

Response on the Middle East

By Susan Fawcett

As a follow-up to our interviews of the Rt. Rev. Riah Abu Al-Essal and the Rev. Naim Ateek, *Center Aisle* asked the same questions of three members of the ecumenical Christian organization, Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East – the Rev. Dr. Peter Pettit, an ordained Lutheran minister; Dr. Dennis Hale, an Episcopalian and professor of political science at Boston College; and Sr. Ruth Lutt, a practicing lawyer and professed member of the Sisters of St. Dominic.

CA: How do we as Christians respond to our fellow Christians in the Holy Land – as well as to our Muslim and Jewish friends?

Pettit: We should support the ministries of Palestinian Christians and provide a critique of their worldview. That’s mutual—they critique our worldview as North Americans and we critique theirs. We engage in mutual critique to understand the church better. In response to Jews in the Holy Land, we should acknowledge that Israel is the national homeland of the Jewish people and that, given Christian anti-Jewish heritage, we of all people in this world need to be supportive of Israel’s sovereignty as a Jewish state.

CA: What thoughts do you have on Resolutions A011 and A012?

Lutt: They are unbalanced and reflect an unwholesome obsession with the alleged misdeeds of Israel, while they ignore Palestinian terrorism and refusal to accept the existence of the Jewish state. A012 calls for the removal

of the security barrier and human rights for Palestinians – without any passing reference to Palestinian terrorism.

Pettit: Biblically, a prophetic voice is addressed to one’s own community: As in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Israelite prophets address Israelite power. From a Palestinian perspective, these resolutions fail to critique the Palestinian use of power. From an American perspective, these resolutions don’t address American power but point the finger at somebody else.

CA: Does it seem ironic to you that, amid the Convention’s calls for continued participation in and awareness of our Anglican brothers and sisters, we have trouble identifying our response to Anglicans in Palestine?

Hale: The church needs to think about our Anglican brothers and sisters abroad and how they respond to the things we do. Are we interested in helping the situation, or just issuing resolutions? Our first responsibility to Anglicans in the Middle East is to have more than an anecdotal knowledge of this conflict.

Pettit: In addressing the church, we need to consistently remember our historical denigration of Judaism. The church has renounced that habit in the past 50 years. We now become the voice within society that must call for an end to that habit. And we should ask ourselves, “Is what we’re doing keeping the church faithful to God’s promises to the Jewish people?” •

Perspective continued

community in Jesus Christ with people who are different from ourselves. The differences may be social, ethnic, sexual, political, national, racial, linguistic, economic, educational – whatever! Difference makes it mission.

Ministry is faithful service to God and neighbor, and mission is the edge that meets difference. Put another way, mission is ministry in the dimension of difference.

In this perspective, so much of what we’re up to here comes into focus as mission. We meet difference in pursuing evangelism and ecumenism in a secular and multi-faith world. The sexuality controversy is about difference within our church and among the religious cultures of the Anglican Communion. Missionaries make their home in environments of difference. The election of a woman as presiding bishop holds promise for rectifying historic gender imbalances. Liturgical proposals seek to honor kinds of cultural difference in our church. And so on. It is mission when we’re working on difference.

A transformation of the past half-century is that Episcopalians increasingly see difference not as threat but as invitation. We now know we’re incomplete without the other who is different. We now know we need the other, that we’re impoverished without the other. Expanding this convention’s slogan: Come, meet difference, and grow! •

Such is a typical day for the delegates to the ECW Triennial Meeting, as they “Live in the Light” of Christ as one of the foundation stones of the Episcopal Church. An impromptu challenge by the ECW board on Friday offered to match dollar for dollar a collection to support the “Darkness into Day” campaign. Within moments, the ECW, through offering and match, provided \$10,000.

We applaud the work of the ECW at home and abroad, and we look forward to its continued commitment to leading in mission and ministry under newly elected President Kay Meyer of the Diocese of Atlanta. •



‘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

Mission is Ministry

by *The Rev. Dr. Titus Presler*

MEMBER, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, SUB-DEAN AND PROFESSOR OF MISSION AND WORLD CHRISTIANITY, GENERAL SEMINARY

Mission as a word and concept comes up all over the place at this General Convention.

Here are just a few instances:

- The Young Adult Service Corps returnees’ presentations about their work in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- Lee Allison Crawford’s witness in the House of Deputies about her Vermont parish’s relationship with the Diocese of El Salvador.
- The impassioned appeal at Saturday’s Eucharist from Aotearoa’s Jenny Te-Paa for Anglican unity amid disagreement.
- Tom Shaw’s stories at the Reconciliation Forum about visits from the Diocese of Massachusetts to the Diocese of Maseno North and the Diocese of Jerusalem.
- Enthusiastic passage of resolutions strengthening our missionary presence with companions around the world.
- Testimony from many at Committee 26’s hearings about how the Episcopal Church should move forward in the post-Windsor Report environment of the Anglican Communion.

Everywhere in the church – left, right and center – people are appealing to mission as the content and criterion of a faithful church’s life and work. Contributing to this consensus have been

the missional emphases of the 1979 Prayer Book, the renewal of Bible study in congregations, an abiding post-’60s commitment to community outreach and social justice, and the democratization of the church’s global mission through Companion Diocese Relationships.

Still, the clamoring voices of General Convention can be confusing. Liturgical revision, responding to the Windsor Report, sending missionaries, supporting the Millennium Development Goals, addressing racism – how do these and more fit together in the mission on which God sends us in the world?

Difference – another word spoken so often – is the pivotal reality. In one way, mission is everything we say God calls us to do in the Baptismal Covenant as summarized in the Catechism: restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ through worship and prayer, Gospel proclamation, and work for justice, peace and love.

What’s gotten people excited here in Columbus is not that general concept of mission but the cutting edge of mission that meets difference. We realize we’re truly on mission when we’re reaching beyond who we are as individuals and communities to encounter and form

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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.

“Where can I find the Center Aisle?”
By about 6:45 each morning, you can find it on the General Convention info desk in the lobby of your hotel. You also can find it in the Convention Center on the desk near the volunteer kiosk by the main escalators. And of course, we’re distributing by hand each morning around town and outside the Convention Center.

June 20, 2006

Issue Seven

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

It’s Not About Us

Deputies have made an encouraging start in the Church’s response to Windsor. Yesterday, they passed Resolution A160, expressing regret, with only a slight change.

Debate over A160 and A161, the omnibus resolution on the consecration of bishops and the blessing of same-gender unions, was reasoned, polite and caring.

But is that enough?

Why are A160 and A161 important? Because they respond to the rest of our family. Are they perfect? By no means. As Deputy Frank Wade said in the *About Us continued on THREE*

Editorial

Don’t Stop Now

For six years, the Task Force on Disciplinary Polices and Procedures has worked diligently and faithfully to rewrite the Title IV disciplinary canons. It prayed; it listened; it developed a theology of the ministry. But its proposed rewrite of the canons (Resolution A153) proved to be wildly unpopular with this General Convention.

The Committee on Canons, in conjunction with the Task Force and other committees, tried mightily to rewrite A153, but the task proved impossible in the short time allotted here. Now Canons, recognizing the good work done by the Task Force, is recommending that the work be continued in the next triennium.

General Convention needs to follow this recommendation. More work is needed, and it cannot happen without approval for more time and more money. A153 (substitute) needs to be approved, so that the work begun by the Task Force can continue and Title IV can be revised. •

Still Living in the Light

By Mike Kerr

The 45th Triennial Meeting of the Episcopal Church Women opened its Thursday afternoon plenary session to joyous music led by Dr. Horace Boyer, singing “Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.” With the theme, “Live in the Light,” the meeting parallels the June 13-21 General Convention.

A prayer chain of paper, with names of those being prayed for by the ECW, circled the entire room, and special guests of the ECW spoke to the need of prayer in all that we do as a church. The meeting session welcomed not only Bonnie Anderson, newly elected president of the House of Deputies, but also Robert Radtke, president of Episcopal Relief and Development. Mr. Radtke

spoke to how the efforts of the ECW expand the mission of the church domestically and internationally.

A short presentation by the bishops of Mississippi and Louisiana, Duncan Gray and Charles Jenkins, underscored the assistance provided by the ECW to hurricane-ravaged areas in their dioceses. Introduced by the two bishops was the “Darkness into Day” capital campaign. This campaign seeks to raise \$6.5 million for the compensation of clergy, the provision of essential diocesan services and the rebuilding of churches. A video presentation of the damage across the dioceses, set to the music of the Blind Boys of Alabama, left the room in stunned silence.



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.

All Benefited from Slavery

After nearly 75 years I have yet to know clearly my feelings on the subject of today's generation apologizing for slavery. I did not own slaves and am pretty certain that my own forebears did not, if only because of where they lived (I am an adoptive Virginian), and yet I have little doubt that in some way I too may well have benefited economically from the existence of the institution.

None of that, however, is my point of the moment. The article ("Slavery and the Episcopal Church, CA #2) mentions that Episcopal clergy in Virginia included slave owners, and that the Church in Virginia benefited both directly and indirectly. I think it worthy of mention that, at least before Independence, there were slaves in all or nearly all the colonies and that even Quakers, who were doctrinally opposed to slavery, owned slaves. Only last week *The Washington Post Book World* included the review of a biography of the Brown brothers of Rhode Island, Quakers, slave owners, slave traders, and founders of Brown University, one of whom changed, freed his slaves, and opposed slavery the rest of his life and the other who did not, causing a rift in the family.

In short, whatever our opinions, there is no escaping our history nor the fact that our current prosperity cannot help but owe something to the fact of slavery.

JOHN W. DAVISON, JR.
LEESBURG, VA.

Sabeel Would End Jewish State

While Naim Ateek affirms Israel as "a secure state," he masks a dangerous anti-Israel agenda

with the verbiage of justice.

In open hearings on June 17, Ateek emptied his support of Israel by saying he could not support it "as a Jewish state." The "secure" Israel he envisions is, in fact, "Palestine and Israel ... becom[ing] ... one state..." which Sabeel has officially advocated in its publications. With that formulation, Ateek would effectively bring the Jewish state to an end.

THE REV. PETER PETTIT
SR. RUTH LAUTT, O.P.
CHRISTIANS FOR FAIR WITNESS ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Holy Spirit is Alive in Episcopal Church

My neighbors are Mormons. I think they are very nice people. Because I have never thought of myself as His feet, I have always admired the Mormon Church's ability to mobilize such a large group of people to spread the Word. That is, until recently.

A few weeks ago, two young Mormon men came to my door, ironically as I was preparing to leave for one of my last EFM seminars. These two young men proceeded to explain to me how after Jesus was crucified and all the Apostles were martyred, no one had a personal relationship with God until Joseph Smith. In fact, they went on, it is only Mormons who currently have a personal relationship with God. Appalled, I asked them if they believed in the Holy Spirit.

As I read the news and letters printed in Center Aisle, I am happy to say I can see the Holy Spirit is alive and active in the Episcopal Church, even in these contentious times. That is comforting. In our early 40s and beleaguered by recent years of caring for aging and ailing parents on both sides, church has become a place for my husband and I go to rest and be refreshed. We're tired of bad news. We want to hear more Good News.

But after reading how inspired the rector of my own parish church was by the U2charist, the conversation with the two young Mormons comes back to me. So many of my not-really-Boomer but too-old-to-be-GenXer group of

friends need to be touched by the Holy Spirit. The message of hope and a future filled with open conversation I have been reading about is inspiring me to rethink my thoughts about being His feet/mouth/hands. Even just creating a group for people of my age to do nothing but be together in caring love and comfort.

STACY HARRISON
LEESBURG, VA.

OffCenter



Committee Hearings: June 20

Nat./Int.: 8 a.m., Delaware A, OH, B029, D055, D077, D085, Reg. 15 min. prior

Social/Urban: 7:30 a.m., Delaware BC, OH, D056, Reg. 15 min. prior

Correction

In yesterday's edition of *Center Aisle* (Letters, CA No. 6) we misidentified the diocese of canonical residence of the Rev. Canon Richard A. Swan. Mr. Swan is from the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. CA regrets the error.

About Us *continued*

introduction, "The words before you are imperfect. The people around you are imperfect. We are all imperfect. When gifts are offered in love and received in love, they become perfected by the grace of God."

General Convention needs to remember: This debate over Windsor is not about us. It is about the rest of the Anglican Communion hearing from us that we want to be in conversation. A160, in the hands of the Bishops, and A161, debate on which will resume this morning, open doors to allowing the conversation to continue. Without these resolutions, those doors very well may be closed, and that very well could be the end of the Anglican Communion experiment. And if this experiment ends, if we end up walking alone because we are not willing to apologize and go slowly, what good will we have accomplished?

Turning down these resolutions would seem to say we don't need the rest of, not the world, a secular phrase and interpretation, but the Body of Christ. The Apostle Paul clearly warned us not to do that, and we should not do so, even in the face of the perceived compulsion of the Windsor Report and recent statements of Anglican leaders.

Josephine Hicks, the Church's representative to the Anglican Consultative Council, put it clearly: "Regardless of our personal views, these create space and help us reach out." Isn't that what Jesus asks us to do? To reach out? To take the first hard steps? Isn't that the most biblical response?

Is A161 fair to gays and lesbians? No. Is it fair to anyone who supports gays and lesbians? No. But is this debate really about fairness? Or is it about following Jesus and making sacrifices?

The bottom line is this: Are we willing to respond to Windsor, to keep the conversation going? Or do we want to go it alone in a great big world, separating ourselves from the rest of the Body of Christ?

Deputies need to remember: This whole debate is not about us. This is about the Body of Christ. As one deputy said, "We are wrestling with mysteries, the mystery of sexuality and the mystery of being the Body of Christ." In this wrestling, we need to admit that all of us will suffer somehow, no matter what we do. To live at the foot of the cross, to emulate the outstretched arms of Jesus, is to live lives of mutual submission, taking into regard the concerns and the needs of all people.

That's what we need to remember and do. •

Virginia Voices

Church Planting is Mission & Outreach

By The Rt. Rev. David Colin Jones

General Convention is considering Resolution A042, a "Church Planting Initiative." This ambitious effort, if funded through major gifts, would launch a wave of church planting throughout the Episcopal Church.

But some ask, "Why start new congregations? Should we not be focusing on outreach and mission?" We have learned in the Diocese of Virginia that new congregations quickly become dynamic centers of outreach and mission. New congregations attract individuals who are not connected to active faith communities. Lives are changed through intentional efforts to reach "seekers." And, as lives are changed, new Christians want to make a difference. They are not content to sit back. They want to participate in hands-on ministry.

In the Diocese of Virginia we have been

delightfully surprised with the mission involvement of our newest congregations. It is part of their DNA. This summer, St. Clare's, a new Richmond plant, is running "Clare's Camp" for children

from underprivileged areas of the city as well as for children who have had many advantages. All Souls, Atlee, another young congregation, has recently sent two mission teams to the Gulf Coast. Holy Cross Church, a Korean mission in Northern Virginia, is about to embark for the

third year on a mission trip to Honduras.

Life in a new congregation is not business as usual. As new members deepen their faith and are incorporated into the life of a new church plant, they are excited, challenged, and engaged in mission. •

Words Without Works = Nothing

By The Rev. Lauren R. Stanley

Three resolutions focusing on slavery, reconciliation and reparations (A123, A127 and C011) offer a good start for work on these important issues, but unless they are taken seriously, they won't mean a thing.

C011, on studying reparations, has been watered down so much that it is now nothing more than a mere call to Congress and the American people to do that which neither has been willing to do before. That's not enough. This resolution needs more teeth.

A127, on reconciliation, has some teeth, but only if dioceses actually do what it asks. Bishops passed it Monday; now it is up to Deputies to first pass this resolution, then to go home and enact it.

A123 also has some teeth, asking that each diocese report its own complicity in slavery and discrimination. Unfortunately, it will be almost two years before a report will be made to Executive Council, and three more years before any positive actions can be taken.

Which begs the question for all people of color: How long, O Lord?

These resolutions certainly deserve to be passed, but that alone will not be enough.

All three could be seen as more great ideas – and that's that. But great ideas are not enough. The Church supported slavery for centuries. Virginia Theological Seminary archivist Julia Randle noted last week in *Center Aisle* that 82 percent of Episcopal clergy in the Diocese of Virginia in 1860 were slave owners. We need to make amends. These resolutions may lack teeth and funding (another problem with each), but we should not lack the resolve to do the right thing.

If the Episcopal Church wants to be the "repairer of the breach," every member will have to take specific – and sometimes hard – actions to restore the trust and respect of the African-American community.

Without waiting for yet another report, we can begin by acknowledging our history. We can make race-relations training mandatory for all leadership positions, lay and ordained. We can provide more funding to our historically African-American institutions, all of which already work to dismantle institutional racism in this country.

Taking these actions would begin to heal centuries-old pain, and would show that we truly are the reconcilers and healers we claim to be. •



Bishop Lee Jones Ohmer Stanley Antolini Fawcett Kerr Getlein

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