

Forbearance, Trust and Respect

By Susan D. Fawcett and Lauren R. Stanley

Special Legislative Committee 26 has been charged with all the hot-button issues of this General Convention: responding to Windsor, episcopal pastoral oversight, human sexuality and the blessing of same-sex unions.

The hearing tonight (7:30 p.m., Regency Ballroom, Hyatt) is anticipated to be so well-attended that deputations are receiving entrance tickets to ensure they get a seat. This could be a cantankerous meeting.

But what we're seeing at the hearings held thus far makes us optimistic.

Committee 26's work has been faithful, diligent and care-filled. The committee and

those who testified yesterday are striving to respond faithfully to the concerns of the rest of the Anglican Communion, while at the same time affirming our own identity and polity. What they are doing embodies the tension between autonomy and interdependence, two words that carry significant weight in the aftermath of the 2003 General Convention.

The committee's work is intentional and relational, exemplified by its discussion of forbearance, trust and respect as signs of how we are to live together in community. What seems to be emerging in these hearings is the idea that the Anglican Communion is more a

family than a legislative body, and as in many families, there are great tensions. How those tensions are worked out is as important as getting them worked out.

Tonight's meeting will be fruitful if all involved – committee members, those testifying and those listening – bring that same faithfulness, diligence and care.

If we manage to do that, there's a possibility that this General Convention could come up with an authentic response to the rest of the Anglican Communion that we can all live with while also reflecting who we are as a church. •

Exhibit Spotlight

Jesus for Free at Rebecca's Keepsakes

By Thomas Eaves

Rebecca Lauren Miller, daughter of the Rt. Rev. Steven and Cindy Miller of the Diocese of Milwaukee, has set up quite an exhibit this year at General Convention. It features several different crèche scenes she has hand-crafted using clay and other materials.

At the age of 3, Lauren discovered her talent for making things with "found materials." She first constructed a boat using scraps of paper, trash and gum wrappers. By the age of 10, Lauren had started her own business, making each unique figure with baked clay. Prices for her models and figures range from \$12 each to \$164 for a set.

She has received several commissions over the past few years, including one to decorate the sidewalks of Racine, Wis., where she lives. She contributed an otter and a birdbath to the project.

Formerly of Annandale, Va., Lauren will attend the Prairie School as a junior next year. She will explore many media, ranging from conventional two-dimensional arts to glass-blowing. While this may sound like a busy life, Lauren maintains an "A" average in school, where her favorite class is chemistry.

The inspiration to us all from this exhibit can be summed up by something Lauren said to one of her customers. "I don't know why my mom put that on there," she said, checking off the box next to "Jesus" on the order form. "Everybody gets Jesus free." •



Thomas Eaves



'The middle is not the midpoint on a line between two extremes. In the life of faith, the great bulk of people are at the center, and that center is faith in the Risen Christ.'

The Pastoral Address to the 210th Annual Council of the Diocese of Virginia, 2005, the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee

Perspective

Slavery and the Episcopal Church

By Julia E. Randle, Archivist, Virginia Theological Seminary

Should the church apologize for its ties to slavery?

To prepare for that important vote by General Convention, Center Aisle asked Julia Randle to dig into the record books of the early church, particularly within what became the Diocese of Virginia. Read on.

What was the economic tie between slavery and the Episcopal Church in Virginia? How did the diocese, the Virginia Theological Seminary and its churches benefit from the system of involuntary servitude that had been an integral part of Virginia's society and economy since the first sale of slaves at Jamestown in the early 17th century?

While it is clear the Episcopal Church benefited from slavery, documenting the details is difficult due to the absence of rich institutional records and the nature of the records that survive. Diocesan records prior to the Civil War are almost non-existent beyond the diocesan Journal. The Archives of the Virginia Theological Seminary contains Board of Trustees minutes for only half of its antebellum existence and a handful of other related documents, while parish records are scattered and incomplete. For evidence of the ways the Episcopal Church benefited from slavery in Virginia, one must look for answers in government records, scholarly assessments of the economy and records of personal actions.

During the Colonial period, prior to the 1785 organization of the Diocese of Virginia, the Church of England was the established or official church of the colony, and all inhabitants were members by law, regardless of personal preference. Virginia church buildings, like other major structures of the

period, were constructed with the assistance of slave labor. Some parishes owned slaves to work the parish glebe lands for the benefit of the parish or the rector. The major benefit to the church from the slave system, however, came through taxes. Parish churches were supported by the parish tax, or levy, not voluntary contributions. A head tax, or "tithe," was paid on white males, as well as "unfree" laborers, male or female, 16 years and older. While the master, not the slave, paid the tax, a large percentage of parish revenue in slaveholding areas was based on slave labor.

In 1785, the last vestiges of an established church ended in Virginia and the Diocese of Virginia was officially created. Tax support of the church was replaced by voluntary contributions by parishioners. The absence of tax income for parishes, however, did not remove slavery's monetary benefits from the churches, the diocese, or later, the Virginia Theological Seminary, founded in 1823. Historically, Virginia Episcopalians were slave owners, deriving much of their disposable income from the labor of their slaves. Voluntary contributions to parishes, the diocese or the seminary all came from the disposable income either directly produced by slave labor or from the economy based on involuntary servitude. Oral tradition indicates that slaves were donated or willed to various levels of the church in Virginia, but records have yet to be found to document this tradition.

Monies invested by the diocese or the seminary in banks or bonds in Virginia were also intimately connected with the slave economy, raising the same linkage *continued on TWO*

June 14, 2006

Issue Two

Center Aisle is an opinion journal offered by the Diocese of Virginia as a gift to General Convention. We offer analysis and opinions from a variety of sources that reflect the transformational center of our church.

Editorial

Pension Fund Election

Many pension funds may be struggling, but ours is thriving. Dennis Sullivan, president of the Church Pension Fund, reported Monday that the fund's assets have topped \$8 billion as of March 31 of this year, thanks to 16.9 percent annualized growth over the past triennium.

There's a happy result from that performance. Benefits will be expanded, beginning July 1. Surviving spouses and those at the lowest end of the pension-benefit scale will be among the major beneficiaries. Also, the clergy resettlement benefit has been dramatically increased for those newly retiring, making the transition from active ministry much easier financially.

Add all that together and it's a no-brainer who receives our support for election as Church Pension Fund trustees. Center Aisle endorses all nine incumbents for re-election. We also recommend the election of three other nominees, two of them former trustees, whose gifts complement those of the incumbents.

To help keep the strong financial trends going, we need continuity among the trustees. Proven expertise will also provide the base for an important initiative contained in Resolution A147: the Church-wide Healthcare Feasibility Study. The increasing strain on dioceses and parishes from ever-increasing, health-care costs might be mitigated by a denominational health-care benefits program. It's worth a look.

Overseeing the critical data-gathering for such a study requires a strong, diverse and experienced team of CPF trustees. Their role is crucial, given the financial possibilities. Studies through the CREDO *continued on THREE*

Letters to the Editor

We're interested in our opinions—and yours!
 E-mail your comments, analyses and reactions to centeraisle@thediocese.net or bring them to our offices in Room 30 on the third floor of the Columbus Renaissance Hotel.
 Candor is welcome. So is brevity. Shoot for 80 words or less.

Good Tip

Thank you John Ohmer for your article on tipping. What a great, practical insight on one way delegates to GC (and all Episcopalians) can put our faith into action.
 Those of us back in Virginia keep our bishops and delegates in our prayers. Now I have one additional way to celebrate our mutual connection in Christ during these nine days: I will tip generously.

THE REV. KEITH EMERSON
 RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

A Windsor 'R'ecommendation

Although it might not be making the rounds of the Internet, there is another "R" that summarizes a key recommendation of the Windsor Report: Refrain. That is, the Windsor Report calls for the Episcopal Church to "effect a moratorium on the election and consent to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same gender union until some new consensus

in the Anglican Communion emerges" (par. 134). The report seeks a similar moratorium on authorizing "public Rites of Blessing of same sex unions" (par. 144). And so, any embrace of Windsor would be "remiss" without placing this important "R" near its center.

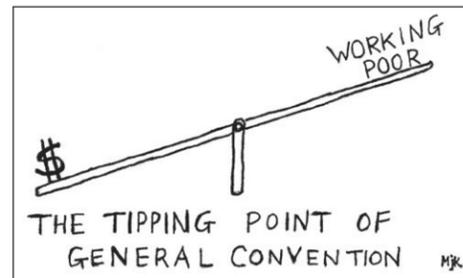
THE REV. DR. DONALD BINDER
 LORTON, VIRGINIA

Avoid 'Angstlicanism'

I very much appreciate John Ohmer's opening article and the tone it sets. I hope that tone is one that prevails throughout General Convention! It is all too easy to get swept up in what a friend has been calling "Angstlicanism," but we need to be ever mindful that God is bigger than the Episcopal Church or even the Anglican Communion, and that if we pay attention we will hear the whisper of the Spirit speaking to the Church. My prayer is that, having heard it, we will be given the grace to follow it... wherever it leads.

THE REV. GRACE GANGIALOSI
 RUCKERSVILLE, VIRGINIA

OffCenter



Slavery *continued*

issues as surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s regarding investments in U.S. companies supporting apartheid through their business activities in South Africa. The Virginia economy was based on slavery, so there was no way to benefit from the economy and not benefit from the institution of slavery.

Surviving records do not provide data on parish, diocesan or seminary ownership of slaves. It is known that building contractors included slaves in their construction crews and VTS buildings, and at least some parish churches were built with slave laborers. In addition, many slave owners rented out "extra" slaves to others. Documents at Mount Vernon from the 1850s record renting slaves to an agent for VTS to work at the seminary.

The ownership of slaves by individuals, however, can be determined through the U.S. Census records. These census records document the slave ownership of the first four bishops of Virginia—James Madison, Richard Channing Moore, William Meade and John Johns, and early professors Edward R. Lippitt, Joseph Packard and William Sparrow.

The Episcopal clergy of the Diocese of Virginia were slave owners, as well. Of the 112 Episcopal clergy canonically and physically resident in the Diocese of Virginia in 1860, 103 could be located in the U.S. Census of that year. Eighty-four of the brethren, or 82 percent, possessed at least one slave, while some owned dozens.

In short, the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia could not help but have economic ties to slavery. Involuntary servitude was the basis of Virginia's economy, which ultimately produced the disposable income that supported the church. Episcopalians, both lay and clergy, owned slaves. The Virginia Episcopal Church's economic ties to slavery, both institutional and personal, could end only with the dismantling of the slave system. •

Virginia Voices

With Independence, Comes Interdependence

By The Rev. Robert W. Prichard

Some contemporary Episcopalians view centralization in the Anglican Communion as a strategy in the debate about homosexuality. If one steps back from the current debate, however, it is possible to see a longer-term phenomenon—the result of the independence of former British colonies.

Prior to 1940, most Anglican dioceses in the developing world were led by British-born bishops, who looked to the United Kingdom for

financial support and adjudication of disputes. After the war, former missionary dioceses began to gain independence. Concern about unity on the part of the independent provinces of the 19th century—Scotland, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland—was an important factor in the formation of Lambeth Conferences (1867).

The increase in independent provinces after World War II led to the drive for additional

"instruments of unity."

The Lambeth Conference of 1948 created the Advisory Council of Missionary Strategy, forerunner of the Anglican Consultative Council (1978). The Anglican Secretariat, which coordinates global commissions for the communion today, began its life as the Anglican Communion Office in 1960.

It would be a shame if current debates convinced Americans to oppose the legitimate needs for coordination in the increasingly complex post-colonial church. •

Fund *continued*

Institute, which support programs for clergy wellness, also indicate that raising the level of health-care benefits leads to healthier and more productive clergy. At the national level, the Episcopal Church Medical Trust estimates a Church-wide plan could produce \$3 million to \$4 million of savings per year through leveraged contracts. This would be passed through in lower premium payments by parishes across the church.

In the balloting today, we endorse the following incumbents for re-election to six-year terms: the Rev. A Thomas Blackmon, Dallas; the Rev. Randall Chase, Massachusetts; Barbara B. Creed, El Camino Real; Deborah Harmon-Hines, Western Massachusetts; the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Virginia; the Rt. Rev. Claude Payne, Texas; Quintin E. Primo III, Chicago; Katherine Tyler Scott, Indianapolis; and Cecil Wray, New York.

We also recommend the following nominees for election to six-year terms: Vincent Currie, Central Gulf Coast, who has significant experience at all levels of responsibility in the Episcopal Church; the Rev. Gary Jones, Virginia, a rising leader in clergy wellness; and Diane Pollard, New York, who brings a breadth of experience in large pension organizations. Currie and Pollard are both former trustees. •

Worship is central to our week together at General Convention. Central Aisle will share snippets of sermons, hymns and prayers from those services.

"It is dangerous to invoke the Holy Spirit. What if we were to take it literally? ... How much fruit of the Spirit are we able to bear?"

PRESIDING BISHOP FRANK GRISWOLD
 SERMON, OPENING EUCHARIST, JUNE 13, 2006

"O Gracious God, you give your wisdom and strength to all who call upon you as

they respond to your call to them. We give you thanks for women who have responded to your call to faithfulness in diverse ways, times, places. We remember all the women named on this Wall of Women, and all those whose names are not yet on this wall but will be added this week. And we remember all whose names have been forgotten, but who each played their part in their time, mothers of our mothers, foremothers strong."

EVENING PRAYER, TRINITY CHURCH
 A TIMELINE OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES, JUNE 13, 2006

Today's Committee Meetings as of 5 p.m., Tues., June 13

Structure: Hearing	7:30 a.m.	Franklin AB A001, A046, A143, A144, A154, A155, B009
Consecration of Bishops: Hearing	7:30 a.m.	Harrison (Reg. 10 min. prior) D037
	2:00 p.m.	Harrison (Reg. 10 min. prior) D038
Social/Urban: Hearing	7:30 a.m.	Delaware BC (Reg. 10 min. prior) C022, C032
	2:00 p.m.	Delaware BC (Reg. 15 min. prior) A093, A095, A127, A156, A157, C010
Prayer Bk, Lit & Ch Music: Hearings	7:30 a.m.	Franklin CD A057, A059-65, B008, C002, C003, C006, C013, C016, C021, C034, C035, C043, D006
Ecumen Relations: Hearing	7:30 a.m.	Delaware D (Reg. 15 min. prior) A055, A056
P B & F: Hearing	7:30 p.m.	Union (Reg. 30 min. prior) Spending hearing

For additional and expanded analysis and opinions, visit us at www.centeraisle.net. Or subscribe to our daily e-mail push at <http://www.centeraisle.net/listserv.html>. We'll send out a notice each night when the next day's content is ready for viewing.



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