

2003 General Convention Consultation Platform

The Mission of the Church

Do Justice, Make Peace, Be Accountable

We, the constituent members of the Consultation, come to the 2003 General Convention in Minneapolis, believing this to be a watershed moment for the Church. We find ourselves in a world and a country that has once again turned to violence in order to create peace. Violence may create order, but it cannot create peace. We, the Church, know this to be true. It is at the core of the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the revelation of the cross and resurrection. Only justice can create peace. Only right, restored relationship can create peace. Our fervent prayer is that the Episcopal Church will speak with absolute clarity about this truth in Minneapolis. The world and our country desperately need us to do so.

We rejoice in the renewed emphasis in the Church on mission. For us to be engaged in mission is to be radical disciples, women and men who are touched by Jesus deeper and deeper in the core of our being and led to be agents of transformation in the world. While we welcome church growth, we reject a focus on it without a parallel emphasis on radical discipleship. Spirituality, evangelism and justice are co-equal partners in a Church striving for wholeness and a transformative witness.

It is a moment for courage and risk in the church, courage to do justice and make peace. And peace/*shalom/salaam* must be our goal, not a simplistic unity that includes some at the expense of others. If the Episcopal Church chooses to protect unity rather than do justice at this point in its history, it will not only miss an opportunity to witness to a different way in a violent and divided world, but will also doom itself to institutional maintenance as its primary mission, a project that can only lead to eventual death. If we fail to do justice corporately we will encourage congregationalism as the only way to do so.

Another significant, missional issue for the Church at this moment is accountability. Many justice issues have turned into accountability issues as we have dealt with them over the long term, the primary examples being the sins of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. In order to do justice and make peace, both within the Episcopal Church and in the world, we are called to be accountable one to another.

Twenty-seven years ago the Church went to Minneapolis in another watershed moment. The Church chose at that moment to allow God to transform it. There can be little doubt that we are at such a moment again, and the primary question is, will we, under the grace of God, have the courage to allow God to continue the work of transformation among us. We offer to the Church, the following ways to further the mission of God, to do justice, make peace, and be accountable.

Do Justice

Civil Liberties

The United States government has taken steps through legislation to restrict civil liberties as a measure to curb terrorism. Both American citizens and people of other nations find a hostile climate in our nation as their rights as individuals are systematically violated and

their homes and families become targets of informants and eavesdropping. Individuals are held incommunicado by the US government for long periods of time without legal counsel or information given to their families. Further, those who are of Muslim or Arab background, or who appear to be, find severe restrictions on migration and human rights. We find these actions deplorable and urge the Church to take a strong stand against them.

Commitment to Anti-racism

A primary commitment of the Consultation is to articulate a vision of a Church without racism, a Church for all races and peoples. We commit ourselves in all of our worship, programs, and advocacy, to model inclusiveness and embody respect for every person. We call on the whole Church to do so as well.

Criminal Justice Reform

We urge a re-commitment to the Church's long-standing opposition to the death penalty. We commend former Governor Ryan of Illinois for his wisdom in the commuting of all death sentences in that state. We encourage other governors and the President to do likewise. The death penalty continues to be a racist and an unjust form of sentencing at state and national levels. We call for a reform of the criminal justice system to include an end to prison building, reforms in sentencing, and restorative justice, and a criminal justice system that is more racially neutral.

Blessing Relationships

The Consultation members emphatically support the request that General Convention approve the process toward a *Book of Occasional Services* rite for the blessing of the mutual and faithful relationship between two persons for whom marriage is not otherwise available. It is time for this issue to reach some resolution among us, not only for the sake of justice, but for the sake of the Church's mission and its future. Continued, endless debate about this issue can only weaken the Church. A *Book of Occasional Services* rite is a reasonable compromise allowing some to go forward with a modicum of national consensus while others continue to discern the place of non-married couples in their congregations and dioceses.

Environmental Justice

We see a decisive moment facing the US and the Church regarding environmental stewardship and justice. The US has 4% of world population but produces 25% of its greenhouse gas emissions through energy use. We urge the Church to reduce its emissions, to advocate for the US to adopt the UN's Kyoto Protocol, and to lead our society through public commitment to energy conservation and use of renewable energy. This would also contribute to cleaner air and decrease the numbers of poor children who suffer from asthma in urban centers. These issues are a fundamental part of the work of dismantling racism in our country and Church.

Water is in short supply globally, with tensions around shortages common and millions deprived of clean water.. We urge the Church to model water conservation and advocate for international development that emphasizes universal water access. The production of toxic chemicals threatens life, with minority communities bearing the brunt of their disposal and storage. We call on the Church to support the "polluter pays" principle in legislation, join environmental justice campaigns and green our procurement and facilities management. The Church can model an ethical lifestyle that is good for God's earth, an earth we must steward for the well-being of all, present and future.

Status of Women

A pressing question in the Church is the issue of inequitable pay of women clergy and continuing deployment problems in many dioceses. Annual salaries for women in every category of employment in the Church range from \$5,000 to \$9,000 less than men's salaries.

We applaud the efforts of the Committee on the Status of Women to highlight the effects of fundamentalism on the lives of women in every corner of the globe. Fundamentalism affects everyone, but women and girls are its chief victims, witness burkas, genital mutilation, lack of schooling, epidemic violence and rape, and today's victims of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Economic Justice

The Consultation calls upon the Church to work for economic justice by advocating for a living wage campaign across our states and local municipalities, as well as the raising of the federal minimum wage to at least the current federal poverty line of \$8.70 per hour. We support resolutions submitted to General Convention calling upon the Church to raise the wages of workers and to join in campaigns for worker justice. This is also a pressing issue within the Church in relation to our own employees, particularly lay employees.

The Consultation calls upon the Church, particularly the Church Pension Fund, to find ways to invest in the Economic Justice Loan Fund and to increase its portfolio. We commend the work of the Economic Justice Loan Committee and their new partnerships that provide funds for community-based projects that address economic needs. We also encourage those dioceses that are exploring the creation of credit unions as a way to partner with the economically disadvantaged. We commend the ENEJ's booklet on alternative social investing, *Community Investing: an alternative for religious congregations seeking social as well as a financial return*. Finally we encourage those who seek to create micro loan funds and support the creation of wealth in disadvantaged communities.

We also commend educational materials produced by ENEJ, along with United for a Fair Economy, that are designed to help people of faith understand the nature of the new global economy and the insurmountable inequities that are part of this economy's structure. We call upon the Church to join with the House of Bishops in redressing these systemic structures of poverty and injustice that are part of our economy.

Baptismal Ministry in a Multicultural Church

We strongly support the revision of Title III to include a non-discrimination clause to Canon 1, "Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons." For the sake of the Church's future and mission, discrimination based on race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or age, in the ability of all the baptized people to exercise their ministries, including ordained ministries, must be erased.

Revision of *the Book of Common Prayer* is a justice issue that continues to confront the Church. It is also vital for the future mission of the Church. Inclusive/expansive language for worship has an important role to play in enabling a truly multicultural Church, as well as providing a base for 20/20 evangelism.

Support for the World

The Consultation calls on the Church to continue actively to support programs of immigration and resettlement, emphasizing the need for parishes and dioceses to engage in enhanced outreach efforts and to support the ongoing efforts of Episcopal Migration Ministries in each of our dioceses.

We support the Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns' call for the establishment and funding of an Africa Campaign in response to widespread humanitarian needs. As a general principle, we believe the Church should commit itself to doubling funding for humanitarian needs alongside any goal of doubling Church attendance.

Make Peace

War Is Unjust

The Consultation is gravely concerned that the United States has become an overtly aggressor nation. Since 11 September 2001, the United States government has declared war on international terrorism and has led pre-emptive strikes against Afghanistan and Iraq. Our nation has come to believe that through violence and overwhelming force the issues and causes of international terrorism can be eliminated. The result has been the loss around the world of many civilian and military lives, the destruction of environments and consequent pollution with radioactive materials (depleted uranium weaponry), the loss of international partnerships and friendships, and a domestic economy incapable of handling both record-breaking war costs and tax cuts for the wealthiest of US citizens. The actions of the United States have been judged immoral, unjust, and against international law by many religious and secular authorities.

Fundamentally we believe that there is no "just war," because violence can never bring justice or peace. The Church must be clear, as it has for a long time, that "war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ," as stated by the Lambeth Conferences of 1930, 1948, 1958, 1968, and 1978, and the General Convention of 1982.

We continue to uphold conscientious objection as a valid option to military service and call on the Episcopal Church to support the availability of conscientious objection materials and resource persons. In light of current United States aggression, we question whether conscientious participation in the military is still an ethical option for Episcopalians.

We are deeply concerned about the situations in Colombia, the Koreas, Palestine and Israel, Vieques (Puerto Rico), the Sudan, and other nations. We urge the United States to reduce the presence of military forces and aid, and increase humanitarian aid and assistance. We see the need for increased humanitarian assistance especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, in light of pre-war promises made to the people of those nations.

Decade of Nonviolence

In this "Decade of Nonviolence" we strongly support peace and justice studies and education for the work in all organizations, including Episcopal schools and colleges. We urge support of the Committee on the Status of Women's continued effort to promote the Pledge of Nonviolence and their work to adopt a method of dialogue on issues of

war and peace. We urge support of the "From Violence to Wholeness," and seek to have that program named, advocated, and promoted as a church-wide education project, as part of the fundamental mission of the Church.

Be Accountable

Accountability for Mission

We believe that within the Episcopal Church accountability requires continuous engagement between the Church Center offices and the peoples, groups and constituencies reached by its programs; transparency in decision making, budget development and budget use by receivers of grants; and generosity in the use of the abundant resources of the Episcopal Church on a national level.

This platform's call to accountability is a call to take seriously the promises made by this Church to engage in dialogue and conversation on divisive issues; to honor, respect and continue the empowering work done by the 'ethnic' desks at the Church Center; to be mutually accountable with overseas partners, requiring budgetary accountability on the one hand and greater grant support on the other.

Making Anti-racism a Reality

The Episcopal Church has for twelve years now (since the 1991 General Convention in Phoenix) engaged in a variety of trainings at varying levels of competencies and efficiencies with the goal of dismantling racism. These trainings have been designed to lift up the awareness of our brothers and sisters of the Church. At our last General Convention, the contract to continue this work for another three triennia (through 2009) was approved.

If our Church is to be serious about our call to a non-racist, multicultural church and society, we must continue this work. We must, however, also begin to *change* the structures that continue to reflect a racist society. This is a long and difficult task that will require further intense training. We must be committed to death and rebirth as a Church so that individuals can be reconstructed as people who recognize the power that they have over others, and who are willing to give up that power in order to produce a multicultural, non-racist society.

A Mission-driven and Accountable Budget

We are not without the resources to engage in meaningful dialogue; we are not without the talent to engage in the expansion of ministries to multicultural groups in the Episcopal Church; we are not without the moral fiber or the funds to engage the needs of the Church worldwide.

We are not poor and we should not think poor, particularly regarding the programs of the Church that are hit hard by the current proposed budget. With such abundance we must identify and enhance good programs and generously fund important initiatives before the 2003 Convention. The projected budget is called "A Mission Driven Budget". Let it be so in more than name only.

The Ordination of Women

The Consultation is among those who are dismayed by the inability or the unwillingness of the Executive Council effectively to assist the dioceses of Fort Worth, Quincy and San Joaquin to obey the national Canons. Resolution A045 of the 2000 Convention charged them with the responsibility to assure the acceptance of women into all the processes related to ordination and deployment. They have failed to do so. We reject the Executive Council's suggestion that the General Convention study the subject of women's ordination during the 2006 General Convention. It will have been 30 years by then since the Canons were revised to include women in all orders.

We are also concerned about continued sexism in the Church. One manifestation of this continuing struggle has been the recent discussion concerning the dearth of women among candidates for episcopal election. There are serious issues here related to the accountability of the election process and to the perception of a male-dominated House of Bishops whose attitudes, structures, and ways of relating to one another preclude women's willingness to put themselves forward for consideration. We call upon the House of Bishops to commission a review of the episcopal election process, and to do an intentional inventory of its own sexism.

A Multicultural and Wholistic 20/20

We call on the Church in our 20/20 initiative to see a Church growth and congregational development opportunity in the rising demographics of ethnic populations. The 20/20 initiative must truly be rooted in the Baptismal Covenant and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

Congregational Development needs to be less compartmentalized and more wholistic and integrated, namely, we need to reclaim peace and justice, mission and social outreach as integral parts of congregational development. In addition, advocacy must be a part of any 'congregational development' worthy of the name.

We need to champion the start up, development and strengthening of local ethnic congregations. The local church is the hope of the future for the increase of membership, financial viability and the development of leaders. To this end, all publications and printed resources out of the Episcopal Church Center should be made available in different languages; the Office of Deployment needs to undergo a thorough review in regards to ethnic and racial deployment, dioceses need to review their ordination practices and ministry development processes, seminaries should be training people to be literate and sensitive to cultural diversity, and more intentional ministry with ethnic youth and young adults. If we are to be a truly multicultural Church, we cannot continue to do business as usual.

No Response to A001

We deplore the failure of Executive Council to monitor and report diocesan progress in contributing 0.7% of net disposable budgeted diocesan income to micro-economic projects as required by Resolution A001 of the 73rd General Convention.

Accountability to All Levels of Ministry

The Consultation supports the centrality of the diaconate to the mission of the church. We support the proposed revisions to Title III of the Canons, especially those allowing direct ordination to the priesthood. These revisions make it clear that Baptism is the source of all ministry, endowing the whole People of God with the call, as well as the means, of service to the world. As a full order of the church, the diaconate is equal in

dignity to the others. We diminish this order when it is used as an apprenticeship for the priesthood. We applaud the proposed revisions to provide greater flexibility in preparation for ordination, but have serious concerns about the possible erosion of norms for theological study.

Full Inclusion for Gay and Lesbian Persons

The Consultation has from its beginning advocated for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the life of the Church in accordance with the desire expressed by the 1976 General Convention. It is time for us as a Church to not only recognize the vital ministries of gay and lesbian people, but to bless them, and the relationships that sustain them. Blessing and justice *are* inseparable biblical concepts, as the Claiming the Blessing Theology Statement says, and it is time for the Church to stop trying to have one without the other. This is an issue of accountability to a now almost 30-year-old promise.

Do Justice, Make Peace, Be Accountable

We believe that these three calls to action offer real hope for the future mission of the Church. In the end, numbers will never tell the story of the Church. Nor will promises. The results of mission will: the results of doing justice, of making peace, and of being accountable one to another. If we do these things numerical growth will not be an issue, for we will have been transformed, and a transformed Church is an attractive Church.