

Perspective

How to Eat an Oreo Cookie

By the Rt. Rev. Mary Adelia Rosamond McLeod
Bishop of Vermont

Oreo cookies are wonderful. When we were children, sometimes after dinner my mother would give us each a red, crinkly, accordion-pleated cup of four Oreos. My sisters, brother and I thought that was sheer heaven. Sometimes we had delicious fun while we ate our Oreos. And other times, the Oreos were a source of contention.

My older sister would dip hers in milk, slurping and licking and chewing. Her milk looked like chocolate chip ice cream by the time she had finished. She said she ate more Oreos that way; she had her four and then drank her Oreo-flavored milk.

My younger sister had no guile and would just eat hers. She was much younger and didn't know any better. She was moved to tears when her cookies were gone so fast.

My brother would carefully twist his Oreos and then become indignant when the cream didn't come off all on one side as he thought it should. When it worked, he would eat the chocolate side first and then the cream side. When all my cookies were gone and he had one left, he would grin and I could see all the chocolate squished between his teeth. I told him he was disgusting, but really I was jealous.

I used to open mine up quickly but with the precision of a surgeon because if you do it just right, the cream will stay on one side.

Once I hid my last Oreo under my pillow so my brother would think all mine were gone. It worked, too. Edward grinned the chocolate grin, ate his last cookie and said it was too bad I was such a pig. But I had my delicious secret Oreo in reserve. The only

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General Convention gathered for its Jubilee Eucharist at the Convention Center yesterday.

A Tune-Up for the Provinces

If provinces were automobiles, you'd find them in a used-car lot—some ready to roll, some desperately in need of a tune-up, all a bit rusty and dented. Don't worry, there's no need to call the scrap yard just yet—not with all that horsepower still out there. But we sure could use some good mechanics.

And there are plenty of places to find them—for starters, in Province 1, where strong coordination and tight New England geography have led to 16 different networks among dioceses; and in Province 5, where small Midwestern dioceses have benefited from regional approaches.

It's that focus on networking and program that makes provinces valuable, that allows them to rise above ineffectual synods and distasteful whiffs of bureaucracy—the kind of "bad press" that led to this year's proposal to eliminate provinces altogether (a resolution all but certain to die an early parliamentary death).

So let's hear it for optimism. Far from rusting hulks, provinces could become the souped-up models of the future—the fast lane to the larger church. After all, this is the age of networking. For that to happen, we need ideas and support bubbling up from parishes and dioceses, not new financial tentacles growing from "815." (The proposal for national funding of provincial coordinators sounds to us like reorganization moving in the wrong direction.)

Let's face it, provinces are here to stay. If we killed them, we'd have to create something new that looks a lot like—well, provinces. We don't need a new automobile, just some heavy maintenance.

Hearing schedule for Friday, July 7. 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, D041, D042
- **Church in Small Communities**, Holiday Inn, Royal, 7:30 a.m.: Open discussion on total ministry
- **Church Pension Fund**, Marriott, Salon C & D, 7:30 a.m.: Presentation by Church Pension Group
- **Committees and Commissions**, Executive Tower, Curtis, 8 a.m.: A084
- **Communications**, Executive Tower, Assembly, 7:30 a.m.: Committee deliberations only
- **Constitution**, Westin, Curtis, 7:30 a.m.: Executive session, only committee members may attend
- **Ecumenical Relations**, Westin, Lawrence A, 7:30 a.m.: A043
- **Education**, Westin, Lawrence B, 7:30 a.m.: Open hearing, A015, A074, A100, B015, C032, C035, D014
- **Evangelism**, Executive Tower, Douglas, 7:30 a.m.: Committee deliberation only
- **Ministry**, Westin, Molly Brown, 7:30 a.m.: A045, C003
- **Miscellaneous Resolutions**, Hyatt, Royal, 7:30 a.m.: (Note committee room change) B010, B018
- **National and International Concerns**, Marriott, Salon B, 7:30 a.m.: Committee deliberation only, no testimony
- **Social and Urban Affairs**, Executive Tower, Brahms, 7:30 a.m.: A047, B006, C021, D040
- **Structure**, Hyatt, Far East, 7:30 a.m.: A116, A120, A121, C018, C019
- **World Mission**, Marriott, Salon A, 7:30 a.m.: A010, A011, A012, B012 (only B012 open for discussion)

Common Folks Out of Loop on CCM

I am a parishioner at St. James', Leesburg, Va., and in fact a vestry member as well, so I have had no lack of opportunity to raise my question sooner. All the same, the fact remains that the very first I heard of the CCM was after the last General Convention in the cheers for our ratification and the lamentation over the Lutheran rejection. My oldest and closest friend commented at the time that he had the same experience. If it is a Good Thing, how come we have not had an aggressive program of information and education, in fact pre-dating the last convention since that is where we first ratified it?

The problem that you may face is that the bishops and other clergy may support a suspension of the need for episcopal laying on of hands and that laity like me, mindful of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral which was included for our guidance in the 1979 BCP, will be careful to inquire into the apostolic succession of the celebrant before concluding that we are about to make an efficacious communion.

As enthusiastic as I may be for ecumenism, I still feel the need to have explained the sudden (to me and maybe many others) change from a centuries-old principle which was considered important enough less than 25 years ago to be included in the BCP.

John W. Davison, Jr.
By e-mail

Blessings Upon You

I just downloaded the first issue of Center Aisle and it is printing out as we speak. Given my technological know-how (which is not so great), this is almost a miracle on par with Balaam's speaking donkey! The issue looks great. I am keeping you all in my prayers that God will bless your work and ministry.

Keith Emerson
Church of the Epiphany, Richmond, Va.
By e-mail

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. 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.



Center Aisle

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A Resounding Affirmation

*"To be, or not to be: that is the question."
—Hamlet*

Hundreds of years after those words echoed through Elsinore Castle, they were heard again yesterday in the Far East Room of the Hyatt Hotel. The question as stated is a simple one: Should the provincial structure of the Episcopal Church continue to exist? Based on the testimony before the Committee on the Structure of the Church, the answer is a resounding yes. Though the provincial structure has been both affirmed and vilified, yesterday's committee hearing produced an overwhelmingly positive view.

Canon V.G. Robinson of the Diocese of New Hampshire, who also serves as the part-time executive coordinator of Province I, believes that the existence of the provinces is essential, but that central to that existence is the requirement of strong leadership. Simply stated, the canon believes that "if it is

everybody's job, it is nobody's job." Without strong leadership, the coordination necessary to run effective programs that cross diocesan boundaries would not exist. Robinson believes that the provincial structure, guided by the leadership of the provincial presidents and vice presidents, is on the verge of a dynamic movement that will enhance and

strengthen the Church on all levels.

There is no doubt that some provinces play a vital role. Youth programs, outreach, and communications networks are just a few of the programmatic efforts that enhance the Church as a whole.

The resounding affirmation for the continuation of the province structure answers Hamlet's existential question. What we now need to ask is how might we most effectively lead these structures and how will we fund that leadership?



The Rt. Rev. Jack McKelvey, Bishop of Rochester, speaks at the open hearing on provinces.

Sexuality Hearings

Some of our friends believe that the Episcopal Church should not only be a place where gay and lesbian persons are welcome, but that it has an opportunity at this General Convention to address the issue of systemic injustice to non-heterosexuals.

Some of our friends believe that the Episcopal Church, in the name of inclusivity, is in danger of allowing extremists bent on a particular social agenda to dominate the debate to the exclusion of biblical principles and common sense.

We agree with our friends.

If there was any doubt as to the variety of opinions within the Episcopal Church with regard to sexuality, the past two days should have put them to rest.

Speaking this week against Resolution A065, the so-called "local option" proposal from the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music that would allow each diocese to set its own policy on the blessing of same-sex unions, the Rev. Christopher Cantrell of the Diocese of Fort Worth said, "Today, even with two very different [Eucharistic] rites, all of us still say 'AMEN' to the same prayers. This resolution puts us in the place where we cannot say 'Amen' to the same prayers."

Later in the day, speaking in favor of C023, a proposal to develop rites for the blessing of same-sex relationships, Mary Gennis of the Diocese of Los Angeles told of an experience 18 years ago when the Roman Catholic Church refused to bless her marriage to her husband. "We admitted we were uncertain about whether or not to have children, and because we

did not fit their model of what makes for an acceptable family, we were turned away," Gennis said. "Committed monogamous love is not a sin. Casting out those who seek God is."

These voices—divergent, opposing, even contradictory—are the voices of the Episcopal Church.

Listening to these voices were the six lay deputies and six bishops who comprise the newly appointed Committee on Human Sexuality—a group that could become one of the most explosive committees at this convention. But so far, committee members have been pleasantly surprised at the civility of the debate. "After so many years of hearing a lot of rancor," Bishop John Lipscomb of Southwest Florida said, "it's refreshing to hear so much done in such good spirit."

Indeed, most of those testifying before the Special Committee seemed to be taking the Presiding Bishop up on his challenge to have conversations that are characterized by "patient, courageous listening to one another as fellow limbs of Christ's body."

On the other hand, the committee simply seems to be stuck. The debate over human sexuality, in one form or another, has gone on for years. Several members of the committee said that in over two days of hearings with dozens of witnesses giving testimony on multiple topics, they had not heard a single new idea.

In a church so full of imaginative, scholarly and artistic leaders, where is the creativity?

Like Bill Murray in the film "Groundhog Day," we are left wondering if there is a road out of the cul-de-sac of endless debate. If it exists, it will come from the process begun here...the slow, faithful process of taking the time to think, study and pray—and then listen.

The High Table

A guide to area gastronomy

Every year Westword, Denver's arts and entertainment magazine, compiles a list of the best Denver has to offer its residents in a variety of categories. Here are some of our favorites from their latest "Best Of" issue. The complete list is online at www.westword.com.

Best late-night pizza

Two-Fisted Mario's
1626 Market St.

Best restaurant for the Atkins Diet

Denver Buffalo Company
1109 Lincoln St.

Best vegetarian burrito

Wahoo's Fish Taco
1521 Blake St.

Best barbacoa burrito

Chipotle Mexican Grill
1600 California St.

Best sake lounge

Mori Japanese Restaurant
2019 Market St.

Best Greek Bakery

Omonoia
2813 East Colfax Ave.

Best Place to Drink a Latte While Eavesdropping on State Senators

Penn Street Perk
1300 Pennsylvania St.

Best Cheap Breakfast

The Breakfast Palace
2000 S. Broadway

Best French Toast

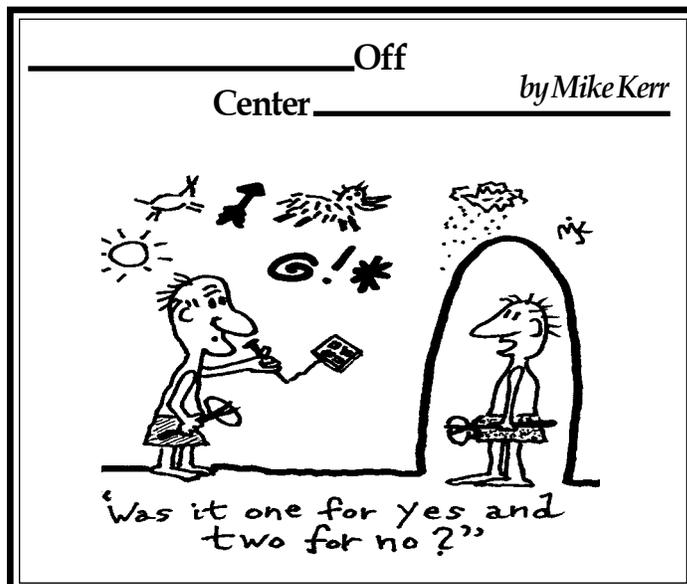
Jou Jou at the Teatro Hotel
1106 14th St.

Best Place to Eat Dinner After 10 p.m.

Sacre Bleu
410 E. Seventh Ave.

Best Chicken Noodle Soup in the Cheesiest Joint in Town

The Soup Kitchen
1675 Larimer St.



Called to Common Mission got a welcome boost yesterday. The Committee on Ecumenical Relations voted to restore language from the 1997 General Convention concerning the one-time suspension of the ordinal in order to enter into full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The wording of Resolution A041 has raised concerns in the Constitution Committee over whether this constitutes the first or second reading of the suspension. Constitution Chair James F. Russell, lay delegate from West Tennessee, in a joint open hearing yesterday, welcomed the suggestion that the 1997 legislation be used in place of A041, with the reference to CCM.

Within an hour, Ecumenical Relations had restored the language. That's good for the resolution, good for both churches, and good for the mission of the Church.

Perspective *continued from front*

trouble with my cleverness was that my mother found it when she tucked us in bed and took it away because I had already brushed my teeth. Edward, again, was triumphant.

The various approaches to theological issues are much like the melange of methods we employed to eat our Oreo cookies. Each of us has our own ideas about "the right way." And like children, often we think our way is the best and, maybe, the only way.



There may be times when we should charge ahead like my impetuous brother and be righteously indignant when we see injustice, division or lack of peace.

There may be times when God calls us to savor and be creative like my older sister, mixing our treasures with the wisdom and insights of others. At another juncture, God

might move us to be more like my younger sister, getting on with the task at hand without gimmicks or guile. Or, conceivably, there may be times when we are called to digest some parts and hide the others, to be digested later, because the time, right now, is just not right.

Jesus used all these methods at one time or another: The spontaneous attack on the moneychangers in the Temple; the thoughtful and creative irony of "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her"; the quiet, direct Jesus in whom there is no guile; the quixotic Jesus who said, "... the first shall be last and the last shall be first."

I pray as we move through this General Convention, we won't lose sight of the many facets of Jesus. Jesus, who gives us life—and Oreos. The One who blesses and gifts us yearns for us to be open to the multiple manifestations of the Spirit and perhaps even to change as we deal with the important issues concerning the mission and ministry of the Church.