

Tucked away in the Blue Book is a sparkling gem of proposed new liturgy that deserves not only the attention of General Convention, but its support.

Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hopes: Liturgies and Prayers for Healing from Loss Related to Childbearing and Childbirth is proposed as the next volume of Enriching Our Worship, the Church's collection of supplemental liturgical material. Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hope was written in response to D047 from General Convention 2003 directing the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to develop post-abortion healing services.

In creating these liturgies of "lament, remembrance and hope," the SCLM "recognized the pastoral and long-overdue need for litur-

gies and prayers that minister to people suffering from reproductive loss and grief."

What makes these liturgies such a gem? The breadth and tenderness of prayers and hymns from a variety of traditions spanning history, the theology underlying the liturgies, and their delicate handling of one of the deepest moments of grief that parents experience.

For example, the Litany of Remembrance from the Reform Jewish Prayer Book will make you weep: "Memories of N. will come to us, unbidden, sometimes unexpected, in all the various moments of our lives," including "in the rising of the sun and its going down, ... at the blowing of the wind and in the chill of Winter, ... at the opening of buds and in the rebirth of

Spring ..."

Rachel's Tears, Hannah's Hopes includes liturgies for small gatherings; for private devotions; for the blessing of a pregnant woman; for mourning the loss of a pregnancy; and for repentance and reconciliation for an abortion. The last might cause some consternation, but the delicacy with which SCLM wrote these prayers deserves prayerful consideration.

Whenever the general tedium of legislation threatens to overwhelm members of General Convention, take a moment to peruse pages 205-265 in your Blue Book and rejoice in the beauty of these liturgies.



Center Aisle

"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 Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop of Virginia

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. www.centeraisle.net

Talk of the Town

Interviews and Photos by Thomas Eaves and Kate Hahn

Question: How do you feel about the Archbishop of Canterbury visiting General Convention?



A: I think it is a very positive step. I am looking forward to him seeing how the Episcopal Church does things and how we work together... just how engaged we are

in the life of the larger Church and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . [It] will be good for both of us.

— The Rev. Lawrence Womack, Clergy Alternate, St. Martin's, Charlotte, N.C.



A: I think it is very important that he is here. I think that we need to be cognizant of the worldwide Church and I am appreciative that he bothered to come.

—Mary Turner, Volunteer, St. Joseph's, Buena Park, Calif.



A: There is no substitute for people facing each other and talking about issues. The archbishop coming here to see us as we really are is very important.

—Larry Kirk, Lay Deputy, Trinity Parish, Reno Nevada

OffCenter



Cartoon: Mike Kerr

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our resources rightly for the care of the poor and marginalized. For example, Resolution D018 invites us all to a time of penitential reflection and action on the brokenness of the global economic order and its reformation in light of the Gospel. And Resolution D019 re-commits the Episcopal Church to the Millennium Development Goals as an expression of our faithfulness to God's mission of global reconciliation.

This is a defining moment for the Episcopal Church. Will we choose to wring our hands over the struggles with our own declining church budgets or will we proclaim that God in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, offers life in abundance for all? Let us not shy away from envisioning and working for a new economic order in these difficult times. In God's economy there is more than enough for all.

Perspective

A Defining Moment?

By the Rev. Dr. Ian T. Douglas, Episcopal Divinity School

For me, the key issue before the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention is the global economic crisis and how we as Christians can respond in a hopeful and Gospel-based manner.

How many of us gathering in Anaheim, or people we know and love, have lost their jobs in the last year? How many of our parish and diocesan budgets have had to endure 10 percent to 30 percent cuts because of downturns in investments and/or contributions? None of us is immune from the economic crisis and its ramifications on the sustainability of life itself.

The risk of this General Convention is that we will be so consumed with battles over the Church's budget and the stresses, strains and negotiations of the Program, Budget and Finance Committee that we will forget the life-denying realities of the global economic crisis on the poor, both in the United States and around the world. In a kind of "Screwtape Letters" moment, our concerns about the Church's budget can distract us from our wider vocation to serve God's mission of restoration and reconciliation in a hurting and hungry world.

The Rev. Dr. Sabina Alkire, an economist and Anglican priest who directs a major international development agency in Oxford, England, and who is a founding member of Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation (www.e4gr.org), has recently written: "The number of people living in abject poverty has reached 1 billion for the first time ever (just a few years ago it was 841 million hungry people on earth). International aid budgets are being cut; and in many countries government-funded social programs are also being reduced due to shrinking economies. Even the countries that give 0.7 percent for international development are giving less money



in real terms because their economies are smaller. Where I sit, the secular development agencies are really in a turmoil. I wish the churches were equally concerned. It is a time for the Church to be prophetic, to speak out, to

sustain its own commitment and call on others to sustain theirs. Quitting is easy. But our actions have consequences for the poorest of the world."

We at General Convention must lift our eyes beyond our own budget woes and see what God wants us to be about to effect wholeness and health in a hurting and needy world. Last night's forum on "Christian Faithfulness in the Global Economic Crisis" gave us the opportunity to hear from sisters and brothers in Christ, including Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, as to how each of us as Christians can work for the healing of the world.

A variety of resolutions, supported by such networks as the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice and Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation, challenge us to use

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Editorial

ABC: A Complex Leader

It's hard to imagine a matter more basic than telling the truth—the challenge the Archbishop of Canterbury issued last night during his eloquent call to spiritual arms, "Christian Faithfulness in the Global Economic Crisis."

We need to stop lying to ourselves and each other about "limitless" natural resources and about economic models that fail to take into account the social costs of our actions, argued Rowan Williams.

It's interesting that this message, both painful and practical, would come from a man who often seems to be not entirely of this world. But as it turns out, that "otherworldliness" might well be a good thing.

During a time of angry dissension in the Church, the 104<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury has become a visual and theological reminder of the deeper truths and historic ties that have held together our worldwide Communion.

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Center Aisle Endorses...

Go to Page 3 to read about our choices for the Executive Council, the Church Pension Fund Board of Trustees and other positions. Our criteria include experience, expertise and diversity.

Contact Center Aisle

We're interested in your opinions. Send your comments and reactions to centeraisle@thediocese.net. Candor is welcome. So is brevity. Shoot for 80 words or less.

Can't Get Enough Center Aisle?

Visit www.centeraisle.net for exclusive Web content; a blog with General Convention updates and unique perspectives; and YouTube videos. You can also join our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter (Twitter.com/CenterAisle).

Where can I find Center Aisle?

By about 5:45 each morning, we'll be distributing copies of Center Aisle by hand around the Convention hotels. You can also find us outside of the Convention Center and inside on the handout table.

## Letter to the Editor

I appreciate *Center Aisle's* effort to "keep it light" in discussing General Convention. But I also read *Episcopal Life*, whose July issue lays out the serious issue of whether or not to break the moratorium in B033, as advocated by the Diocese of Newark.

I have absolute confidence that the distinguished deputation Virginia is sending to Anaheim will find the practical tactics for preventing deeper schism in the Anglican Communion, another financial crisis in diocesan giving and more departures from the Episcopal Church.

I just hope and pray that General Convention won't go down that path again and that it will retain B033.

Jack Schick  
Diocese of Virginia

## This Discussion Could Be a Real Gift

Beginning today, deputies have a chance to discuss, without legislative binds, the resolutions resulting from the passage of B033 in 2006, which called for exercising restraint in consecrating bishops.

House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson announced before General Convention that the Deputies would meet twice, today and tomorrow, as a "committee of the whole" to explore what it wants to do, if anything, about B033.

General Convention has not had a "committee of the whole" since 1976, when the Church discussed and passed the ordination of women.

This approach means that there will be no legislative maneuvering, no calling of the question. Rather, it means that deputies will have a real chance to listen to each other and to share their own viewpoints. These two hours, if deputies are willing, could be a real gift to the Church.

—The Rev. Lauren R. Stanley

## Center Aisle



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Flanked by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson, the Archbishop of Canterbury receives a standing ovation at yesterday's forum. Photo: Matt Farr

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Dr. Williams has been faulted—rightly so on occasion—for statements too easily misunderstood. His comments on *shar'ia* law come to mind.

But the archbishop, whose whiskers are well-suited for a windy day on the moors, has managed to navigate incessant criticism from all sides. As he joins us at this General Convention, he remains, against all odds, a transformational leader of 75 million Anglicans.

Of course, even the designation of "leader" lacks the subtlety craved by Anglicans. You know there are nuances when your job description refers to you as "an instrument of communion."

But then, Dr. Williams is a master of nuance, unafraid of ambiguity, not enthralled by the black and white of it all. His scholarly dissertations on early monastic life and the history of icons are masterpieces of insight. They are incisive in their glorious detail, the work of an original thinker. How often does one encounter a master theologian with a talent for poetry?

The complexity of his personality has been reflected in many of his statements as

archbishop. Call it "Anglican-speak" if you like, but Dr. Williams has a knack for saying weighty things in ways that connect to a diversity of seekers.

The archbishop has unquestionably changed from his days as the primate of Wales. This onetime "liberal" on matters of human sexuality has become a seeker of unity, a crafter of consensus.

That is how it should be. Far from a sign of weakness, Dr. Williams' evolution has reflected his humility. It is, after all, not his personal preferences he seeks to spread from Canterbury, but the perspective of a Communion rich in diversity. There are those who contend that Dr. Williams has wasted his intellectual powers on petty matters of governance in an unwieldy Communion. There are others who fault his indecisiveness for the continuing divisions in the Church.

But the reality of the archbishop's tumultuous tenure may have been captured by Dr. Williams himself. Writing about leaders during divisive times, he concluded, "Such figures are destined neither for charismatic triumph, nor for the overtly noble and tragic role of the straightforward martyr: They carry the unresolved tensions of their communities in their own persons, and so guarantee that uncomfortable truths are not buried."

Such may be the legacy of the 104<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury.

*Looking for more perspectives on the Archbishop of Canterbury? See our Q&A on Page 4, or visit [www.centeraisle.net](http://www.centeraisle.net) to access YouTube video interviews with our Virginia Bishops on the archbishop's visit.*

## Virginia Voices

### Title IV Reform: Say Goodbye to Clergy Romance

By the Rev. Dr. Robert Prichard

*Opinions and positions from the deputation of the Diocese of Virginia*

The members of the Title IV Task Force have intentionally or unintentionally provided an ingenious way to avoid entanglement in the sexuality debate that has divided the Church: In proposing a replacement for a canon dealing with clergy discipline, they have omitted any reference to marriage of any kind in their definitions of sexual behavior, sexual misconduct and pastoral relationship.

The solution is ingenious, but the results are unfortunate. If read literally, the proposed canon would make most married clergy liable to charges of sexual misconduct, for the canon broadly defines any romantic relationship between a clergy person and a person who is a "volunteer . . . or in the same congregation as the member of the Clergy" or the recipient of "counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance" from that member of the Clergy to be misconduct.

To avoid the canon's definition of misconduct, clergy and spouses would have to par-

ticipate in different congregations and would have to refrain from conversation about spiritual matters.

One would assume that this was not the intention of the drafters of the proposed canon, but only an unintended consequence of the attempt to frame standards of conduct without reference to marriage. Members of the Committee on Canons will need to take a serious look at the proposed language.

The implications of the proposed definitions for unmarried clergy are, however, undoubtedly intended. The definition would discourage clergy from initiating any romantic relationship with any person in a congregation to which they are connected, even if that connection were not that of rector-parishioner, counselor-counselee or employer-employee. The definition is broad enough to exclude a romantic relationship between two assisting clergy in a large congregation.

The proposed canon may be intended to

spare congregations exposure to the messiness of contemporary dating. The canon does not, however, provide standards for the honorable courtship of unmarried clergy; it only labels romantic behavior as misconduct if it involves a person who has some relationship to the church.

It is, moreover, cast so broadly that "any physical contact, bodily movement, speech, communication or other activity sexual in nature" is excluded between clergy and those connected to the congregations in which they serve. A lingering kiss or a love letter would seem to be out of bounds.

The potential for problems created by clergy romantic relationships is real, but banning all relationships with those most likely to share a common Christian faith in the context of the Episcopal Church may not, however, be the wisest way in which to deal with those potential problems.



## Center Aisle's Choices for Councils and Boards

*Center Aisle* endorses the following 12 people for election by the House of Deputies to the Church Pension Fund Board of Trustees. Our criteria involved affirmation of the governance of the CPF by endorsing the four incumbents eligible for additional terms, concern for continuing the diversity of the board, and concern for the boards' need for special competencies, e.g., investment and accounting experience at a senior level. We endorse:

- Martha Bedell Alexander
- Robert H. Johnson
- James E. Bayne
- V. Gene Robinson
- Thomas James Brown
- Edgar S. Starns
- Gordon B. Fowler Jr.
- Sandra S. Swan
- Karen Noble Hanson
- Wesley S. Williams Jr.
- Julio Cesar Holguin Khoury
- Wayne P. Wright

For the Executive Council, continuing our concern for diversity and inclusion, *Center Aisle*

endorses for election by the House of Bishops:

- Wendell Gibbs
- John Howe

For election by the House of Deputies, we endorse the following six lay persons:

- Scott Evenbeck
- Sandra Michael
- Patrick Fenning
- Katie Sherrod
- Stephen Hutchinson
- Carlton Stockton

For election by the House of Deputies, we endorse the following two clergy:

- Zabron (Chip) Davis
- Kevin Martin

For the General Board of Examining Chaplains (GBEC), for election by the House of Bishops, we endorse Sean Rowe and the following three lay persons:

- Frank Conteh
- Duncan Cairnes Ely
- Donn F. Morgan

We also endorse for election to the GBEC by the House of Bishops the following three clergy with specialized ministries:

- Lyndon Charles Shakespeare
- Elena Thompson
- Tanya R. Wallace

Finally, we endorse the following three faculty members for election to the GBEC by the House of Bishops:

- Lloyd A. Lewis
- Frederick W. Schmidt
- Denise Yarborough

For the trustees of the General Theological Seminary, we endorse Neil Alexander and Clifton Daniel for election by the House of Bishops; lay persons Marjorie Christie and Reginald Scantlebury and clergy Yamily Bass-Choate and Gregory Jones for election by the House of Deputies.