

## Perspective

### Is it a Book? Is it Common? Does it Have a Prayer?

By the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee  
Bishop of Virginia

The constitutional amendment proposed by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) (Resolution A-132) opens the way for publication of additional forms of worship without the expensive and elaborate process involved in the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. Center Aisle endorses the passage of the first reading of A-132 and questions the need or wisdom for the adoption of Resolution A-066 in its present form.

Contemporary information technology has made possible the availability of a wide range of liturgical and musical resources. In its introductory material in the Blue Book, the SCLM accurately observes, "to achieve a renewed and enriched Common Worship is not a task that can be achieved by a deadline. It is the vocation and aspiration of a living church....Local traditions will be established and then taken on by others until they become widely used. Diocesan and national groupings will initiate experiments that local groups will test and evaluate." (Blue Book p. 242)

The elaborate list of assumptions, scope and structure, and methodology outlined by the SCLM suggests the imposition of a bureaucratic, controlling structure on what should be a refreshing freedom to experiment within the living liturgical tradition of the church.

A more unifying process that still recognizes diversity might be the adoption of the constitutional amendment to permit publication of alternative forms while leaving the 1979 Book of Common Prayer in place as the norm for our common worship. We fear that when SCLM mentions "addressing expansive language concerns" in the 1979 text, it means excising references to "Father," "Lord," "King," in our language of liturgy and when SCLM says "the question of one or

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Yes, *Convention*,

## There Is Another Way

In the debate over same-sex unions, which added another chapter at a crowded open hearing last night, the real threat to the Episcopal Church comes from advocates bent on premature closure to a lasting and complex issue.

Extremes must be rejected. The rigid, fundamentalist attitude of Soulforce, with its disdainful claim of "I'm right and you're wrong," is as unhelpful as the alarmist attitude of those who would have us believe that the action of blessing same-sex unions is itself a "frontal assault on the institution of marriage" and a "sure step toward cultural suicide."

There is another way. It is found in continued compassionate listening, in choosing to live deliberately in the reality of confusion for the foreseeable future. The model used in the Diocese of Virginia is to bring together, on a regular basis, groups that reflect the full theological spectrum on human sexuality. Members meet frequently, pledging to commit to conversations grounded in Scripture, theology, and prayer. There is no expectation of any conclusion, of any ruling on anything, one way or another. We choose not to solve the problem.

We admit that deliberately choosing "not to solve a problem" is sometimes avoidance, or worse, a cop-out. But other times—and this is one of them—we are tempted to pressure ourselves into "solutions" that turn out to be worse than the problem they supposedly solved.

At last night's two-hour hearing drawing over 900 people, we heard a wide variety of sincere testimonies from many different perspectives. But even in the variety of opinions, there was a constant refrain, "now is the time."

There are those who say "the debate must end" over same-sex blessings, and that *now is the time*—at this General Convention—for the Episcopal Church to start the process for officially sanctioning homosexual rela-

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### Pass on the Salt, Please



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**In observance of the Sabbath suspension of legislation, and to give ourselves a small break, Center Aisle will not publish a Sunday issue. We will return to the street at 6 a.m., Monday morning with issue No. 5. See you then.**

Hearing schedule for Saturday, July 8. Sites and subjects reflect information posted by the Secretariat of the General Convention as of 7:50 p.m. yesterday. For further information on meeting room assignments, call the General Convention staff office at 303/228-8520.

- **Canons**, Westin, Horace Tabor, 8 a.m.: Open hearing, B044
- **Church in Small Communities**, Hyatt, Royal, 7:30 a.m.: Open discussion on total ministry
- **Church Pension Fund**, Marriott, Salon C & D, 7:30 a.m.: Open hearing, C039, D036, D044, D046
- **Committee on the Church and Human Sexuality**, Marriott, Suite 3, 7:30 a.m.: Committee deliberation only
- **Communications**, Executive Tower, Assembly, 8: Committee deliberation only
- **Constitution**, Westin, Curtis, 7:30 a.m.: Committee deliberation only, no testimony, A023, A025.
- **Ecumenical Relations**, Westin, Lawrence A, Mezzanine, 7:30 a.m.: Open hearing, D047, D051, A038
- **Education**, Westin, Lawrence B, 7:30 a.m.: B015, B036, C032, D014
- **Evangelism**, Executive Tower, Douglas, 8 a.m.: Committee deliberation only
- **Ministry**, Westin, Molly Brown, 7:30 a.m.: A027, A076, A087, C004, C011, C033, D013, D015. 5 p.m., House of Deputies visitor's section: Committee deliberation only
- **National and International Concerns**, Marriott, Salon B, 7:30 a.m.: B016, B032, D033
- **Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music**, Executive Tower, Symphony, 7:30 a.m.: A069, A132, B017
- **Privilege and Courtesy**, Marriott, Gold Coin: Open hearing, various courtesy resolutions
- **Social and Urban Affairs**, Executive Tower, Brahms, 7:30 a.m.: Open hearing, A006, B007, C025, D004
- **Structure**, Hyatt, Far East, 7:30 a.m.: Open hearing, C009, D035
- **World Mission**, Marriott, Salon A, 8 a.m.: Committee deliberation only, A011, A012

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tionships through the provision of official rites of blessing in the Book of Occasional Services.

Then there are those who say that the unofficial "live-and-let-live" position of the Episcopal Church regarding those dioceses that allow same-sex blessings must stop, and that *now is the time* for the Church to take a firm stance denouncing same-sex unions and those who bless them.

We reject both of these extremes, and we hold up a positive alternative.

We believe the official approval of the blessing of same-sex unions would signify a rupture with the rest of the Anglican Communion and mark a major departure from the beliefs of mainstream Episcopalians.

And yet we believe it is foolish to bury our heads in the sand and pretend that those very blessings are not already taking place by people of good faith—Episcopalian Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ—in many dioceses of our Church.

Our model of compassionate listening is not for those seeking final resolution. But it is a model that preserves core values of unity, love and witness in our church.

And it is a model that works.

## Don't Exclude Us

I am a member of Table No. 48. We have met together three times for Eucharist, prayer and meditation. I again was very disappointed and discouraged that the prayers, responses, readings, especially the Gospel of our Lord, was only written in English.

On page 9 of (yesterday's) "The Holy Eucharist" booklet, the presider prayed, "In the fullness of time bring us, with all your saints, from every *tribe* and *language* and *people* and *nation*, to feast at the banquet prepared from the foundation of the world."

At past conventions, Spanish and American Indian translations were part of our worship booklet and oral readings.

Our table is composed of three people who don't speak Spanish and two individuals who don't speak English. Half of our meditation session was spent with Spanish as the primary language. Our table was blessed with four bilingual members who could translate.

In the spirit of "wholeheartedness," as our Presiding Bishop has called us, please realize that written corporate discrimination is still exclusionary.

**Kathy Yaeger**  
Alternate Deputy,  
Northwest Pennsylvania

## The People Respond

Join us in the walk down the center aisle by writing us at Suite 322, Holtze Hotel, 818 Seventeenth St., Denver (just drop it by the front desk and they'll get it to us, or give it to any member of the Diocese of Virginia deputation). Or you can send your letter to [centeraisle@thediocese.net](mailto:centeraisle@thediocese.net). As space permits, we will publish your letters and commentary. Please try to limit your letters to 150 words. Your letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please be sure to sign your correspondence and let us know how we can contact you.

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# Meet the Nominees

The election of the President of the House of Deputies is scheduled to take place this afternoon. Center Aisle took time yesterday to get to know the candidates beyond their resumes. Here's what they had to say.

## Randy Dales

*Wolfeboro, N.H.*

**CA:** In what ways has the office of the President changed in the last nine years?

**RD:** I think Pamela Chinnis has expanded the office by her willingness to be present to the church in so many ways. She has been to every interim body and has been willing to be available to those with whom she agrees and disagrees in the Church.



**CA:** In what new directions do you see the office of the President moving in the next decade?

**RD:** I see increased communication with the deputies demonstrating that they are elected for a three-year term and not for 13 days. I envision a greater openness about the action taken by the President of the House of Deputies and those taken in partnership with the Presiding Bishop.

**CA:** What changes would you make to have this happen?

**RD:** Specifically, I would hope for:

1. A regular list-serve mail to the deputies from the President.
2. Honesty and forthrightness on the part of the President.
3. An increased use of the Council of Advice.

## Reynolds Cheney

*Memphis, Tenn.*

**CA:** In what ways has the office of the President changed in the last nine years?

**RC:** The position of the President of the House of Deputies has grown in importance in the last nine years. Mrs. Chinnis has dedicated herself to be an emissary of the Episcopal Church, attending such things as the World Council of Churches in an exemplary manner. She has as her avocation to serve and commit to take the time to go to New York to be part of the life of the General Convention at 815.



**CA:** In what new directions do you see the Office of the President moving in the next decade?

**RC:** I think the office needs to become even more important as the spokesperson for the clergy and laity of the church. It needs to take an increased role on Executive Council where the President is Vice President. The office of the President needs to be more active in appointing people of diverse backgrounds to the interim bodies committees and standing com-

missions in regard to race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and economic and social backgrounds.

**CA:** What changes would you make to have this happen?

**RC:** I think the President would work closely with the Presiding Bishop to make sure the Church moves together in reference to the bishops, clergy and laity. We need to work hard at building community and mutual respect. We need to create opportunities to listen to each other and to make a focused effort to recruit people with diverse backgrounds to serve the church. We need to involve the Executive Council as much as possible in the life and operations of the Episcopal Church.

## George Werner

*Pittsburgh, Penn.*

**CA:** In what ways has the Office of the President changed in the last nine years?

**GW:** There have been several things that have changed over the last decade. There were two distinct budgets—a General Convention budget and a budget to take care of the expenses of the Presiding Bishop's office. Since we have merged into one budget, the lines are no longer as clear and there is a danger that the House of Deputies can be marginalized. When David Collins was President, the job grew to be a two-thirds time job. Pam Chinnis as the first woman President had even more demand on her time and the job has grown even larger. Pam and her Council of Advice have also made other significant changes. The number of resolutions has gone from 600 to a little more than 200. Pam has been phenomenal with clear and more frequent communication with the deputies.



**CA:** In what new directions do you see the Office of the President moving in the next decade?

**GW:** There has been some concern and feeling that the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop are clones. That is a concern. The President and the Presiding Bishop are equal in some aspects, but the Presiding Bishop wears many different hats and he is clearly the Primate. One new direction I see is seeking the right kinds of authority through budgeting and oversight without messing up the balance. The President of the House also has the opportunity to bring many diverse voices to the table. It is a chance to really identify the people of all backgrounds and appoint them to leadership positions. That is what makes a healthy Church.

**CA:** What changes would you make to have this happen?

**GW:** I see the President of the House to have the opportunity to act as a catalyst for several movements in the church such as 20/20 evangelism, urban ministry and a development fund, and to help us really be the kind of Church God calls us to be. People involved in strong mission are not as involved in wars between themselves.

## Pass on the Salt, Please

You've got to be kidding. Salt under tables? Salt strewn on the microphone daises? Prayers for exorcisms?

That's what is going on over in Deputies these days, courtesy of the Rev. Nelson W. Koscheski, deputy from Dallas.

Apparently he's been going around before the sessions, spreading salt under numerous deputation tables as an ancient symbol of exorcism in the Christian church. Most of the time, no one's paying any attention.

Until yesterday, when Dr. Louie Crew, deputy from Newark and founder of Integrity, objected during the House's business meeting that Koscheski had put salt under the chairs of Newark's deputation. Crew's objection led to the suspension of business until the salt was removed. During the cleanup, about two-thirds of the deputies gathered at Newark's table to sing hymns.

Koscheski said the salt was blessed (like it makes a difference?) and that he was in great pain for being accused of heterosexism. This isn't about hatred, he said, just his own pain. The Rev. Mark Anschutz, also from Dallas, told the House that Koscheski's action was not representative of the rest of the deputation.

Save the salt for dinner, sir.

## Perspective *continued from front*

two Rites needs to be addressed," it is warning us that it looks with disfavor on the Rite I early Sunday morning Eucharist all across the church.

In many places, the rich resources of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer are still not fully in use. The Easter Vigil, perhaps the single most powerful liturgy of the church, continues to grow in usage but is by no means yet universal.

Many of SCLM's assumptions, especially regarding technology, are useful. What they observe about the breadth of liturgical activity across the church is, we believe, inconsistent with the establishment of a single office to control that activity.

We think the model of a single, enduring Book of Common Prayer as a norm of unity with provision for additional alternative forms is better than a plan that endangers the present Prayer Book.

Resolution A-066 could be revised to meet this goal in these ways:

- Remove the word, "Revision," from line 3 of the first paragraph of the resolution
- Revise lines 9 and 10 of the second paragraph to read, "while providing for the unity and continuity of the Book of Common Prayer."
- Revise line 17 to authorize a lesser amount of money for the process.

The result, we believe, of the adoption of our suggestions will be a "win-win," "both-and" liturgical process that contributes to the unity of the church and provides sufficient flexibility for the development of alternative rites.

## CCM Rounds Third

We're almost home.

Full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America took a step closer to reality yesterday when the House of Bishops overwhelmingly and enthusiastically approved Called to Common Mission.

Later in the day, the bishops also approved A041 and A042, the enabling legislation that supports CCM.

Now it's up to the deputies.

The Rt. Rev. Edward Lee Jr. of Western Michigan presented A040 to the bishops, saying that "we have arrived at the right time in the right place at the right moment in this Jubilee year" to move into full communion with the ELCA. This is an "opportunity to enact a Jubilee action of reconciliation. It is not a merger, not a blending, not a dilution," he said.

The bishops spent nearly an hour debating CCM before saying yes, then singing Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" — a fortress that is getting stronger by the minute.

## Huh?

Perhaps Judy Collins needs to learn more about her Church. A publicist for the folk singer told Center Aisle that Collins canceled her performance at Convention when she found out that the Church "does not have a national church policy of allowing ministers to officiate at same-sex unions or ordain openly gay people." How's that for a news flash? Apparently we won't be seeing this attendee of New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine unless we vote "the right way." It sounds to us like Collins is humming a few bars of "My Way or the Highway." Here's what others had to say:

*"That's her choice. How people respond to what we do is up to them."* —Harry Way, Alternate, Wyoming

*"I'm very disappointed. I also wonder where she got that impression and I hope that we can correct it."* —Lowell Grisham, Deputy, Arkansas

*"I think it's an uneducated opinion. There are a lot of people that join our church thinking we're liberals and then they find out we actually have principles and aren't sure what to do."* —Jean Scribner, volunteer

*"I don't think she has all the information."* —Bob Morris, exhibitor

*"She's played right into the hands of those who believe that, and it's almost a political thing. But I respect her right to do that."* —Hazel Kelshaw, Bishop's wife, New Mexico

