

Standing Commission on Human Affairs

MEMBERSHIP

The Rev. Reynolds S. Cheney, II (West Tennessee) 1997, *Executive Council Liaison*
Dr. Louie Crew (Newark) 2000, *Secretary*
Dr. Scott Evenbeck (Indianapolis) 2000
Ms. Mary Fong (California) 2000
Mr. Bruce Garner (Atlanta) 1997, *Vice-Chair*
Dr. Germaine Hoston (San Diego) 1997
The Rt. Rev. Larry Maze (Arkansas) 2000
The Rev. Daniel J. Riggall (Vermont) 2000
The Rt. Rev. Edward L. Salmon, Jr. (South Carolina) 1997, *Chair*
Mr. Bruce W. Woodcock, *Episcopal Church Center Staff Liaison*
Dr. David E. Crean (North Carolina) *Consultant (assisted with drafting the report)*

Commission representatives at General Convention

Bishop Edward L. Salmon and Deputy Louie Crew are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report.

SUMMARY OF THE COMMISSIONS WORK

The commission met seven times during the triennium as follows:

- Dallas, Texas
- San Francisco, California
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Charleston, South Carolina
- Burlington, Vermont
- Memphis, Tennessee
- New Orleans, Louisiana

During these meetings, the commission made on-site visits to and met with the leaders of the following organizations:

San Francisco, California

- Participated in a joint meeting with the Asian Commission of the Diocese of California, hosted by True Sunshine Episcopal Church, where we met with leaders of Asian ministries, many from NorCalYeast, an empowerment ministry for Asian young people.

Charleston, South Carolina

- Agape Ministries, a non-denominational ministry in an area hard hit by crime, drugs, poverty, homelessness, and other social difficulties.
- Van Arrington, a non-denominational African American minister hired to coordinate youth programs for African Americans on Pawley's Island.

Burlington, Vermont

- 3 Cathedral Square, a housing project for the for elderly and handicapped persons with very low income.
- The Samaritan Project, a group that coordinates volunteer services with those in need in the greater Burlington area of Vermont.

Memphis, Tennessee

- Bridge Builders, a program of leadership training for young people, with participants from all incomes and cultures in Memphis.
- Church Health Center, a medical service for the working poor.
- Emmanuel Center, an Episcopal presence in the middle of the projects, low-rent housing for the poor in Memphis.

These visits did not entirely make up the commission's sources of information. Written materials were received from a variety of other groups which the Commission was unable to visit. These included written descriptions of:

- The Social Responsibility Ministries of All Saints' Parish, Atlanta, Georgia (Covenant Community, Sisters With Pride, and North Avenue/All Saints' Academy);
- Oasis/California, the Gay and Lesbian Ministry of the Diocese of California;
- National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol and Drugs (NECAD), the Recovery Ministries of the Episcopal Church; and
- A comprehensive packet on homelessness, assembled by Dr. Louie Crew.

I. OUR MANDATE

*Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every
human being? (Service of Holy Baptism, Book of Common Prayer, page 305)*

These vows from our Baptismal Covenant contain all the implications of our social responsibilities toward each other. Other vows in the Covenant outline our spiritual responsibilities – being part of the life and worship of the church, resisting evil, proclaiming the Word. These injunctions are clearly directed to how we treat each other as sisters and brothers, as children of God. But our treatment of our fellow human beings comes not out of a sense of obligation, of somehow making ourselves “right” in the eyes of God, less still out of a sense of duty or guilt. Our service to others arises out of a sense that we are a people redeemed, affirmed, and deeply loved by a deeply loving God. Extending love to our neighbors is rooted and grounded in this knowledge of the love of God.

This love is manifested in the Gospel accounts of Jesus's ministry which contain many examples of how our responsibilities toward each other are to be lived out. The parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:29-37*), for example, illustrates what Jesus expected of so-called ordinary people. Those who, by title or occupation, would have been expected to minister to the stranger in need did not do so. The one who responded to the needs of another was just – and quite literally just – an ordinary person on the street. We do what we are doing therefore out of our relationship to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

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We find more explicit instructions about our ministry in Matthew's Gospel (*Matthew 25:31-46*). Here again, Jesus leaves no doubt about what he expects us to do for each other – feed those who are hungry, provide water for those who thirst, clothe those who have no clothing (with its broader corollary, provide shelter for those who have none), care for those who are sick, visit those who are in prison, welcome the stranger. Jesus is also quite clear in his pronouncement that what we are doing for each other we are also doing for him. Separation and damnation, as in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (*Luke 16:19-31*), come about because we have failed to do for Jesus what we have signally failed to do for each other, particularly the least of these his sisters and brothers.

One striking, and yet very subtle, aspect of this call to ministry is that we are prohibited from sitting in judgment, which means to say exercising a narrow judgmentalism. The call is universal. There are no exceptions. We are not excused from visiting a prisoner because of the nature of her/his crime. We are not relieved of our responsibility toward the sick because of the reason for their illness. It makes no difference *why* someone is hungry, or homeless, or without clothing. We are not provided with either reason or opportunity to discuss merit, reason, worthiness, or need. When Jesus fed the multitudes, he did not institute a means test.

There may be reasonable arguments for the position that our primary duty as Christians is outlined in the Great Commission:

Jesus came and said to the disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Yet we must also consider the Great Commission in the light of other scriptural injunctions. We are reminded, for example, in the Letter of James, of the folly of trying to minister to the needs of the soul when we have not ministered to the needs of the body:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:14-17)

This instruction is amplified in the First Letter of John:

Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does

God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 John 3:13-18)

This raises a profound dilemma for Christians: Is someone who has not eaten in three days likely to hear a message concerning the salvation of his or her soul? Abraham Maslow, in his theory of the hierarchy of need, suggests that spiritual needs may be addressed *only* after the material needs are met. Jesus realized fully that the soul cannot be reached until the basic needs of the body are met. "How am I to talk of God to the millions who go without two meals a day?" asked Mahatma Gandhi, who then went on to say, "To them God can only appear as bread and butter."¹ How relevant to the needs of a family living under a highway bridge is a discussion of the necessity of baptism for the salvation of their souls? While we, with all the good intentions in the world, might see our primary responsibilities for the spiritual needs of others, how effective can we be in carrying out those responsibilities? If the basic human requirements for meeting those needs are not met, how can we expect anyone to have an interest in issues far less tangible? If we don't put first things first, we will put lesser things first.

Are we really "seeking and serving Christ in all persons" if we focus only on spiritual needs? Are we "loving our neighbors as ourselves" when we ignore the physical human needs that must be met just to survive in the world? Our ministry, grounded in faith, must address realities of this world, if it is to be of value to anyone. We are called to serve our sisters and brothers simultaneously on two fronts: feeding their souls while we nourish their bodies.

Where are we as the Episcopal Church on these issues? Are we addressing social responsibilities as a part of our ministry to the people of God? Do we even see social responsibility as a part of our calling? It is unfortunate that many people see a choice between only addressing social issues, or proclaiming the good news. All too often they are seen as mutually exclusive. They are not.

The vow from the Baptismal Covenant that precedes those listed above makes it very clear that our mission as Christians is to do both:

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Faithfulness to our Baptismal Covenant requires us to proclaim the Good News *and* to imitate the actions of our Lord and Savior. There is no contradiction. There are no alternatives. The question becomes simply: Where do we start?

A Church Faithful to the Baptismal Covenant

The consequences of our being born to new life in Jesus Christ begin with baptism. A good starting point, therefore, is to examine the baptism of Jesus:

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11)

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The phrase in this passage that is particularly striking is, “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.” This is God’s affirmation of God’s “Yes.” This affirmation, being “well pleased,” finds an echo in two passages, the first servant song of Isaiah and the first creation account in Genesis. In both instances, God is expressing delight: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” (*Isaiah 42:1*), and “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (*Genesis 1:31*). God finds delight both in God’s servant and in God’s creation.

But, we can go further. By our own baptism we become a new creation in Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). As part of the new creation, God’s grace is working in us. We are in a real sense God’s servants, imitating the pattern given to us by our Lord and Savior:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. (Philippians 2:5-7)

Moreover, we are called, by adoption as God’s children through our baptism, to redeem the whole creation, the creation which God saw as “very good”:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:18-21)

In all this, we see creation, not in the narrow sense of purely environmental concerns, but as the whole created order, of which human beings are an integral part.

Honoring that Covenant for All People

Given that our mandate extends to the whole creation, how do we live out that covenant relationship? How do we, in particular, honor that covenant for those whom we are particularly called to serve in Christ’s name? The answer is once again to be found in our baptismal covenant where we called upon to “seek and serve Christ in all persons . . .”

Our very baptism brings us into a new creation in Christ. This new creation leads us into a blessing relationship with God, and by extension with the whole of the created order. In the first creation account we read that “God blessed [us]” (*Genesis 1:28*). This blessing is further extended in our new life in Jesus Christ as is summed up in the Letter to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

We are one body in Christ and in this relationship we have been blessed “with every spiritual blessing.” The blessing relationship we enjoy with God does not, and indeed cannot, stop there. A blessing does not just come to rest in the recipient. If it does, it is no longer a blessing. Because we have been blessed by God, God calls us to become a blessing to others in precisely the same way that God has become a blessing to us.

How does this blessing become incarnated in our lives? The answer may be found in the General Thanksgiving:

*We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
(Morning Prayer II, Book of Common Prayer, page 101)*

God created us. God loves us. God expects us to share that love which is God’s particular blessing for us with others. God’s love for us is manifested in both the incarnation and in the crucifixion which it prefigured. God’s love for us is manifested in the actions of our Lord on the night before he died.

Seeking and Serving in Christ’s Name

Jesus left two particular memorials of himself on the night before he died. The first was the simple meal of bread and wine which he shared with the disciples and which forms the basis for our Holy Eucharist. It is the simplicity of this meal which reminds us above all else of the ordinariness that is our everyday ministry. We are constantly looking for the great gesture – the magnificent program which will make all other programs redundant, and which will solve the plight of the poor. In many respects we have been searching for such a program for nearly two millennia and still have not found it. Ministry is found in simplicity, in the ordinary gesture – the giving of the cup of water or the bowl of soup or the can of food, the coat that will keep a child warm in the winter, the time spent sitting at the bedside – the multiplication of which gives Christian service and charity the flavor that is peculiar to it. And it is in this multiplication that, in Thomas Merton’s words, “I would grow together with thousands and millions of other freedoms into the gold of one huge field, praising God, loaded with increase, loaded with wheat.”²

The other action that Jesus left us was also to be found on the night before he died when he “got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him (*John 13:4-5*). Again, it is the stunning commonplace nature of this gesture that takes our breath away. This action, even more than Jesus’s other teachings on servant ministry, shows us the nature of what servant ministry ought to be: “I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” (*John 13:14-17*)

Once again, we find the blessing relationship carried out. Jesus, the ultimate blessing for this world, serves his disciples in the most ordinary ways imaginable. Just so are we called to enter that blessing relationship that Jesus enjoined on the disciples. That is the challenge that we, as the church, have to meet.

The Challenge for the Church

The Standing Commission on Human Affairs seeks to hold up, to mirror, the challenges for ministry we face as a church. In its meetings during the triennium, the commission visited a large number of groups throughout the United States, as indicated in the Introduction. From these meetings and deliberations, the commission has derived certain principles which form the basis for this Report. We identify and hold up these principles for ministry by which the church might more effectively bring good news to parts of the community not now hearing it. We saw models of Episcopalians working together in parishes with mutual love and respect. We saw inclusivity across many boundaries of difference regarding theology and morality. We hold up as models those ministers who know and speak the language of the needy. We identify missionary procedures, not maintenance procedures. Too often we in the church find ourselves with a dynamic system, yet position ourselves for only a static response.

Having noted the adversarial postures in which we often find ourselves as a church, the commission seeks to move beyond these postures, no longer defining ourselves as winners and losers, but as mutually supportive pilgrims. We strive to move beyond the nastiness that has too often characterized discourse from all sides of the issues. We share the conviction that Episcopalians need to talk to each other long enough to join hands and do the work of the Lord. The church needs to unite around what we affirm, not divide over what we oppose. Accordingly, the commission trusts that those who read this report will be able to connect the broad issues which we outline to specific instances of ministry. The commission holds up these instances as a challenge to the church to live out its promises made in the Baptismal Covenant and in so doing imitate Christ.

II. CHURCH AND CULTURE

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! (*Romans 1:25*)

As Jesus sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." (*Matthew 9:10-13*)

Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30-37*) is but one of many examples in which our Lord offended the sensibilities of the God-fearing leaders of his community. The problem Jesus faced was not that the scribes and the Pharisees were bad people. They were staunch believers in their God who sought earnestly to do what was right; to follow God's law. They prided themselves that their loyalty to the covenant that God had made with the people of Israel was

above reproach and attempted to prove this by a rigid adherence to the letter of the law. The difficulty they faced, which was relentlessly exposed by Jesus, was that it is possible to be obedient to the letter of the law – rules that had been embellished over the centuries by generations of leaders with the most honorable of intentions – and yet in so doing violate the spirit in which the law is given. This is the church’s story as well. It is replete with examples of suffering, blindly inflicted by some leaders of the church.³

The spirit of the canons that govern the church is the love of God "In response to the lawyer’s question about inheriting eternal life, Jesus quoted the law: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself,’ ” (*Luke 10:27*). He then showed its practical application in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30-37*). The leaders of the religious community were conscious and proud of their position among God’s chosen people. However, they violated these fundamental commandments when they sought to avoid ritual contamination by those around them who belonged, not to the chosen, but to the outside community. In this sense, the parable conveys much more than merely the lesson that the individual who helped the victim of the mugging was a good neighbor. It reveals that the members of the chosen people who tried to be righteous by following the complex codes and rituals of their faith community disobeyed the essence of God’s law by failing to act out of love to help their distressed neighbor.

In like manner, the woman at the well was astonished when Jesus asked to drink of the water she had drawn (*John 4:5-26*). Jews were supposed to avoid all contact with people of Samaria, and Jesus was prepared to break that taboo in the *stunningly* intimate act of taking into his body a substance that had been gathered with her “unclean” hands. In the Jewish faith community, a “good Samaritan” was an oxymoron. How could anyone who was not among the chosen possibly be “good” in any meaningful sense?

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus acted consistently in violation and defiance of the social, dietary, and liturgical rules that differentiated the Jewish community from the culture that surrounded it. He and his disciples healed the sick (*Mark 3:1-5*) and gathered grain on the Sabbath (*Mark 2:23-28*); they sat at table to eat without first washing their hands in accordance with the laws of purification (*Mark 7:1-5*); and he consorted with undesirables such as prostitutes, divorcees and tax collectors, sinners all (*Matthew 9:1-11*).⁴

Jesus also expanded the concept of family. When he was told, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” He replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” Then he looked around at those who were with him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!” (*Mark 3:32-34*). In another incident he said, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household” (*Matthew 10:34-36*).

Jesus calls the Episcopal Church to be a community that is in direct contrast to the culture which surrounds it. He calls us to behavior that is radically different. Our Lord does not call us to shun the surrounding culture, but rather to seek to change it and bring others into our fold, *even as we look critically at ourselves and recognize that even within the Episcopal Church we ourselves*

bear the signs of being sinners. Today, our acrimony and hatred toward each other compromise our witness. Who would want to be a member of such a church?

Since our Lord does not call us to shun the surrounding culture, how do we respond when popular movements affirming human dignity in the society at large penetrate our church? Should we respond to these in love, or should we somehow refuse to be contaminated by the outside culture?⁵ Human affairs within the Episcopal Church are just as important as human affairs within the culture. Christians affirm that we are all children of God. It was our baptismal vow that we “seek Christ in all persons” that inspired many of these movements for human rights on the basis of the belief that all persons are created equal (*Genesis 1:27*).

Two broad conclusions follow:

1. The emergence of movements within the church to combat such social ills as racism, sexism, or homophobia do not constitute an invasion of the church by the surrounding secular culture. Rather, they constitute efforts to reclaim the joyous, liberating heritage that was God’s gift to us in Jesus Christ and follow our Lord’s call to look critically within ourselves to see how our nature as sinners afflicts us even within our own faith community. We cannot be an effective contrast community without this critical perspective on ourselves. It is as Christians that we can say in the words of the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”
2. We cannot fulfill our evangelical mission as a church without taking on the challenge of being prophetic. *We* behave as the church when we reach out to serve others wherever and whoever they are, seek Christ in them beneath the grit and grime of their pain, and to remove the sources of that pain. There could have been no abolition movement among those who waited until liberating a slave no longer violated laws that protected the property rights of *slave owners*. An unjust and unchristian law had to be violated to redeem those enslaved (to say nothing of those doing the enslaving). The marginalized will remain marginalized in our church until we as “the church” embrace them; until we as “the church” begin to see that ministry is always ministry *with*, never ministry *to*; until we violate the new purity codes that *we* have created since our Redeemer rendered the old purity codes useless.

The urgency of these tasks has never been greater than it is as we approach the end of the second millennium. From our local communities to the international arena we witness human misery on an unprecedented scale, culminating in genocide. In no small measure, this misery is the product of the remarkable inventiveness of men and women in inflicting cruelty upon one another. This is not new. Since the time of Cain and Abel, men and women have declined to accept responsibility for the well-being of those who are other than — especially physically or otherwise different from — themselves. What is new, and particularly salient, is the enhanced role that the twin deadly sins of pride and covetousness play in this tragedy. In both sins we have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (*Romans 1:25*).

The material world dominates our society — not so much the world of God’s creation as the world of our creation. Our worth as human beings is measured, not in terms of one’s worth to society, but in terms of the external attributes associated with financial success — one’s salary,

one's position in the corporate (and the church) hierarchy, and one's social status. These tend to be correlated with the fleeting, superficial attributes of physical beauty – good looks, and “femininity” or “masculinity.” Those in positions of success, as defined above, may even come to believe, as did the Pharisees, that they have achieved these because of some innate merit. Conversely, it is held that those who are jobless or homeless have failed to reap the rewards of material prosperity because of an innate lack of merit. Moral turpitude is equated with poverty and professional failure; success is equated with virtue.

The wondrous natural creation which God deemed “very good” and the stewardship of which God entrusted to us, is mistakenly evaluated in terms of the extent to which it has been “improved” or “developed.” We replace greenery with concrete. We crave instant gratification of temporal wants, which are transformed into false needs generated ceaselessly through advertising in the mass media.

Finally, and most importantly, the legitimate desire to assert one's individuality has been distorted into a rampant individualism so extreme that we now neglect the community. We have developed a mistrust of public institutions which serve the needs of the larger community beyond our own immediate families. We suffer from what John Kenneth Galbraith in his book, *The Affluent Society*, diagnosed in the 1960s as private wealth and public poverty. Thirty years later this malaise has intensified. We prefer private entertainment which we get through our Walkmans, video games, and VCRs. We seek isolation in the ecologically wasteful privacy of our individual automobiles. The sphere of desirable social activity has so narrowed to the shrinking household that we ourselves have become the single greatest producers of the “outsiders” we fear and shun.

Men and women have long drawn distinctions among themselves, more often than not with tragic consequences. In America today, this tendency is coupled with our attachment to material possessions and our desire to accumulate wealth to pass on to our own. Robert Frost reminds us that it is stupid to insist that “Good fences make good neighbors”; instead “Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down.” The Body of Christ permits no division between *us* and *them*, between rich and poor, citizen and immigrant, white and nonwhite — Asian, African-American, and Latin — however much we wish to draw those lines. We go on to act on the basis of a self-fulfilling prophecy that marginalized groups will never, and can never, become fully integrated into our society. Therefore, society denies them access to quality education and health care and the other basic necessities of human life whose attainment would leave them free to seek spiritual growth in our churches. But any group that denies such access to other groups is not behaving as the Body of Christ.

This denial of access to resources and services is increasing in secular society. California's Proposition 13 expressed the determination of property owners to resist levies on their private wealth. These taxes could have financed public education. Ironically, the resulting erosion of the quality of public education in turn has led the same disgruntled taxpayers to abandon the public education system as hopelessly inadequate and send their own children to private schools! More recently, we have seen the so-called California Civil Rights Initiative which seeks to roll back affirmative action. There are also proposals under the general rubric of “welfare reform” which would seek to deny benefits to illegal aliens, and even certain benefits to legal immigrants.

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These initiatives all share a flawed premise: That immigrants and ethnic minorities are inherently incompatible with “American values.” Going further, there is the implication that these groups represent the primary source of crime and gang activity, as well as being a drain on private and public resources generally. The premise is fallacious. Middle- and upper-class white children are also spiritually lost, widely associated with gangs, use drugs, and engage in antisocial behavior.⁶ Many of them initiate and imitate the racially intolerant and political examples set by their parents’ generation.

Such initiatives are often motivated by greed and racism. They plainly violate the tenet that “all people are worthy of respect and honor, because all are created in the image of God, and all can respond to the love of God,” (*The Catechism, Book of Common Prayer, page 846*). We do not realize that such legislation is ultimately self-defeating. No accumulation of wealth can protect one and one’s children from the systematic marginalization of one sector of our population. Despite our superficial differences, we are the interdependent children of God. If one of us is hurt, we all suffer. As one insightful reader of the *International Herald Tribune* noted recently:

The young people in . . . gangs grew up in America’s cities, were exposed to America’s bigotry, generally dropped out of America’s overcrowded schools, watched American television, were neglected by America’s health-care system, bought guns on the uninhibited market defended by America’s gun lobby, and were for the most part badly fed, clothed and housed by America’s parsimonious welfare system. If they are not America’s children, whose are they? . . . Americans concerned about juvenile violence must assume their responsibilities by attacking its source. This means working to give all the country’s young people a fair chance for a long, productive and fulfilling life.

III. BARRIERS TO MINISTRY

The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” (Matthew 25:34-36)

The white and pale blue signs, with a splash of red, which we see at strategic street corners and which proclaim “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You” are the outward and visible symbols that our church is not a closed community. One hallmark of the Christian community is that it is a welcoming community. Another is that it is a caring community. We care for those in our parish communities – the sick, the disadvantaged, those who mourn and “all those who, in this transitory

life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity,” (*Holy Eucharist I*, Book of Common Prayer, page 329). But being welcoming and caring for its own members is not enough; plenty of communities which are emphatically not Christian also do that.

The hallmark of the Christian community lies in its caring for those outside its bounds. As Archbishop William Temple noted: “The church exists primarily for those outside its fold.” Our caring ministries must and should reach beyond ourselves. The teaching of Holy Scripture, is very clear on this point. As Archbishop Michael Ramsey once said, “Where men and women are hungry or oppressed, there is Jesus, and to serve them is to serve Jesus and to find him. It is in such encounters with our fellows that we encounter God himself and we find that which transcends in the midst of the human scene.” Therefore, we have to ask ourselves: Who are the strangers in our midst whom we are commanded to love, and are we doing the best possible job of in reaching out to them?

Bishop Paul V. Marshall of the Diocese of Bethlehem writes:⁷

If you want to know what's going on in the Episcopal Church . . . go to an Episcopal church near you. . . . You will find people helping people in need. You will find people welcoming the marginalized and caring for the oppressed. You will find food banks and soup kitchens. You will find creative worship. You will find care givers reaching out to persons and families affected by HIV/AIDS. You will find innovative ministries where parishioners reach out to children at risk in their neighborhoods and communities. . . . You will find us “seeking and serving Christ in all persons.” You will find us “striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.” That’s the Episcopal Church.

Indeed, Episcopalians feed the hungry through our soup kitchens and food pantries and through the delivery of food to the sick and those unable, as a result of infirmity, to leave their homes. We give something to drink to the thirsty. Through clothing closets, and by extension the provision of shelter to homeless people, we clothe the naked. We conscientiously take care of the sick, especially those of our parish communities. We visit those in prison and lift them up in our prayers. We welcome the stranger in particular through the ministry of refugee resettlement. These are the strangers whom we must love in the name of Jesus.

Do we Episcopalians really welcome the stranger as well as we proclaim? One of the more distressing trends in this country in the past five years has been an emerging xenophobia – fear of the other, the stranger. We see this manifested in all sorts of ways in the world: the initiatives which would cut illegal aliens from any semblance of humanitarian care; the suggestion that even legal immigrants should not have access to certain services; the feeling that immigrants are somehow taking the jobs that should rightfully belong to citizens of these United States. Despite hopes of seeing a new world order emerge, the fear of the stranger persists in increasingly virulent and violent forms throughout the world. The question becomes: Has the Episcopal Church somehow also fallen into this trap? Are there some people whom, by virtue of their “otherness,” we are not serving as well as we ought?

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (*Luke 16:19-31*) is a chilling parable, for it shows us the only representation in the Gospels of a man actually in hell; and he is in hell precisely because he ignored the poor man at his gate. Most important is the context of the parable. Jesus has just told the parable of the dishonest steward (*Luke 16:1-8*). His comment on that parable has become rightly famous: "No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth," (*Luke 16:13*). Luke's account continues:

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped," (*Luke 16:14-17*).

It is then, and by way of illustration, that Jesus tells the parable.

This passage places our responsibility to our neighbor in the clearest context possible. As Christians, we cannot serve both God and wealth; we must serve both God and neighbor. We cannot live by the values of the secular world while in that world during the week, and by the values of Jesus Christ when we attend church on Sundays. We have to own up to the fact that we are a Christian colony in a secular world.⁸

If we are to live by the values of Jesus Christ, then our calling is to serve those who have been marginalized by society. *The commission asserts that persons become marginalized when we are not intentional in welcoming them.*

Whom Are We Not Welcoming or Serving?

We can come up with an extended list of those who, at one time or another, have not been welcomed, or who have been marginalized, or even rejected outright. These are generally people who have been marginalized and rejected by the dominant culture. As Loren Mead notes: "Christians are divided into the righteous and the unrighteous, and the righteous do most of the dividing." While there are many classes and categories of people who have thus been excluded, among those who are or have been marginalized the commission recognizes four broad categories:

1. **GENDER:** Women, for far too long, have been second class citizens in the church. Not until 1969, fifty years after women's suffrage, were females seated as deputies in the General Convention. Not until 1976 did the Episcopal Church ordain women to the priesthood. The pattern persists. Throughout the Episcopal Church, the recruitment, ordination, and placement of female clergy remains a problem.
2. **RACE OR COLOR:** People of color have long struggled for recognition in a predominantly white church. The insidious, and spiritually corrosive, sin of racism continues to infect both church and society.⁹ Racism affects not only African-Americans, but also Hispanic-Americans, Native Americans, and Asian-Americans. The commission notes with concern the crisis represented by the disproportionate loss of Episcopalians of color.

3. **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Homosexual men and women have been systematically barred from full participation in the life of the church or have been shunted into marginal communities even when they have not faced outright ostracization.
4. **AGE:** At both ends of the scale, the church marginalizes people of different ages. We worship youth, and ignore our children when it comes to involving them fully in the life and ministry of the parish. We claim to respect the wisdom of our older members, but again ignore them when it suits us.

The task of the church, if it is to be true to the precepts of its lord and master who was vilified by the dominant culture because he ate and drank with “tax collectors and sinners” (*Luke 5:30*), is to reach out to those at the margins of society. This can only be accomplished if the church truly becomes a compassionate community. A caring community is, by definition, a compassionate community.¹⁰ The compassionate community sees its ministry not simply in the alleviation of pain, but as a means to enlarge its vision and to embrace fully the Great Commission to go out and spread the Gospel to all the world. The theologian Walter Brueggemann speaks eloquently to this point:

*Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt [of exclusion and rejection] is to be taken seriously, that the hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition for humanness.*¹¹

The late Henri Nouwen expands this theme:

*A Christian community is . . . a healing community, not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision. Mutual confession then becomes a mutual deepening of hope, and sharing weakness becomes a reminder to one and all of the coming strength.*¹²

Jesus Christ leads us to a new vision. The vision is realized not by retreating into some inner spiritual sanctum where we become detached from the cares and occupations of the world, but by entering into the pain and suffering of the world to minister to that hurt.

What Stops Us From Doing This?

There are many reasons why we do not practice this radical ministry of hospitality to which Jesus Christ calls us. We have a deep-seated fear of “the other.” In this we are not unique. The Hebrew community had to be reminded time and again to care for the stranger. So do we. Like them, we find the “we-they” dichotomy all too convenient:

- “They” are not like “us.”
- “They” are not as hardworking, or as dedicated as we are.

We find convenient excuses not to serve “them”:

- They are smelly and obnoxious, and they appear to be “dangerous”;
- It’s their fault – if only they worked harder/weren’t so lazy/didn’t drink/weren’t on drugs . .

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The problem with all these excuses and attitudes is that they run contrary to the vision of human society that Jesus gave us. When he fed the five thousand, he did not institute a means test or ask whether they were somehow “deserving.”¹³ He simply said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat,” (*Mark 8:2*) and then he fed them. That was the vision he gave us of the caring, compassionate community. But we are in danger of losing that vision, and because our vision is no longer intact, we have become a community that has forgotten its intended nature. We have developed rather like the community that arose around the great Hasidic rabbi, the Baal Shem Tov.

The Baal Shem Tov would take his disciples to a quiet place in the forest. There they would light a fire and, as they danced around the fire, the rabbi would lead them in the most uplifting prayers, lifting them into a sublime state of ecstasy. After the death of the saint, the disciples continued to go to the spot in the forest, light the fire and dance. But they could not remember the prayers and in time they forgot the dance, and later no longer even lit the fire. Finally, even the spot where he had led them faded from memory.

In like fashion, we have lost our memory. We join the same Pharisees, whom Jesus berated so severely, in their behavior. We have forgotten what it is like to live eucharistically, to set our lives in a context of thanksgiving. We have forgotten “the gift of joy and wonder in all [God’s] works” (*Service of Holy Baptism*, Book of Common Prayer, page 308). As the recently retired Dean of Westminster notes: “Once wonder goes; once mystery is dismissed; once the holy and numinous count for nothing; then human life becomes cheap and it is possible with a single bullet to shatter that most miraculous thing, a human skull, with scarcely a second thought.”¹⁴

Because we have lost this sense of wonder, our community, our coming together, is largely based on fear. As some cynic has suggested, the church is the biggest fire insurance agency in the world. Our fears are manifold:

- We fear the unknown, and because “they” are not like “us,” “they” are different from “us,” we fear “them.” Because we fear “them,” we hold “them” at arms’ length because only then do we feel safe.
- We fear change. We live in a changing world where the pace of change has become so rapid that we look at our community of faith to protect us from change. Intellectually, we assent to change, but at heart we want to stay the same. We do not want to plunge into that world where we encounter change directly and where we might be changed in ways that we would find uncomfortable.
- We fear uncertainty. We like things to be stable and certain. We like our liturgy to have no surprises. We reject the prayer of Dom Helder Camara in which he begs God to “Change our lives, shatter our complacency,” let alone “Take away the quietness of a clear conscience.”¹⁵
- We fear revealing our feelings, and therefore we do not express them. And yet God calls us to “rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (*Romans 12:15*). Because we do not, this leads us into a rejection of that compassionate response to which Jesus calls us.
- We fear loss. Especially do we fear the loss of security. We have lost the ability to say, with Teresa of Avila, “I thank God for all the things I do not have.” We fear losing what we have. When confronted with the “have-nots,” we become afraid because we see in them the mirror of our own potential failure.

We have become a community of self-affirmation, not redemption. We have forgotten how to live eucharistically. Less and less do we come together in a re-membering to be *broken and shared* at the altar and then go out into the world, to give thanks to our gracious Creator and Savior, and to serve in his name. We feel that it is better to be served than to serve and that as long as we service the needs of the members of our congregations, we are serving Christ. We are graciously benign. Our selfishness and self-righteousness have led us to a renunciation of the core values of our baptism. In so doing, we have become practical atheists. All too often we do our works out of a sense of obligation rather than compassion. We take refuge in pious posturings where we prefer hierarchy to relationship, promote stereotypes to defend our positions, and tolerate differences rather than accept them.

Finally, as a church, we have adopted corporate values. Wall Street has come to dominate Jerusalem. We believe, whether implicitly or explicitly, in winning at all costs. We believe that bigger is better, and biggest is best; that success is *the* measure of the person; that money is the measure of all things; and even that might is right. We dress for success (one has only to look at any Episcopal congregation to see the truth of this). We have come to believe that one is what one does, and that one's professional status, and above all one's wealth, are the marks of one's value to the community. As one commission member noted, "Ours is a struggle for the souls of our people vis-a-vis the values of our culture and the values of our church. We are too absorbed by the values of power and being big. We reward people for being successful in the values of the culture. We need the standards of the servant community, not a success community."

These are the parameters that prevent us from truly ministering to the needy. These are the values that have fomented the "we-they" false dichotomy and which prevent us from seeing those who are materially less fortunate than ourselves as our own brothers and sisters. These are the structures which make the poor among us, the strangers at our gates, all but invisible.

IV. PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

Jesus and the disciples came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." (Mark 9:33-37)

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 7:9-12)

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The Episcopal Church has many outreach ministries. We pose the question: *Are there principles or models of success to which we can look for guidance?*¹⁶ The commission, during its three-year tenure, visited a number of agencies throughout the country and learned much from them regarding effective Christian outreach. These learnings gave the commission great insight into the principles undergirding their success. The commission shares these findings in the hope that all the church's ministries will benefit from the principles which we have identified in these models. We divide these principles into four broad categories: Leadership; Mission and Vision; Networking; and Creative Use of Resources.

Leadership

There can be no effective program without effective leadership. "The arrival or departure of a leader," as one commission member put it, "is a direct factor in the success patterns of every ministry in our diocese." This leadership must come both from outside the ministry as well as within. From outside the ministry there must be a clear and well-defined vision that should come from both the national church and the diocese. Our efforts to serve God and our neighbors need to be challenged to "be all that you can be," and then go beyond that.

Leadership often comes from an inspired point person. But herein lies a danger. Frequently, that "inspired point person" (generally the executive director) becomes the program. This leads to "ownership" or "turf" issues. The identification of the program with the leader, who in turn may receive his or her identity from the program, may become destructive to both ministry and leader. As the noted management consultant, Peter Drucker, observes, "The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I.'"¹⁷ The best way to counteract any sense of "turf" is to have a shared sense of mission and a sense of *shared* ministry. It is also necessary to plan for transition. It is always necessary to prepare for the leader's replacement so that the transition when he or she is no longer there will be eased.

Leadership cannot thrive in a vacuum. The mission should be shared. Dynamic leadership requires training and development and the delegation of tasks suited to the particular gifts of each participant in the ministry. Social outreach ministry is often isolating. If a ministry has a good executive director, the temptation is all too often to leave everything to that single individual with the ultimate result of burning out that person. This means that the governing body must support that person, and this support must go beyond the monthly or bimonthly or quarterly meeting. Boards need to be appropriately involved with the executive director and staff. Particularly in the area of fund raising, board members should assist the executive director. By the same token, boards also need development and education, if not the intensive training that the point person requires.

Leadership should fit the task at hand. Expectations should be realistic. People's gifts *must* be identified and respected. Leadership should be nurtured at all levels in the organization. All involved in the ministry should have both the appropriate authority and the responsibility to act. This means that boundaries and guidelines must be clear should be coupled with high expectations. The leader provides a flexible structure for the organization, a framework for the organization's mission and ministry.

Effective leadership is also exhibited in a variety of other ways:

- the ability to say “no” compassionately;
- relational skills, shown in such personal touches as knowing the clients’ names;
- a system of recognition of tasks well done;
- clarification of needs to be met; and
- an awareness of community trends.

In this last regard, it may be necessary to go out into the community and bring the ministry to the people. One outstanding program which the commission visited actually took its ministry to the people it sought to serve. That ministry recognized basic issues such as people’s work schedules.¹⁸

Regarding leadership, Drucker makes a further point: “Keep your eye on the task, not on yourself. The task matters, and you are a servant.”¹⁹

Mission and Vision

Even more important than leadership is the mission of the organization. “Mission comes first,” says Drucker. “Nonprofit institutions exist for the sake of their mission. They exist to make a difference in society and in the life of the individual. They exist for the sake of their mission, and this must never be forgotten.”²⁰

We have alluded to the vision, the shaping of the mission, that must come from the outside. But it must not come entirely from the outside. An important part must come from within. As one priest ministering in a depressed inner-city area put it: “We are not willing to let drug addicts and gangs set the standards for us; we will set our own standards.”

The organizations that do best have a very clear idea of what they are about and why. They have a sense of being catalysts, agents for change in the community in which they find themselves. “What we try to do,” said the director of one organization, “is to create alternatives.” They have a clear idea that their ministry is ministry *with*, not ministry *to*. This again arises out of the sense of compassion as being shared weakness. Their programs demonstrate an earnest commitment to *quality* service. It is not enough to pour soup in a bowl and place that before the client; the vision should include recognizing the client as a whole person, not simply as a mouth to feed. This extends to listening to the sacredness in the other person, and understanding that person as a vehicle for the divine.²¹ “Next to the Blessed Sacrament,” wrote C.S. Lewis, “your neighbor is the holiest object that presents itself to your senses.” This was brought home in a very striking way by the statement of a former client who had been receiving medical care at a church-based clinic: “I knew that I was really poor, but nobody ever made me feel that way. It seemed they were more concerned with my health and my feelings. . . . I receive good health care now, but I can truthfully say it doesn’t compare to the familiar, nurturing environment I grew so fond of at the Church Health Center.”

The most important part of the mission is a vision for future mission and ministry. Human beings are not static; we live in a dynamic society. Our needs change as society changes. The mission must include these possibilities. The vision must also be large enough to encompass the possibilities of growth. But the growth comes out of the express needs and relationships formed in

the program. For example, a literacy program in one organization grew out of a Bible study group when it was realized that some of the participants could not read.

Vision like this matters. “People with small visions,” writes Parker Palmer, “will always win the effectiveness awards, since these projects are so insignificant that they can almost always ‘succeed’ (never mind the fact that they contribute almost nothing of real merit to the commonweal).”²² The most successful ministries are also those where the mission is carried out with a sense of real joy.

Reference has been made earlier to the church being a Christian colony in a secular, and sometimes hostile, world. This applies equally to church-based and church-supported outreach programs. We are people of a story, the story of Jesus Christ, the story which we retell each and every Sunday, which shapes us and from which we derive our power and authority. Paul says, “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you,” (*1 Corinthians 11:2*). Too often we share this story halfheartedly, if at all. In so doing our programs become indistinguishable from those of secular organizations. The commission formed the distinct impression that those organizations which realized that their identity comes from the story and which share that story boldly and explicitly are those which are the most effective.

Networking

Networking, by which we mean the informal sharing of information and services among individuals or groups linked by a common interest, is carried out at the local, regional, and national level. Productive networking, like support from a board, lets the leader know that he or she is not isolated. With the recent advances in electronic communications, networking has become even easier. The computer allows access to people in the neighboring community, or in the city across the continent. One can be in touch with organizations in the United Kingdom as easily as with organizations in the United States.

But networks go beyond ministering to a real or imagined sense of isolation. Networks are about forming coalitions, forming community. They provide a forum where people can articulate their successes, share their visions, and thereby tell their stories. Networks are tools for community organizing. They are interesting in that, in so doing, they take on a life of their own.

Networks broaden the vision. Effective networking allows one to experience that “we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” in a real and extraordinary sense. They allow one to develop the concept of church as not just parochial, nor even Episcopal. They provide opportunities to *experience* ministry and diversity and they can act as discernment or “wrestling” groups.

Good networking encourages participation in the ministry. Other leaders, such as rectors of parishes, can “give permission” for people to participate. Thereby they encourage participation and, in consequence, expand the volunteer pool.

Networks facilitate the formation of coalitions. Here one of the most creative we have encountered is *Synagogy*. This is a “community of people who live in, worship in, and work with

small congregations in the Episcopal Church.”²³ This particular coalition centers on a commitment to a shared learning process. It works in several critical areas:

- multi-cultural understanding;
- changing diocesan paradigms and decision making processes;
- “the church’s ability to reclaim its prophetic voice when confronting situations like the farm crisis and the urban crisis”; and
- the concern that “ministry not be just located within church structures.”

Another network which we hold up is the Jubilee network. These networks are non-hierarchical. They operate out of a sense of compassion, of shared weakness, and mutual support.

While dioceses can facilitate networking, it is the national church which, above all, can help in the formation and development of networks to a remarkable degree. Computer networks now provide opportunities which did not really exist prior to 1985. These are tools which should have wider use and greater emphasis. The commission sees the development of these resources as a priority in national church funding in the next triennium. If we are, in an era of apparently straitened financial and human resources, to “work smarter,” this is where we are going to have to see major progress in the future.

Creative Use of Resources

A commission member remarked, “The church is like a barn with a lot of ‘stuff’ in it. The owner doesn’t know what to do with it all. Then along comes an antique dealer, and suddenly all that ‘stuff’ is in lofts all over New York . . . and who knows where else.” The “stuff” which we have is the untapped resources of our church, financial, human, and visionary. The “stuff” is, if you will, the talents which we are called to use to the greater glory of God. That same member also said, “When the church faces the needs of the world, the problem is often not money or resources, but vision. We need to win the hearts of our people to share from the vast bounty with which we have already been blessed.”

Resources are often thought of mainly in terms of financial resources. There is a trap here. “Almost by definition,” writes Drucker, “money is always scarce in a nonprofit institution. Indeed, a good many nonprofit executives seem to believe that all their problems would be solved if only they had more money. In fact, some of them come close to believing that money-raising is really their mission. . . . But a nonprofit institution that becomes a prisoner of money-raising is in serious trouble and in a serious identity crisis.”²⁴

Another danger is the danger of operating out of a scarcity assumption. This has broader implications as illustrated by Palmer, who notes, “Given the sort of action that dominates our world, it is apparent that many of us, and our institutions, have chosen the scarcity assumption. . . . Tragically, every time we act on the scarcity assumption, we help create a world in which scarcity becomes a cruel reality.”²⁵ Scarcity becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. And yet, Jesus holds before us the miracle of the loaves and fishes to demonstrate that the assumption of abundance must be that which undergirds our ministries.

There are other resources which enter into the equation. Chief among these are the human resources. Nonprofit institutions tend to rely heavily on volunteers. Volunteers need recognition

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and appreciation if they are to be truly effective. Like paid staff, they need opportunities for training and further education. A careful balance between volunteers and staff should be maintained at all times.

Non-financial material resources should also be carefully sought and maintained. For example, the architecture or structure of the working or living environment can be psychologically beneficial to staff, volunteers, and clients. Another psychological factor in a program is the vitality which arises from variety and *number* of ministries; success breeds success. On the other hand, while growth in the number and variety of ministries can be important, there must be a willingness to grow responsibly.

The cultivation of volunteers is an essential element of an effective program. The director of one agency said to the commission, "I would rather have someone volunteer once a month and have that person for twenty years, than once a week and have them burn out in six months." Volunteers need feedback regarding the success of the program. They need to feel part of the program and to know that their talents are needed and respected. The responsibility and authority are shared with the staff. It's not too different from the situation of Jesus when he trained and sent out the seventy (*Luke 10:1-18*), praising them when they returned. They felt that they had made a difference, and the volunteers who make our outreach ministries possible should be made to feel no differently.

The program must be marketed carefully. Returning once more to fund raising, one of the most important learnings was that careful record keeping of time contributed without has dollar value. The documentation of this in grant applications is helpful.

Finally, and most important in the creative use of resources, is the spiritual aspect of outreach ministry. We draw our mandate from Jesus Christ who is the ultimate model for us as Christians. He was able to balance perfectly the material and the spiritual aspects of his ministry. We must do likewise. Worship should thus play an important role in our program. Bible study and prayer should play an integral role in staff development, as well as in shaping the vision for our ministries.

V. THE CHURCH AS ADVOCATE

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21)

Jesus said to the disciples: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

What an embarrassment poor people are . . . not unlike the days when Amos prophesied in Israel. Perhaps there should be a sentence added to the Ash Wednesday Litany of Penitence (Book of Common Prayer, *page 268*). It could follow "Our self-indulgent appetites, and our exploitation of other people," and would read, "Our embarrassment at the poor in our midst." This would then be followed by, "We confess to you, Lord."

Consider the following vignettes:

According to the Census Bureau, in 1965 14.7 million children, 21 percent of everyone under the age of 18, were poor. In less than a decade that number fell to 10 million. Last year, the figures were right back to square one — 14.7 million children were poor. "Unfortunately," said a Florida member of the United States House of Representatives, serving on the committee that wrote much of the welfare reform law, "the children are very often just the victims of poverty."²⁶ How sad.

In Kentucky, the state will no longer pay for welfare recipients to earn bachelors' degrees in order to lift themselves out of poverty. Instead, they are pressured to accept minimum wage jobs at \$4.75 an hour. To refuse any such job may result in penalties.

The director of a homeless shelter in Georgia had this to say about his ministry: "This ministry was not without controversy — homeowners' associations, members of the parish, etc. After two successful years, the shelter moved to a permanent location nearer to Marietta — the urban part of the county. The shelter was eventually moved because a chunk of the congregation felt that the growth of the parish was harmed by the shelter's presence. We're in the middle of a lot of upwardly mobile folk with lots of kids, etc. . . . Two interesting points: This is the first year that our pledged budget is back to where it was during the shelter years, and two, attendance is only now back to where it was during those years. In spite of the smell, the grunge, etc., it seemed we did better when we had a real outreach program that wasn't so nice and tidy. Sure we got more members, but they didn't attend as much as the 'old' group, and their average pledge was \$10 a week!"²⁷

These vignettes encapsulate perfectly the need for the church to not only serve the poor, but to be advocates on their behalf. Poor people are, generally speaking, poor because they lack access to resources — financial, material, political, and intellectual. How is a poor person helped to get a job when that job is located, say, in a shopping mall five miles from the center of town and that person cannot afford the transportation to get there? Or, in the information age, how can a poor person get a job in, say, computer data entry if that person cannot read?

Enabling poor people to have access to these resources in order to break the poverty cycle is advocacy in its broadest sense. Our church-based ministries that serve poor people must likewise have access to these resources in order to serve those whom we are called to serve. This also requires advocacy.

The Nature of Power

Poor people are poor because they lack power. They lack the power to make decisions regarding their own lives. The powerful have access to resources, and it is a distressing feature of this nation at the present time that power, certainly economic power and wealth, is increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people.

Power is seductive. The second temptation of Jesus in the desert, where the devil offers Jesus power (*Luke 4:5-7*), is witness to this reality. Pilate understood the nature of power. We read that he “entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, ‘Where are you from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, ‘Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?’ Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin,’” (*John 19:9-11*).

Power is never neutral. The temptation to wield power often comes cloaked in righteous rationalizations. The temptation when one wields political or economic power is, ultimately, to use that power to serve oneself instead of using it to serve others. Servant ministry thus becomes the antidote to this particular temptation: “whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” (*Mark 10:43-44*)

Power and its control in our society arise out of a scarcity assumption. “The scarcity assumption,” writes Parker Palmer, pervades our institutional life by putting power in the hands of a few, and keeping it there. Hierarchies are always rooted in the belief that power itself is, or ought to be, a scarce commodity, rooted in the belief that few people are qualified to hold power, or that few should be allowed to hold it, lest the threatening abundance of power known as ‘democracy’ come to pass.”²⁸

The Advocacy Role of the Church

Advocacy is the antidote to power. Advocacy consists of being the voice of the powerless before the powerful. In this context, the church has *always* had an advocacy role to play in the larger society. However, it is this very aspect of the Episcopal Church’s witness that is the least popular of all its many ministries, in large part because many of its members are themselves those who wield power, either political or economic. The church stands, in their opinion, ready to bless their positions of power and their use of it. But we, as Christians, must take for granted the fact that, in Thomas Jefferson’s words, “The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government.”

We should also understand that advocacy, in the light of our mission, is not just directed toward those areas with which we agree. Advocacy is directed toward what we know to be right and just, toward what we know is the call of the Gospel, in meeting the needs of the widow or the widower, the orphan, or the stranger at the gate — even when we might not personally share a passion for those beliefs. The mission of advocacy which we find in the Gospels doesn’t give us the option of basing our actions on whether we truly believe the hungry need to be fed; it just tells us to feed them.

The Episcopal Church needs to recognize that it has power. This was summed up succinctly by one commission member: “We can enter into existing social ministries and bring our enormous

influences to make a difference. We do not have to start from scratch. We have all kinds of talent to make a difference in existing programs. We have access to networks: Money is there if someone is already there holding up the flag and raising the vision. . . . Often the church can serve best by providing a public blessing and offering the help of people with the getting the material support, as well as board members to provide structure.”

The tools for enabling this to take place have been described in an earlier section — networking, forming coalitions, pooling resources, etc. We need to be more intentional, using the tools we have been given, in making sure that we “work smarter.”

Economic Power

But we should see advocacy not simply in addressing the wrongs wrought by public policy initiatives. What we should also seek to do here is to see in what respects the Episcopal Church can be an advocate for the right use of economic power, especially the economic power of its members. “We need to use the blessings of money in our church,” said a commission member. “Even with all our budgetary problems, the Episcopal Church enjoys enormous material blessings, more so than several other denominations. With these blessings comes responsibility, and we need to be more intentional in accepting that responsibility.”

And yet, a recent research study signals out alarming trends in giving in churches.²⁹ Not only is membership of churches as a percentage of population declining, but the study found that giving to churches as a percentage of income is also declining. The most disturbing finding was that “*benevolence giving*” — which the authors define as “funds earmarked for church activities whose focus lies beyond the congregation, such as support for denominational work at regional and national levels and funding for seminaries and international and domestic mission programs as well as local mission projects” — is declining even faster than giving to “*congregational finances*” (i.e., the core budget of the congregation). It is indeed ironic that these trends are occurring at a time when this nation is the wealthiest in the whole of recorded human history.

This research study should act as a clarion call to the Episcopal Church, and its constituent congregations, to examine their mission. The documentation of the dwindling contribution of our tremendous resources, both human and financial, raises some profound issues for both evangelism and stewardship as well as for our outreach ministries.

The problem also raises profound questions for us as individual Christians. For example:

- Who will provide the care for the victims of war, famine, and natural disaster overseas, especially in this age of dwindling government resources? Historically, the church has always reached out in compassion. Are our ministries in this area to be cut back?
- Who will be able to serve those in our midst who are hungry and needing food, thirsty and needing drink, strangers and needing welcome, naked and needing clothing, sick and needing care, in prison and needing a compassionate hand and voice? Many of the gaps caused by cutbacks in governmental programs to serve these persons have been filled by the religious community. Will this compassionate outreach come to an end? As Jesus Christ defined the mission of the church, it must not.

The two options before us are to go out and enlarge our resource base, both through bringing new members into our midst, as well as retaining those we already have (evangelism), and seeking a greater level of commitment to giving, especially to the outreach ministries (stewardship). We also have to “work smarter.” We have to seek out and learn from those of our programs which are already doing an effective job and “seeking and serving” others in the name of Jesus Christ.

What Are the Consequences of Our Actions?

Our first task as advocates is to help people see the consequences of their actions. In particular, we ask the question: What are the monetary or financial consequences of reduced giving in the church? We would do well to examine the question: What would happen to the poor if the church’s historical benevolence toward them were suddenly to cease? A better way of phrasing the question may be: What would happen *to the church* if it decided that its benevolence to the poor should cease because of lack of funds? The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (*Luke 16:19-31*) should, at the very least, give us pause.

Does not our advocacy role also include finding the means to respond in greater ways to the needs of those we are called to serve — whether within our congregations or outside of them? Whose wealth is it, anyway? God poses the question to the rich fool: “The things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (*Luke 12:20*). If we build the bigger barns for the benefit of others, then we can give an appropriate answer to the question, “Whose will these things be?” They will belong to all.

One of the startling revelations we are facing about our corporate bounty is that, in the next *decade*, 9-13 trillion will change hands through people dying and leaving their estates. To whom will they leave them? Or, rather, who will be the beneficiaries and will those beneficiaries be reflective of donors who understand their (our) roles in the light of the Gospel we proclaim? If so, will they entrust their wealth, or a proportion thereof, to the church so that it can continue its ministries? Never has it been more important to affirm the tithe as the standard of giving.

To illustrate this, we share a vignette that a member of the commission told: A vestry member had a modest income from raising and harvesting pecans, yet gave generously not only of her money but also her compassionate service to anyone in need. She was one of the first women to join the vestry. At one meeting, a retired general complained about giving to the church, especially any money going beyond the parish itself. “The problem is one of control,” the general said. “When we give money beyond our parish, we don’t have any control over how that money is spent!” “No,” the new vestry member replied, gently but firmly. “The problem is not one of control. When I give my money to the church, I give it to God. I don’t need to control what the vestry or the diocese or the national church does with it. I trust that they will do what should be done with the Lord’s money. The problem is not control, but faith. You need more faith that God will take our offerings and do with them far more than we could ever dream.”

This transfer of wealth will be a clear indication of our faith, of how well we have shared and proclaimed and supported our mission. Planned giving will reflect whether we will indeed serve God or serve wealth. The distribution of our estates is a testimony of our intention to serve God, and will continue even after we make our song at the grave, “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.”

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE 1995-97 TRIENNIUM

	1995	1996	1997
<i>Income</i>			
Budget	\$17,333	\$17,333	\$17,333
<i>Expenses</i>			
Consultant		\$750	\$750
Commission Meetings	\$20,954	\$24,009	\$8,513*

* 1997 estimate

BUDGET APPROPRIATION

	1998	1999	2000
Budget	\$17,500	\$28,000	\$17,500

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution A062 Standing Commission on Human Affairs Budget Appropriation

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That there be appropriated from the Budget of the
- 2 General Convention for the expense of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs the sum of
- 3 \$63,000 for the triennium 1998-2000.

Resolution A063 Dissemination of Standing Commission on Human Affairs Materials

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 72nd General Convention request the
- 2 Church Center staff to disseminate the materials and resources that the Standing Commission on
- 3 Human Affairs has assembled and this report to the bishops and to the directors of Christian
- 4 Education or their equivalent in every diocesan office.

Resolution A064 Funding for Study Guide

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 72nd General Convention direct the
- 2 Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to provide \$1,000 to complete the study guide on the
- 3 principles of successful models for ministry to accompany the report.

Resolution A065 Outreach Ministries Network

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 72nd General Convention direct the
- 2 Executive Council and the Church Center Staff to develop a network of, and maintain an
- 3 inventory of, outreach ministries in the church.

Explanation

Many parishes and dioceses in our church are engaged in a wide variety of what can be termed "outreach ministries." Their experiences, whether successful or unsuccessful, are a valuable

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resource to other parishes and dioceses exploring ways to be involved in similar endeavors. The maintenance of an inventory of outreach ministries would make those resources readily available to all who wished to use them and would help prevent duplication of effort and repetition of mistakes on the part of those exploring such ministries in their own areas.

Resolution A066 Educational Program on Planned Giving

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 72nd General Convention direct the
2 Executive Council and the Church Center staff to develop and implement a comprehensive
3 educational program on planned giving for the Church; and be it further
4 *Resolved*, That this 72nd General Convention direct the Executive Council and the Church Center
5 staff to develop a comprehensive program to encourage our members to see the tithe as the
6 minimum standard in their estate giving.

Explanation

The next decade will witness the largest transfer of wealth between generations in history. We have an obligation to provide our parishioners with the advice, counsel, and resources needed to make decisions regarding the disposition of their estates that will be beneficial to them, to their loved ones, and to the church. The material resources we have are, in effect, on loan from our Creator. We are charged with the stewardship of those resources for both our own generation and subsequent generations.

Resolution A067 Non-United States Clergy Pension Strategy

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 72nd General Convention request the
2 Church Pension Fund to develop a domestic missionary strategy to ensure that clergy recruited
3 from elsewhere to do ministry here have pensions adequate for them to live in the United States
4 after retirement; and be it further
5 *Resolved*, That this 72nd General Convention direct the Church Pension Fund to explore
6 reciprocal agreements among retirement funds in other branches of the Anglican Commission.

Explanation

The Church Pension Fund is now considering a strategy to encourage our missionaries elsewhere to have adequate compensation. This resolution seeks to enable a similar strategy to support those from elsewhere who do vital ministries in the United States.

Resolution A068 Domestic Missionary Strategy for the Marginalized

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 72nd General Convention request the
2 Evangelism Office at the Church Center to create and implement a domestic missionary strategy
3 to reach out and embrace God's miraculous creation of peoples diverse in ethnicity, economic
4 circumstances, and gender who have hitherto been marginalized in our society and not included in
5 the Episcopal Church. This evangelistic effort should commit itself especially, but not exclusively,
6 to Asian-Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, Latino-Americans, and other ethnic
7 minorities.

Explanation

At the advent of the second millennium since the birth of our Lord, the United States faces an intensified wave of international isolationism and xenophobia, as well as the cumulative decline

of public commitment to support those most vulnerable in our society. In our Baptismal Covenant we pledged ourselves to "seek and serve Christ in all persons" and "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being" (BCP 305) and in our corporate membership in His Church are committed "to go out to all the world and proclaim the good news" (Mark 16:15) of God's love for all human beings as children of God. We have fallen short dramatically in this endeavor. The needs of our ethnic ministries are in at crisis proportion.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Mahatma Gandhi, in *All Men Are Brothers*, New York: Continuum, 1980, page 123. This quotation originally appeared in *Young India*, October 13, 1921.
- ² Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, New York: New Directions, 1961, page 17.
- ³ In the nineteenth century, Philander Chase (later Presiding Bishop) wrote a book, when Bishop of Illinois, defending American slavery as a part of God's plan, using Holy Scripture to bolster his position.
- ⁴ See also Luke 15:1-2. Jesus follows up this challenge by telling, in rapid succession, the parables of the lost sheep (15:3-7), the lost coin (15:8-10), and the prodigal son (15:11-32).
- ⁵ The obvious examples here are Gandhi's doctrine of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) which influenced modern prophets such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and some of the tenets included in the general term "liberation theology." Would the great gains in the civil rights movement in the sixties or the overthrow of apartheid have been possible if the Church had been resistant to its "penetration" by these outside influences?
- ⁶ See, for example, George H. Gallup with Wendy Plump, *Scared: Growing Up in America*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1995.
- ⁷ Letter to the Editor, *The Morning Call*, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, November 7, 1996.
- ⁸ For an extended treatment of this important theme, we refer you to Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- ⁹ This was brought home to the commission most strikingly in its viewing of the video, *The Color of Fear*. The commission highly recommends this resource which can be ordered through the Episcopal Church Center.
- ¹⁰ By *compassionate* we mean the ability to feel another's pain and to respond to that pain. The Greek word which we translate as compassion, means literally 'to feel in one's guts.' The Latin from which our word, compassion, is derived, *cum patior*, means 'to suffer with.'
- ¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, page 85.
- ¹² Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1972, page 96.
- ¹³ A means test is applied to applicants for such programs as Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Food Stamps and is an assessment of the applicant's net financial status.
- ¹⁴ Michael Mayne, *This Sunrise of Wonder*, London: HarperCollins, 1995, page 235.
- ¹⁵ Dom Helder Camara, 'Come, Lord' from *The Desert Is Fertile*, New York: Orbis, 1982.
- ¹⁶ The commission realizes that success is not the only criterion. As Mother Teresa said, "We are not called to be successful, but to be faithful."

- ¹⁷ Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*, New York: HarperCollins, 1990, page 18.
- ¹⁸ The ministry in question was True Sunshine Episcopal Church in San Francisco, a multicultural ministry serving the surrounding community which included people of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean extraction.
- ¹⁹ Drucker, page 27.
- ²⁰ Drucker, page 45.
- ²¹ This important principle is consistently violated by one church-based soup kitchen that allows its clients to eat their food only with plastic spoons – the same implements provided to criminals housed in the federal maximum security prison in Marion, Illinois.
- ²² Parker J. Palmer, *The Active Life*, New York: HarperCollins, 1990, page 75.
- ²³ Definition drawn from *Synagogy: A Progress Report*, May 1993. The full text of the report may be obtained from Sandra Majors Elledge, Episcopal Appalachian Ministries (formerly APSO), P.O. Box 18097, Knoxville, TN 37928.
- ²⁴ Drucker, page 56.
- ²⁵ Palmer, page 127.
- ²⁶ Peter T. Kilborn, *The New York Times*, November 30, 1996.
- ²⁷ Gary B. Roberts, personal communication to Commissioner Dr. Louie Crew and reproduced in *Homelessness – A Resource Packet*, page 35.
- ²⁸ Palmer, pages 125-126.
- ²⁹ John and Sylvia Ronsvalle, “The End of Benevolence? Alarming Trends in Church Giving”, *The Christian Century*, October 23, 1996, pages 1010-1014. The authors are directors of empty tomb, inc., in Champaign, Illinois. The article is based on their recently published book, *Behind the Stained Glass Windows: Money Dynamics in the Church* (Baker Books, 1996).

**THE EPISCOPAL SOCIETY FOR MINISTRY ON AGING, INC.
(1994-1997)**

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The following report is submitted by the Commission on Human Affairs on behalf of and as a courtesy to the Episcopal Society for Ministry on Aging, Inc. (ESMA).

One of the critical issues confronting our nation and the Episcopal Church as we face the beginning of a new millennium is the growing percentage of our people who are older. As a nation, the fastest growing segment of our population is that over 85! The 1982 State of the Church Profile reported that approximately 25% of Episcopalians were over 65, and that 50% were between 40 and 65. Dr. Bernard E. Nash, past president of ESMA and former executive director of AARP, now estimates that the 1997 figures are 2% higher, i.e., 27% of Episcopalians are over age 65 and 52% are between 40 and 65.

The Rev. Robert W. Carlson, current president of ESMA, points out that “whereas the secular world tends to speak of our national aging as a social problem, the church, with its unique perspective on life, might see this trend as a gift and an opportunity. The Bible consistently regards long life in this positive way, and perceives death, the end of life, as the culmination of a life-long process and the beginning of a larger life.”

Unfortunately the church has often ignored the good news about aging, and has shared the secular tendency, very prevalent in America, to deny aging and to focus on youth and young adulthood to the exclusion of the fact that aging is a life-long process. ESMA’s continuing task is to remind the Episcopal Church of its mission statement on aging adopted at the 1986 General Convention, “to

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affirm and empower all persons for shared ministry throughout the entire life span, and to be responsive to the special gifts and needs of older persons." ESMA continues its mission despite being weakened by General Convention's 1994 decision to discontinue financial support for its ministry on aging.

Older people not only make up an increasingly large percentage of our church membership. They also contribute greatly to the leadership and financial support of the church and provide a unique gift of wisdom, experience and example for those of other age levels. Where would our churches be without the stewardship of our older members in terms of dollar support? Where would our parishes, dioceses and national church be without the hours of time given by Episcopalians of all ages, but increasingly by those of "riper years?" Many of our elders are willing to step back and let younger people take their place, but there is a constant need for the experience, perspective and discretionary time which older people are able to contribute.

While the secular world continues to see aging as something to be denied, as a problem with no solution, the biblical witness is to the positive contribution of older persons. Rabbi Zolman Schachter-Solomi has pinpointed this in his book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* in which he calls older people to their unique mission to witness to the truth and wholeness that has been revealed to them in their lives. Older people in the church are called to this same mission and ministry and need to be supported by a church which is sensitive both to their needs and unique gifts. The spirituality of aging is one of the major foci of ESMA, again asking the church and its congregations to call forth and nurture the spiritual gifts of persons of all ages.

Resolution A069 Educational Program Inclusion

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the educational program of the Episcopal
- 2 Church include education throughout the entire life span.

Explanation

The membership of the Episcopal Church includes all of God's children - children of all ages. The educational task of the church is to equip its members to live into the fullness of life and into the transition to eternal life.

Resolution A070 Book of Common Prayer References to Aging

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the Standing Liturgical Commission, in its
- 2 next revision of The Book of Common Prayer, cast all references to aging in a positive light.

Explanation

Aging is a gift and a privilege granted to us by God. Yet in Form II of the Prayers of the People (p. 384), we pray "For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and the suffering ..." By association, the first phrase implies that aging is an infirmity rather than a normal part of life. The new phrase could read, "For the frail elderly and the infirm, ..."