

The Tipping Point

By The Rev. John Ohmer

I don't know if the Episcopal Church, U.S.A., is good news to the working poor, but I plan to be in one small way while I'm here in Columbus. And I invite you to join me.

Like many of you, I'm staying in a local hotel. I plan to leave \$5 on my nightstand each morning for the housekeeping staff.

By the time General Convention is over next Thursday, I will have left \$55. Not a big deal to me—much less than what I would have paid for airport parking.

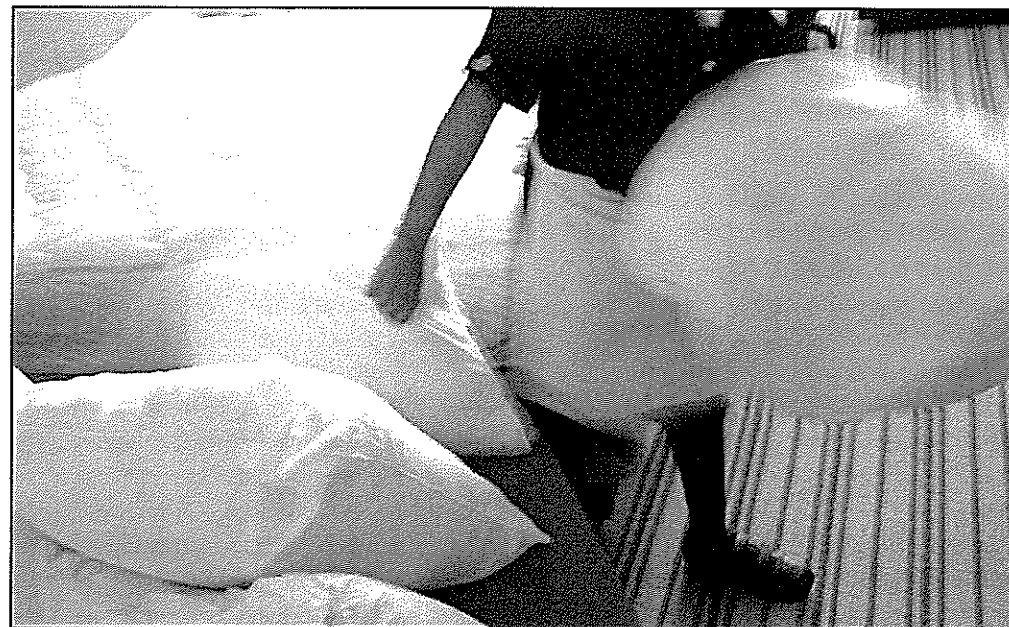
No, not a big deal to me, and not a big deal if I'm the only one doing this.

But do the math: They say that General Convention will draw close to 12,000 people to Columbus over the next 10 days. Organizers of the Convention are preparing worship leaflets for 8,000. Not all stay the whole time, of course, and not all spend the night in hotels.

So let's take a conservative number and say 5,000 people are spending the night here and let's say they spend at least five nights.

If 5,000 people leave \$5 a night, we inject \$25,000 of cash directly into the hands of the working poor each morning; multiply that times five nights, and it adds up to \$125,000 by the time we leave.

A less conservative (but completely possible) scenario: If those same 5,000 people leave \$5 a night for 10 nights, we inject a quarter of a million dollars into the working poor's economy.



John Dixon

And let's look at it from the perspective of a housekeeper: Those at the hotel I'm staying in clean 15 rooms a day. If each hotel guest on his or her floor left \$5, that housekeeper would take home \$75 each day.

If the housekeeper is making \$7.75 an hour (\$2.60 an hour above the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour), he or she is bringing home more in our tips than in wages. If that worker is making minimum wage, we're almost doubling his or her pay.

Actions speak louder than words, and I suggest that this simple action—leaving five bucks on the nightstand each night—is a lot more meaningful and powerful than any carefully

worded resolution affirming the poor or claiming solidarity with them.

For extra credit, follow the recommendations of those posting to the HoB/D list serve to interact with the housekeepers—to say hello, to seek and serve Christ in the face of those who would otherwise be invisible to us.

But as nice as a smile and a warm hello are, they don't buy diapers or milk. So I'm leaving the five bucks each morning, whether I see the recipient or not.

It's a small price to pay to be good news to the working poor. •

The High Table

A guide to area gastronomy

Let's Eat

By Patrick Getlein

If you spent your first day or so in Columbus wondering where in the world people eat around here, you are not alone. I arrived Saturday and after trying, and failing, to find an open deli around any corner from my hotel – The Columbus – I wondered whether the choice of Columbus as host of Convention was some new Church Insurance wellness initiative to tighten up Episcopalian waistlines. The fact that my hotel has no actual restaurant seemed to clinch the conspiracy.

But as it turns out the key to finding food in Columbus is to know the neighborhoods on the periphery: the Brewery District; the German

Village; and most especially Short North, which is west and a little north of the Convention Center.

So where do locals eat? That was our question, too. So we've been asking around and doing some snooping of our own. And though we can't tell you all our secrets, here's a short list to help get you started.

Due Amici: Chic, contemporary and very cool upscale Italian bistro. Prosciutto-wrapped goat cheese is a must. Well-discerned wines by the glass. Reservations recommended. (Downtown: 67 E Gay St.; 614-224-9373)

Columbus Fish Market: One of a half-dozen places owned by local restaurateur with golden touch, Cameron Mitchell (also: Mitchell's, M, Molly Woo's Asian Bistro, Martini and Columbus

Brewing Co.). A New England chowder house without the creaky charm of an actual waterfront. But the fish is fresh. Reservations recommended. (Grandview, just outside Short North: 1245 Olentangy River Rd.; 614-291-FISH)

Lemongrass: Asian cuisine meets European style and all reports from the first group we sent there were extremely positive. Reservations recommended. (Short North: 641 N High St.; 614-224-1414)

Schmidt's: Our experts say this is about as close to a real *biersteube* as you'll find outside Munich. A tourist stop since 1886 but the food is high quality and they're ready for groups. Reservations recommended. (German Village: 240 E Kossuth St.; 614-444-6808) •



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

Perspective

Arms Wide Open: A Posture for Hope

By The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee

Center Aisle takes its name from the central architectural feature of so many of our churches: the center aisle that welcomes all people to follow it to the altar where God's people, in all their particularities and even peculiarities, are nourished and sent back out into the world, transformed by the nourishing love of Christ.

Center Aisle is an expression of the Christian discipleship of Episcopalians in the Diocese of Virginia. Next year, in 2007, we will mark the beginning of the Anglican experience in North America when Jamestown was settled. Our center aisle began then, offering a way to Christ that is welcoming, nourishing and transformative. From that long experience, we hope to offer in these pages reflections on the General Convention that are welcoming, nourishing and transformative. We find the center not a bland compromise point between extremes but more as a solid foundation on the rock of faith in Christ where we can stand in life's midst with arms open to all in welcome, in an invitation to nourishment and as an encouragement for the transformation of Christ's people.

Like the church across the ages, Virginians have often erred grievously. A Virginia researcher will report tomorrow in our pages that a majority of our clergy in the 1850s were slaveholders. We know what it is to be wrong and of the need for all Christians to live lives of repentance.

We believe this Convention has a God-given opportunity through our response to the Windsor Report to affirm our solidarity with the other churches of the Anglican Communion by expressing our regret for the offense caused by our 2003 Convention actions. That regret needs to be in the context of reaffirming to our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters that we have too often marginalized them and silently acquiesced when they have been denied their humanity in too many of the world's cultures.

We think coming down the center aisle to the foot of the cross is far more a spiritual than a political process. We hope that pilgrimage will guide our reflections as people called to welcoming, nourishing and transforming ministries, and contribute to this Convention. •



Susan Fawcett

The parking meters in Easton, a suburb of Columbus, seem to be doing time in service of economic justice. The Change for Charity program donates a percentage of meter proceeds (and ticket fines) back out to local charities. Read our story, "The Tipping Point," on page four to learn how you can do as much, if not more, to level the economic playing field during your stay in Columbus.

June 13, 2006

Issue One

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

Let's Grow Up Together

We at *Center Aisle* bring to the tasks of the next nine days a rare quality in Episcopal quarters—optimism.

It's not that we're dewy-eyed idealists who underestimate the pain some of General Convention's decisions may bring. It's that we celebrate the opportunity God has given us to grow at this critical juncture.

Those determined to continue the "bickering" and "fussing," as two of our nominees for presiding bishop have put it, will receive no

continued on TWO

Editorial

How many 'R's in Windsor?

There has been much talk of embracing the Windsor Report. We think that's good. But do you really know Windsor's ABCs? Or for that matter, how about the 'R's?

Of the four 'R's currently making the rounds you will find two in the report:

Regret: As in, we should express regret "that the proper restraints of the bonds of affection were breached" in the election and consent to Gene Robinson.

Reconciliation: As in, Windsor is not a judgment but "part of a pilgrimage towards healing and reconciliation."

continued on TWO

Windsor *continued*

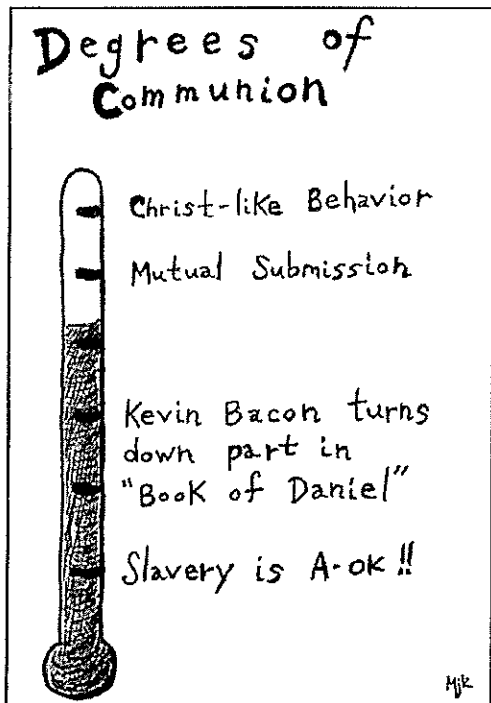
But we've been hearing some other 'R's that you will not find in Windsor:

Repentance: As in repent for the election of Bishop Robinson. There is no reference to repentance for the election and consent to Bishop Robinson.

Rollback: As in, undo it. There is no call in Windsor for a rollback of the consent to Bishop Robinson. Indeed, Windsor recommends that the Archbishop of Canterbury (Windsor's real ABC) use "very considerable caution" in inviting and admitting Bishop Robinson to the councils of the Communion. The premise of that recommendation is that Gene Robinson will indeed remain a bishop.

So, embrace Windsor? Sure. Let's just make we know our ABCs. •

OffCenter



Together *continued*

support from us. We're all about growth—growth from the transformational center of our faith. Here are three goals for growing that demand our attention:

Growth in mission: The theme for General Convention, "Come and Grow," is precisely on point. It's time for us to rebuild our sense of mission, to reach out to the least among us.

We fervently support the global embodiment of that mission—the Millennium Development Goals, which would help relieve the world's most desperate poverty. But you don't have to look across the oceans. There are examples of material and spiritual need in all of our parishes as well.

Growth in numbers: The 20/20 campaign calls for doubling average Sunday attendance by the year 2020. For the past six years, our numbers have been going south. That means we need 14 good years of reversing those trends by connecting with those in search of a spiritual home. Look around the world of Episcopalians these next few days and you'll find a wealth of creative examples for how to grow our numbers and, more important, deepen our spiritual communities.

Growth in understanding and love with those with whom we disagree: Much of the world outside our church will see these next few days as all about sex. Our differences on human sexuality are not trivial. They are deeply important and earnestly felt. But we have allowed them to become a distraction to our broader mission as a church.

Visit us at www.centeraisle.net for an online exclusive first person account of day one at General Convention. 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.

It's time for us to return to the table of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. That means foregoing elections and consents to the consecration of those who are living in non-celibate, same-gender relationships, or to proposals to change our liturgy on the blessing of same-gender couples, until there is greater consensus in our communion.

It also means a halt to the crossing of diocesan boundaries by uninvited bishops—a key point in the Windsor Report that has not received the attention it deserves. Rules must be obeyed if we are to build trusting relationships and mutually submit to each other.

Finally, a return to the communion table must be accompanied by a reaffirmation of our embrace of gays and lesbians within the family of the baptized.

Three years ago, we supported General Convention's consent to Gene Robinson's election. Today we genuinely regret that the bonds of communion have been breached. We have seen how damaging to communion the perception of unilateral action can be.

Let's temper our passion for principle with the humility of those at the foot of the cross, as we begin the intensive listening process called for by the Windsor Report.

We at *Center Aisle* don't intend to be the same in nine days. We hope to grow during our time together because, at day's end, this General Convention will be judged, not by who "wins" the debates here, but by what we resolve to do together to spread the love of Christ when we leave here. •

Virginia Voices

Title IV: No Thanks

By Russ Randle

In the federal judicial system, judges take two oaths, one to uphold the federal Constitution, and the second to do equal right between rich and poor. The second oath is biblical (Deut. 1:17). Chief Justice John Roberts expressed the ideal at his confirmation hearings, when he insisted that a judge sworn to uphold the law must act very differently than a politician.

This ideal matters most in turbulent times, when minority views are despised. The law insists that even in such times, punishing someone for an offense requires strict compliance with procedural protections: rules of evidence, burdens of proof, statutes of limitation, and advance definition of the proscribed conduct. History is littered with

injustices occurring when these protections were short-circuited and false accusations made. Think of our Lord's trial; think of Joseph, falsely accused by Potiphar's wife.

Our church is in great turbulence. There are clergy in most dioceses whose views on controversial issues are far out of step with their bishops. On the HoB/D list, ordained clergy and commissioned lay leaders often hurl vicious charges and question each other's psychological health.

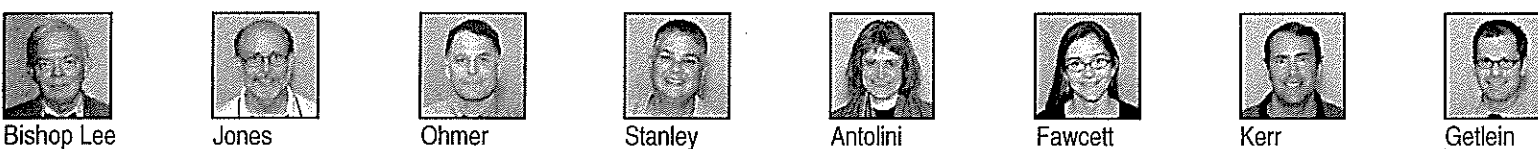
Yet in the proposed Title IV disciplinary canon revision, we would reduce the burden of proof to sustain disciplinary charges from "clear and convincing" to "preponderance of evidence." We would allow the admission of hearsay

evidence more easily than we do now. Among other changes, we would define new offenses such as "exerting undue influence on or taking unfair advantage of any person," or failing to report impairment, including one's own. The net effect of the proposal would be to ease the removal of clergy.

We are now meeting to try to reconcile passionate factions; this is a very bad time to make it easier to bring poorly supported disciplinary charges. And as an attorney with 26 years experience, including four clergy disciplinary cases, and as a former Standing Committee president, I am convinced the proposed changes make the chances of a mistaken finding of misconduct too high, given the ruinous consequences of such a finding. These proposed disciplinary canonical changes should be defeated. •

Committee Meetings: as of 3 p.m., Mon., June 12

Constitution:	6/13	2 p.m.	Hyatt-Marion	
Canons:	6/13	2 p.m.	Union DE	A031,A032,A153
		7 p.m.	Union BC	A045,A082,A084
Structure:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Franklin AB	A006,A087,A105,A137,A151,A158,D021
		7 p.m.	Franklin AB	A044,A104,A107
	6/14	7:30 a.m.	Franklin	A001,A046,A143,A144,A155,B009
National/Int. Affairs:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Delaware	AA008,A009,A142,A164,C024,C041,D022
Social/Urban:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Delaware BC	A092,A131,C008,C012
	6/14	7:30 a.m.	Delaware BC	C022,C032
		2 p.m.	Delaware BC	A093,A095,A127,A156,A157,C010
Small Congregations:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Madison	A098
Evangelism:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Fairfield	A037,A042,A043,A101
Prayer Book,	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Franklin CD	A074,A075,A076,C001,C023
Liturgy & Ch Music:	6/13	2 p.m.	Franklin CD	A067,A077,D011
	6/14	7:30 p.m.	Franklin CD	A057,A059-A065, E008,C002, C003,C006,C013,C016,C021,C034,C035,C043,D006
	6/15	7:30 a.m.	Franklin CD	C020,C031,C044
Education:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	McKinley	A145
Ecumen. Relations:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Delaware D	A014,A025,A026,A053,A054
	6/14	7:30 a.m.	Delaware D	A055,A056
Communications:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Fayette	A048,A049,A051,A133
Special Committee 26:	6/13	7:30 a.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	reflection
		2 p.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	A159,C004,C009,C014,C025,C027,C037,C038,C039,C042
		7 p.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	A165,A166,C007
	6/14	7:30 a.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	reflection
		2 p.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	reflection
		7 p.m.	Hyatt Regency Blrm	A160,A161,A162,A163 (tickets required for deputies, bishops; special rules apply for testifying)
	6/15	7:30 a.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	reflection
	6/16	7:30 a.m.	Union A, Hyatt Regency	A168,A169,D017



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