent assistance of promotion manager Ann Hunter for 11 years, and her successor, Lynne Hoekman, for the last two and a half, he doubled the WITNESS subscription rolls to 6,000 in spite of a 3-year fixed, no-growth budget period mandated by the Board along the way to cut expenses. Lynne has streamlined customer service by bringing our lists inhouse and taking on more fulfillment duties. (And has kept the office in flowers because her husband George has a fondness for remembering her on special occasions.)

Befriending progressives

My word, here is a whole file cabinet around the history of The Consultation, the umbrella group of progressive forces in the Episcopal Church working at peace and justice issues. Historically, THE WITNESS has always been associated with progressive groups — the Church League for Industrial Democracy (CLID) in the Spofford era, the Church and Society network in DeWitt's day, and The Consultation in ours. Early files read simply "constituency development", when the latter group operated without an official name.

In those days ECPC brought together representatives of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, the Union of Black Episcopalians, the Episcopal Women's Caucus, Integrity, Appalachian People's Service Organization and the Urban Bishops Coalition to strategize around common goals. The group matured and grew in number under the tenure of ECPC executive director Barbara Harris. Members have been key companions in our advocacy efforts, and I will sorely miss these tender comrades.

In this journey through the past, I am especially reminded of my debt to our contributing editors over the years, as well as longtime friend and artist Beth

Seka, who produced such striking covers and who, along with staff, made me look good. And Bob Eckersley, our CPA, who has been aboard since the Spofford days, will long be remembered for his help in critical times.

Since Bob DeWitt left Ambler, I have kept a bare crucifix that was formerly in his office. I should say, rather, it is a simple wooden cross without a corpus — and is before me now. It reminds me that we supply the bodies for our own crosses which we must bear as we work at our respective trades.

Managing editor Susan Pierce and I especially cherish two items in our offices which we will be taking away with us. Sue's is a framed montage from her mother's former office — a cartoon of Jan deluged by paperwork, trying to meet a deadline. It commemorated her "tencentennial" as Pennsylvania diocesan editor. When Sue joined our staff we ran a photo of both Pierces saying, "Like mother, like daughter." This daughter has truly been a faithful clone of her mother.

As I retire to New Orleans to spend quality time with my parents, Marie, 92, and Anthony, 90 (who just celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary) I return with the desk pen they gave me when I became editor. It says simply *Mary Lou*, 4/1/81, and marks the peak of a checkered journalistic career which they have followed with love and prayers. Neither could I have pursued it without your, support, dear WITNESS readers. I only hope new editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann and her staff enjoy the same backing.

Finally, it is time to say adieu and thank God for all that you have meant to me — WITNESS people, past and present; readers, family. The Spirit will help us, as we leave Ambler, to discern the next steps in life's great adventure. Meanwhile, put that good old New Orleans coffee on, Mom and Dad. I'm comin' home. TW

Lots of heat, not much light

By Susan Erdey

It was supposed to be a convention to end racism. But the 1991 Episcopal Church General Convention came instead to be known as “the 70th Genital Convention.” And it wasn’t just the 100 degrees-plus July temperatures in Phoenix that were getting folks hot and bothered.

If the state of the recently-completed 10-day Convention is an indication of the state of the Episcopal Church, then this church has sex on the brain.

It is also a church which is slowly discovering that it cannot legislate its way out of differences of opinion. Nearly 600 resolutions were submitted to the 1100 bishops and deputies for consideration, on topics ranging from abortion to economic sanctions to whom to include in the calendar of saints. And when the final session ended, a lot of paperwork had never even reached the floor of either the House of Deputies or the House of Bishops — it simply went into that Twilight Zone known as the three years between conventions, or as the legislative traffic cop, the Dispatch of Business, put it, “referred to the appropriate interim bodies for consideration.”

Sexuality debate dominated

But the one issue that didn’t get shunted off into limbo was sexuality. Specifically, homosexuality. Both houses spent an unbelievable amount of time trying to discern whether or not gay men and lesbians are qualified to be ordained, or whether their committed, long-term monogamous

relationships are worthy to be blessed. And while many people came to Phoenix determined to have a definitive answer to take home with them, by mid-Convention it seemed that compromise was good enough for most.

Typical of that movement toward compromise was a resolution initiated by Bishop David Johnson of Massachusetts. Prior to arriving in Phoenix, Johnson had circulated a proposal to a number of bishops, suggesting that all resolutions dealing with sexuality be taken off the agenda and that the House of Bishops spend the next three years preparing a pastoral statement about the church’s teaching on sexuality. It took several rounds through committee and several amendments by both houses before a final version was struck, which states in part:

The teaching of the Episcopal Church is that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the life-long, monogamous union of husband and wife . . . that this Church [resolves to] continue to work to reconcile the discontinuity between this teaching and the experience of many members of this body . . . this General Convention confesses our failure to lead and resolve this discontinuity through legislative efforts . . .

and goes on to commission bishops and dioceses to “deepen their understanding of these complex issues” and to develop a Pastoral Teaching before the 1994 General Convention. That’s the Episcopal way — when in doubt, drop back and study the problem some more.

Not all resolutions regarding sexuality were brought under the umbrella of

Johnson’s resolution. One notable exception, the proposed canonical change submitted by Bishop William Frey, called for all clergy to abstain from genital sexual relations outside of Holy Matrimony. After considerable and heated debate, the resolution was defeated in both houses. Another resolution, acknowledging that no one has a right to ordination, but guaranteeing equal access to the ordination process for all baptized members of the church, passed the House of Deputies by a fair margin, but got shot down in the House of Bishops on the last legislative day. Although the resolution’s intent was to guard against discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender, and disability as well as sexuality, the bishops couldn’t seem to see past the sexuality issue, fearing that such a broad-stroke resolution would be a back door for getting gays and lesbians into the ordination process.

The dispute over gays and lesbians had an impact in other ways. Early on in the Convention, John Spong and John MacNaughton, Bishops of Newark and West Texas respectively, nearly reenacted “the shoot-out at the O.K. Corral,” as Connecticut Bishop Arthur Walmsley described it. Spong decried the “incredible lack of understanding by people who are blinded by homophobia.” MacNaughton responded by asking if the definition of being homophobic “was disagreeing with the Bishop of Newark?” The House of Bishops became a tense place indeed, until Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning announced that the bishops would spend the better part of the next day behind closed doors in executive session — no visitors, no press allowed. Clearly, the

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fragile balance and trust of the House of Bishops was in jeopardy.

The bishops emerged from their executive session looking somewhat more at ease and ready to move on — until Spong stood up and announced that during the break between the session and the resumption of business, a “top leader” of the conservative group Episcopalians United had related to him much of what he had said during the closed-door meeting. Once again, the trust and collegiality of the house was on the line.

Collegiality remained the watchword of the bishops for the rest of the Convention, invoked in almost every instance of potential division. When a resolution was put forth to censure Ronald Haines, Bishop of Washington, D.C., and Walter Righter, Assistant Bishop of Newark, for their recent ordinations of a lesbian and a gay man, a substitute resolution softened the censure issue to one of breaking collegiality. Even so, the attempt to censure eventually failed.

Racism took back seat

But wasn't the whole point of meeting in Arizona — despite protests that the church should boycott the state which refused to pass a holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. — to make a powerful witness against racism? Where was the anti-racism agenda during all this preoccupation with sex?

In the back of the bus, that's where. African-American deputies and bishops lodged their disapproval at the first legislative day, when Deputy Antoinette Daniels of New Jersey and Bishop Walter Dennis of New York stood up in their respective houses during roll call to announce that they and many others were “present under protest” at the Phoenix Convention. Soon strips of purple ribbon showed up on lapels and nametags, symbols of solidarity with those who felt the decision to keep the Convention in Arizona was inappropriate. Ironically, when the Frey canon on sexuality was defeated

Alfred Yazzie, Sr., right, a Navajo from Ft. Defiance, Ariz., consecrated the worship space at the opening Eucharist of General Convention, assisted by Bishop Steven Plummer of Navajo-land. (Photo by Greta Hols.)



in the House of Deputies, conservative deputies, led by Pittsburgh's John Rodgers, stated that because of the house's non-affirmation of traditional biblical sexual morality, they would remain at Convention “under protest,” and suddenly strips of black ribbon were sported around the halls.

The entire Convention gathering took part in a “racial audit,” designed to discover the varying attitudes espoused by Episcopalians regarding race. The audit was conducted by an outside consulting firm, with results to be presented at an evening open hearing. The hearing's time and place had been published and sent to every bishop and deputy several months before, but on the day, deputies suddenly realized that the hearing would conflict with provincial dinners. Instead of simply rearranging their busy social calendars, deputies spent over an hour — abridging time set aside for debate on resolutions — trying to get Convention organizers to reschedule the audit report to a morning legislative session so their dinners wouldn't be cut short. The motion to change the schedule failed, but only by one vote.

Results of the racial audit, finally revealed at the regularly scheduled time (although videotaped for later viewing by those who couldn't get done with dinner

in time), provided few surprises. Respondents were divided by ethnicity and, in the case of blacks and whites, also divided by gender. To the statement, “I believe that cultural diversity is secondary to the Gospel message and that there are many more important issues to be addressed,” a majority of Native Americans agreed, while Asians, Hispanics, blacks, and whites disagreed, although by widely varying margins.

Sixty-two percent of black females, 72% of black males, and 59% of Native Americans agreed with the statement, “I find that white people in the Episcopal Church are distant, and that they feel superior to others,” while 37% of Asians and 33% of Hispanics agreed. Only 35% of white females and 28% of white males agreed. To the statement, “Adequate attention is paid to the problem of racism in the Episcopal Church,” 61% of Hispanics agreed, but Asians (26%), Native Americans (45%), black females (8%), black males (14%), white females (31%), and white males (29%), were far less convinced.

A full report of the audit will be prepared and made available for distribution and study. In addition, a resolution encouraging all dioceses to conduct their own racial audits was approved.

Judy Conley, president of the Union of

Black Episcopalians, said that although she felt that discussions around racism at the Convention, especially during daily Bible sharing, were healthy and good, "I don't have a great deal of hope that it's going to be brought back home." Conley did find a ray of hope in the racial audit, because "it is the first time that we've had actual raw data to support the fact that racism does exist in this institution."

Part of the plan for a scaled-down, simplified convention, initiated in response to the storm of protest when the church chose not to honor the boycott, included a request that exhibitors cut back on their space and that organizations either eliminate or simplify special dinners. There was little evidence in the exhibit hall of compliance, especially among the three most visible conservative organizations, the Prayer Book Society, the Episcopal Synod of America, and Episcopalians United. These groups held prime real estate in the center of the hall, with high-tech electronic equipment and opulent furniture. The Episcopal Church Publishing Company canceled its traditional awards dinner, and THE WITNESS withdrew its booth. And the Episcopal Divinity School was the only one of the 11 Episcopal seminaries that voted to stay away from Phoenix.

Delegates' response to the church's call to contribute financially to combat racism was lackluster. Despite widespread publicity that collections from daily worship services would be credited to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy fund, which provides scholarships for minority students, contributions remained low. One diligent deputy calculated that the average donation was approximately 30¢ per person per day — quite skimpy compared to the cost of meals being consumed at nearby restaurants.

Native American presence

One reason cited for keeping the Convention in Arizona was out of respect for Native American members of the Church

of Navajoland. Native Americans played an important role in the liturgical life of this Convention from beginning to end. At the opening Eucharist, Alfred Yazzie, a Navajo singer from Ft. Defiance, Arizona, performed a Navajo consecration ritual, the Blessing Way, which set aside the altar as sacred space.

Later in the Convention, Native Americans presented a prayer service, blending aspects of the many tribal traditions from which they came. The worship space smelled of burning sage, not incense, as the congregation entered. Bags of earth from the various tribal lands were brought and mixed on the altar to consecrate it as holy ground. Leaders prayed to Earth Mother and Father Heaven. Church leaders as diverse as Eau Claire's Bishop William Wantland, a Seminole, and Ginny Doctor, an Iroquois from Central New York, gave testimony to the struggles of Native Americans to maintain their own culture despite pressures to adopt Anglo ways and beliefs. "We have survived genocide, manifest destiny, and John Wayne," quipped Robert Two Bulls, a Lakota Sioux.

Exercise of Native American spirituality has come under fire recently from the Supreme Court, which ruled that Native Americans could not use peyote, a natural hallucinogenic drug derived from cactus, in their rituals. The Convention voted to support efforts to protect the right of religious freedom in the Native American Church.

But as meaningful as the Native American spirituality was for many Convention-goers, others saw it as a sort of environmentalist end-run on traditionalist theology. Several conservative groups denounced the rituals — and much of the debate on environmental issues — as "pantheism" and "syncretism". When pressed, few people could define any of these "isms" but most agreed they were the first steps down the slippery slope toward radical feminism and goddess worship.

Concern for the environment did figure into the life of Convention, most notably in the dismay over the amount of paper being processed for all of those resolutions. Archbishop Michael Peers, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and an outspoken environmentalist, addressed the joint Houses, where he quipped, "I'm a trifle anxious about the forests that have come down in order to provide your points of information."

By the morning of July 17, with four days left to go, the Convention print shop had made 1,119,033 copies. By the last three hours of the closing day, it was out of paper.

Legislative logjam

Unfortunately, the paper shortage left a lot of justice issues in limbo. Because Convention had spent so much time on sexuality, many resolutions on peace, international affairs, AIDS, and sexism were carried over from day to day on the legislative calendar. The last few hours of the final legislative day were conducted a breakneck pace, with barely time to find one resolution in the overstuffed Convention notebook before going on to the next. Even so, important legislation such as a resolution supporting selective conscientious objection got lost in the shuffle of papers — or in this case, the lack of papers.

One issue that did make it through the maze was the supplemental liturgical texts — the inclusive language liturgies — that have been in trial use since the 1988 Convention. To the surprise of many, the resolution to extend their use easily passed both Houses, with Bishops omitting one Eucharistic canon dealing with the feminine imagery of the Wisdom literature, and one doxology which referred to Jesus as "the Eternal Word."

One of most powerful moments in the legislative sessions came as Jonathan Myrick Daniels was considered for addition to the church's liturgical calendar as a martyr. Daniels, a seminarian working

Of mad dogs and Anglicans . . . ?

by Susan Erdey

Ah, yes. General Convention in Phoenix — in July, when the thermometer tops 100 on a daily basis. What was that old saying? “Only mad dogs and Anglicans go out . . .”

No one ever thought it would be dull. And we weren’t disappointed. A few tidbits culled from the exhibit hall, the legislative sessions, the elevators:

Walking the short block from the Sheraton to the Phoenix Civic Center was a lesson for Type A personalities and/or East Coasters who are used to zooming across streets against the light. First of all, almost nobody jaywalks here. And secondly, the heat slows you right down. You don’t go anywhere fast.

Weirdest sensation: Knowing you’re in the middle of a desert, and yet seeing fountains everywhere. The outdoor walkways in the Arizona Center, a nearby shopping and eating area that got lots of Episco-cash, are cooled by a system of jets that spray misted water on you as you walk, dine or shop. This is a city in deep denial of the global environmental crisis.

Most disgusting pamphlet: *F.A.G.*, published by a member of the Church Army and distributed at its booth. The acronym stands for “fornicator, adulterer, glutton” — the three sins the now-saved author allegedly suffered from. The pamphlets were originally placed on all of the tables in the Bible sharing/worship area. Outcry from Integrity and a number of deputies got the pamphlets re-

moved. The pamphlet was reissued under the title, “Forgiven and Freed from Sexual Sin.” Not quite as catchy.

Most ubiquitous symbol: Pink triangle stickers, distributed at the Integrity booth. As in Detroit, it was the sticker to have on your nametag. Best button at Integrity booth — for fellow travelers — a pink triangle that said “I’m straight, but I’m not narrow!”

Most annoying symbol: Blue square stickers, imported from Harvard University, where a conservative group wears them to express anti-gay sentiment.

Best bumper sticker: Worn on her hat by Ann McElroy, of the Diocese of El Camino Real — a lime green beauty reading “I sure miss Bishop Pike.”

Best spontaneous resolution: As the House of Bishops debated whether to urge Nestle’s/Carnation and Bristol-Myers to cease advertising infant formula, Bishop Charles Duvall of Central Gulf Coast spoke against the measure as meddling in companies’ affairs, and that he expected soon Convention would be dealing with resolutions against tobacco, guns and alcohol. Another bishop immediately shouted, “So moved!”

Overheard in the elevator, one jogger to another: “Hey, I found town! It’s about three miles away, but there were real people!” Most Convention-goers were insulated in their nearby hotels and didn’t see much of the area — unless they were staying

at Squaw Peak (fondly known in the press room as Twin Peaks) or The Pointe, which required a 30-minute bus ride each way.

Strangest leap of logic: The hymn, “The King of Love My Shepherd Is,” was scheduled for one of the morning eucharists, but one verse was omitted. Bishop Edward MacBurney of the Diocese of Quincy accused Integrity of engineering the deletion of the verse that begins, “Perverse and foolish oft I strayed.” Integrity demanded an apology, but apparently never got one.

Second strangest leap of logic: Some conservatives were accusing Integrity of orchestrating the General Convention to be in Phoenix at the same time as the convention of the Metropolitan Community Church, a denomination which reaches out especially to lesbians and gays.

People unclear on the concept: Exhibitors were asked to scale back their booths in the exhibit hall as a sign of the “austerity” being practiced by this General Convention. The Prayer Book Society, the Episcopal Synod of America, and Episcopalians United held the central booths in the hall, complete with plush lounge furniture. The Prayer Book Society also had a TV newsroom set up as their booth, with six color video monitors and a roving camera crew. A reporter asked a representative of PBS how their booth fit into the rubrics of “scaling back.” The representative replied, “Well, we used 3/4-inch plywood instead of one-inch.”

in the Civil Rights movement, was killed in 1965 in Hayneville, Ala., by a white deputy sheriff. Although the resolution came at the end of a long and often frustrating day, deputies from all across the country rose to speak eloquently in support of the proposal. Deputies voted unanimously for the proposal, which had been passed by the bishops earlier.

Women's issues

Women scored a major victory in the election by acclamation of Pamela Chinnis as the first woman president of the House of Deputies. Chinnis was a delegate to Triennial, the meeting of the Episcopal Church Women which is held at the same time and place as Convention, in 1967 when the first woman was seated on the floor of the House of Deputies. At a post-election press conference, Chinnis said, "It never entered my mind that I would one day stand on that podium as president." Asked how she felt about the recent ordination of a lesbian at Washington's Church of the Epiphany, Chinnis replied, "It was at my parish — that's all I need to say!" Chinnis is senior warden there.

A motion to repeal the controversial "episcopal visitors" resolution passed in 1988, which gives the option of asking for a visiting male bishop when members of a diocese cannot "in conscience" accept a woman bishop, met with defeat. Although the church has had three years since the consecration of Bishop Barbara Harris to get used to the idea of a woman bishop, apparently neither bishops nor deputies were willing to give in just yet.

In other legislation affecting women, Convention:

- affirmed the need for Medicaid funding for Norplant birth control devices;
- called for a celebration of the ordination of women to all holy orders of the church during the 1994 General Convention, the 20th anniversary of women's ordination to the priesthood;
- urged Nestle's/Carnation and Bristol-

Meyers to cease advertising infant formula products in developing countries;

- called on dioceses to report on their progress in complying with the 1985 General Convention resolution on maternal/parental leave policies;
- recognized the "seriousness of the crisis of the increasing pauperization of women and children", and called on "parishes and dioceses to support ministries designed to provide opportunities for movement out of poverty and to assist those still in poverty";
- supported policy of equal pay for work of equal value, or pay equity.

A resolution opposing governmental restrictions on abortion information was adopted by both houses on the final day of Convention.

A resolution opposing laws requiring parental notification for minors seeking abortions was hotly debated in both Houses. The Episcopal News Service reported that although a deputy from the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast objected to the resolution on the ground that parents have a right to know what their children are doing, other deputies pointed out that a growing number of minors seeking abortions are pregnant by family members or are in abusive family situations. The Houses eventually concurred in opposing the restrictive laws.

Center held

Although progressives may not exactly be jumping for joy over the way this Convention shaped up, they are probably heaving a sigh of relief that the most repressive legislation didn't pass and that, as many deputies commented, "the center held." As the last legislative day wound down, however, at least one traditionalist group expressed its dismay over the lack of conservative victories. The Episcopal Synod of America issued a statement which reads in part,

"There are now two religions in the Episcopal Church. We worship two Gods . . . One religion serves the God

whose self-revelation is preserved in Scripture and reliably passed on in the tradition of the church. The other serves the desires and beliefs of this age as interpreted by the consciences of individuals . . ."

The statement calls the "faithful people of the Episcopal Church" to support "both existing and new congregations founded on biblical principles in those diocese where the diocesan structures and the bishop are openly hostile to orthodox Christianity." A full plan of action for what seems to be the ESA's first step towards breakaway will be revealed at the group's November meeting.

Looking ahead

So now that the jet lag is wearing off, many questions remain.

How can the sheer volume of resolutions be reduced? After setting what must be an all-time record for numbers submitted, this process needs to be reviewed carefully. And does any one pay attention to these resolutions? Ultimately, canon law is the only thing that can be enforced in this church. So why does General Convention pass so many resolutions?

An oft-heard comment from bishops and deputies alike was, "We did the Anglican thing — we muddled through." Does the Anglican penchant for compromise, for the *via media*, mean that this is a wishy-washy church? Or are we just careful and deliberate?

Is the passage of the resolution calling for three more years of dialogue about sexuality just another way of postponing the inevitable? Or does the church need the time to allow people to "grieve" the loss of their prejudices and misconceptions. How long, many wonder, can the church afford to delay justice for gays and lesbians?

If people thought it was hot in Phoenix, just watch the next three years. There'll be plenty of heat on issues to come. And in Indianapolis, next Convention site, it may not be so easy to compromise. **TW**

Continued from page 3

with its provisions. But even if this resolution passes, the bitter fact remains that a large majority of our churches are either architecturally or attitudinally inaccessible to people with disabilities. Only after the necessary changes have been made can such individuals really feel they are welcome in the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Charles H. Swinehart, Jr.
Epilepsy Support Services
Brighton, Mich.

Will fight WITNESS

Since I became an alternate delegate to General Convention, I have been getting some truly unusual mail, but last weekend I got my copy of your publication. It was a revelation.

We live in relative isolation here, although I try to keep up with what is going on by reading. I had heard that there were organizations like yours "out there" but until I read your magazine I had really no idea of how real they were, and the evil they were trying to promote.

I won't bore you with theological arguments. You've heard them before and you have your responses down. The drill is redundant.

I will tell you, though, that I take seriously the baptismal charge that a Christian should not be ashamed "to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil." I intend to fight all that you propose.

Douglas Buchanan
Bishop, Cal.

Strange positions

It is difficult for me to understand the Episcopal Synod of America's position that a candidate for the priesthood must have a penis. Equally puzzling to me was that not too many years ago, I have been told on good authority, at least one of our Episcopal religious orders for women required a physical examination to determine for sure that the postulant was, in fact, a virgin.

One might wonder whether the virgin nun and the penis-carrying priest can pray

better, understand God and the sacraments better, and represent the love and caring of Jesus Christ any better than all the other human beings of this world. I think the church should stop looking at vaginas and penises and start thinking about the real image of God. I'll probably be strung up if this is printed, but one of the joys of being in one's 70s is that it doesn't even matter.

Ann R. Wood
Spokane, Wash.

From 97-year-old reader

I have just read the May issue of THE WITNESS and wish to have it sent to three of my relatives. I found it made me *think*, and more. I married an Episcopalian Oct. 1, 1913. I'm a Presbyterian but we had an Episcopal service. My Dan died in 1979, aged 91. I'm now 97 and, glad to say, have good eyes, good mind and am thankful for having had a wonderful long life.

Lily M. Gurnee
Granada Hills, Calif.

Parents speak out

We are the parents of a gay daughter and active in our P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Chapter. Both of us also happen to be Episcopalians. The gay/lesbian issue at General Convention in Phoenix is of great importance and concern to us.

Our gay daughter and her friend have been shunned in an Episcopal church where they were living. Many of our gay children remain closeted, living a lie, because of the lack of affirmation for them anywhere.

We believe that our gay children and friends are born gay — they don't have a choice about their sexuality. The only choice the gay and heterosexual communities have in common is whether or not to act on their sexuality. It was not a painless road traveled by our daughter, her friend and ourselves when we became aware of our daughter being gay, but with God's help we have come to understand and love her on a much deeper level than before.

Our churches, schools, parents and society teach us that homosexuality is

wrong. Somehow, with God's help, our hope is that all can overcome their pelvic mentality. We are thankful that the Episcopal Church has begun some dialogue on this very important issue.

Kenneth and Kathleen Tschabrun
Holdrege, Neb.

Adieu to staff

Thank you for the June pre-General Convention issue. It should have been mandatory reading for every deputy, lay and ordained — and the bishops!

Now, how to respond adequately to the move to Detroit. How to say "thank you and goodbye" to Mary Lou Suhor, Susan Pierce, Susan Small, and Lynne Hoekman who have been there for me on the other end of a long distance telephone line.

I have had a special relationship with THE WITNESS as both an author and a reader. You have nurtured me — editing my written words (painful as that may be), and helping me to know more about topics and places to which I might not otherwise have been exposed, and certainly not in the same way with your focus and perspective.

I used the word "friends" above, and that is what we have been although we have never met in the traditional sense. But we know each other, and we have worked together, and we have learned together. And each of us whose work has appeared in the magazine, and who have laughed and cried and been taught lessons we have needed to learn by other writers whose experiences we have shared, is indebted to you and your hard work and caring and professionalism. It showed through in every issue.

The future is always a challenge. I know that each of you who have guided THE WITNESS these past years will meet that personal challenge as you move forward to your next adventure. I hope that the folks who take on the task of following in your footsteps will show the same energy and concern as you have as they strive to maintain the level of this truly excellent journal.

Beatrice Pasternak
St. Louis, Mo.

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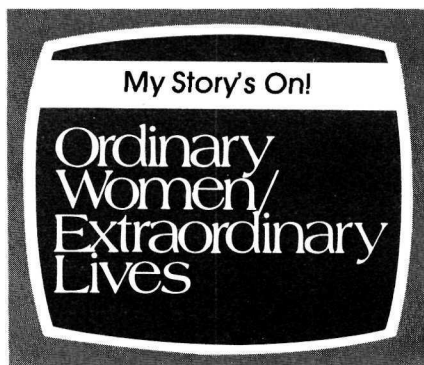
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