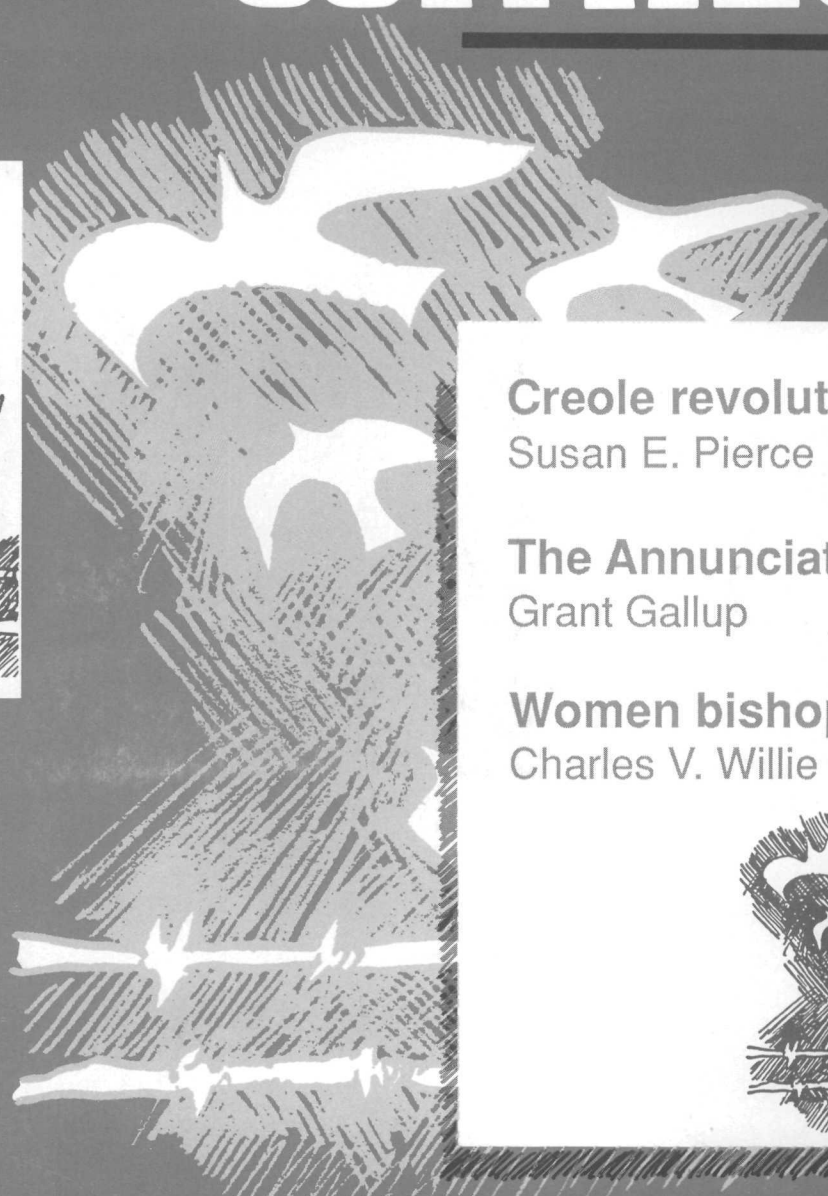


THE WITNESS

Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church, DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.



Creole revolutionary
Susan E. Pierce

The Annunciation
Grant Gallup

Women bishops?
Charles V. Willie



THIS IS THE DREAM OF A PEOPLE
TO BE FREE, TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN
DESTINY AND TO MOLD THEIR OWN SOCIETY
OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

Letters

Bravo DeWitt, Garrison

As an interested reader and admirer of THE WITNESS I would like to thank you particularly for the articles in the December issues — “In with the old: the joy of aging.” Anne Garrison’s alternative to shuffleboard and bingo through the many opportunities for human service is a reminder that often gaps in community need are being filled by older persons who have time, talent and experience to offer.

For many years I have observed and admired Robert L. DeWitt’s message to faltering persons and groups that their unique gifts are to be recognized and treasured. Now to hear that gospel spoken to the aged, to the increasing numbers of us whose age and diminishments have almost convinced us of the popular view that aging is only a downhill slide, the call to find courage to use the special gifts that are uniquely ours is indeed a call for fulfillment and growth.

For about five years, as chairman of a diocesan committee on Ministry for Aging in New Hampshire, I have planned and conducted seminars on “Growth in the Later Years.” In general, it isn’t a subject that has wide appeal. Now, it occurs to me that it might be a better idea to distribute Bob DeWitt’s message to our senior members as they leave church on Sunday morning. Or, here’s an even better idea — distribute it to those older people sitting on shopping mall benches who seem to be looking for some life and diversion.

Lester Dobyns
North Sandwich, N.H.

Second that bravo

What a delight to find the article by Anne Garrison in THE WITNESS. As a soon-to-be-60-year-old seminarian and postulant in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, I feel my sanity reassured. Yes,

God really does call us at any time — in God’s own good time — which may or may not have any relation to Eastern Standard Time. God bless you, Anne Garrison!

Ann Robb Smith
Bryn Mawr, Pa.

What about fathers?

Many thanks to Lesley Northup for risking the sharing of her story with us (“On having an ethical baby,” October), and probing the implications of traditional church views. The real immorality (not yet mentioned in subsequent Letters to the Editor) is the many, many fathers who refuse to support their children. People should stop worrying about the relatively small number of pioneer children with no father and concentrate on the vast number of children being hurt by biological fathers who turn their backs on their children.

Joan Howarth
Los Angeles, Cal.

El Salvador’s holocaust

I was with Jim Lewis on his latest trip to El Salvador. As a college student, I had the opportunity to live in Spain. Later, after I married, we lived in Panama for three years. When we returned home, we chose to drive the Pan American highway from Panama to Texas. We passed through El Salvador in 1968.

My return visit to El Salvador was quite different from my first. In those days there was no war. Now there are men in uniform with guns on every corner; helicopters fly overhead carrying the wounded. Even though I speak Spanish, I did not understand the words that I heard — kidnapped, raped, tortured, harassed, sabotaged. If we had not had a translator, I would not have

understood. The visit was a real shock. We were there in the midst of their “holocaust.”

These wonderful, warm people revealed to us the horror that they have been through. The horror continues today. There is tremendous fear everywhere. While we were there, two teenage boys were tortured to death and left in the street. There are at least a couple of deaths a week — just so that the people will know that the fear is real.

I came away from El Salvador a changed person. When I saw the suffering, I was moved beyond measure. Our brothers and sisters are dying there. “If you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me,” Christ said.

Let us cry out against this war. Let us cry out against the deaths of American and Salvadoran troops. Let us cry out against the crushing of the lives of innocent men, women and children. Let us cry out, “*No mas*, no more!”

Meredith Patterson
Burlington, N.C.

Correction

The statistics in James Lewis’ story on El Salvador (page 7, January Issue) contain an error. The sentence about overall support should read, “We supply El Salvador with \$0.5 billion worth of support a year,” not \$1.5 billion, an error incurred in typesetting. Figures gathered by Lewis from the University of El Salvador and the University of Central America in El Salvador list \$115 million in military aid; \$422 million in economic aid, and another \$155 million in “supplemental aid.”

Give shelter to all

As I read “Always room at these inns,” by Robert Hirschfield in the December WITNESS, I was warmed to realize that addicts were helped and not shunned by

the Homes for the Homeless program of the Diocese of New York, sponsored by a company dealing in pet supplies rather than war.

Concern evolved when I realized no mention was made of AIDS. Surely HIV-positive people are included, because it is so unlikely that the guests have not engaged in life-threatening behavior! My concern is for encouraging people at high risk to understand their situation. Does Homes for the Homeless confront the reality of AIDS among its guests? If so, how? If not, why not?

The program sounds like one that every urban diocese should consider. In my diocese, activists for Persons with ARC and AIDS came to be confronted by persons who are homeless (for a multitude of reasons) who moved on to another site rather than threaten the nationally known, two-year-old ARC/AIDS vigil. Neither protest has gained support from mainline religion.

Opening my door to a homeless activist with AIDS made 1987 the best year of my life. Thanks be to God for the gift of a Son, shunned and disbelieved by family and friends. To those with an unoccupied room, consider offering it to one of God's children who, due to the AIDS virus, is without a home. Caring for the sick and the dying helps to come to grips with our own deaths. It helps remove the fear. And it is God's will for us, for life.

Jane Jackson
Oakland, Cal.

Sharing the bread

I am 71. I have been a Christian all my life, but as I grew through this very complicated world, I had to start making some very definite choices about what the man Jesus said. Not what everyone around him said, but his words.

Perhaps I too am struggling to put his teachings into the societal order I must live through, but the more I studied and tried to apply the teachings to this life space I am in, the less help I found.

There were, and are, whole blocks of concern that were never mentioned from the pulpit, and when I asked questions in the small study groups, no one cared to share ideas.

Then I discovered THE WITNESS! From the beginning of my intellectual Christian growth, I have become more and more alone. My sin among my people seems to be my dismay at studying the recipe for all these years, and never baking the bread!

Let us break bread together, on our knees, friends who have learned the recipe and are firing the ovens!

Lunette Gay
Azle, Texas

Not his cup of tea

It was my mistake to subscribe in the first place — as your magazine bears only a partial resemblance to the old one.

It is not only strident and spiritless, but worst of all, so self-centered. Please do not send further copies.

The Rev. Edward M. Green
Cocoa, Fla.

Bishop on the streets

I was introduced to your magazine while on sabbatical study leave in New York in 1984-85, and have been a subscriber ever since then. I very much appreciate THE WITNESS as an alternative voice to the almost uniformly bland ones of many other church periodicals coming from the United States. I notice that you quite frequently publish poems, so I thought I would pluck up courage and send you a number for con-

sideration. I am trying a publication in the United States mainly because the poems arise out of my *American* experience and focus on a tragic phenomenon relatively unknown here — street people.

During my study leave in New York I was exploring the spirituality of fellow Christians engaged in various struggles for justice and social transformation. I spent a good deal of time with individuals and groups, and on the streets. I worked as a volunteer for four months in the soup kitchens of the Church of the Holy Apostles on Ninth Avenue, mainly waiting on tables and serving street people their meals. My observations and encounters there and on Manhattan's streets led to my poetry.

The Rt. Rev. Godfrey Wilson
Anglican Bishop of South Auckland
New Zealand

(THE WITNESS is privileged to offer a sample of the poetry produced by Bishop Wilson on page 21. Would that there were more of him! — Ed.)

Conservative converts

Many years ago "the conscience of St. John's Episcopal Parish," Katherine Baker, sent me a subscription to THE WITNESS, which both intrigued and repelled me. Out of respect for the donor, I read most of the articles and gradually realized that this was one reason I could no longer remain a "good" conservative politically.

The combination of this sensitization and regular Bible study and weekly church attendance inexorably worked to raise my consciousness, and today — to my own surprise — most activity time is spent with various peace movement groups. May my gift subscriptions do the same.

Virginia DeMaris
Olympia, Wash.

THE WITNESS

EDITOR
Mary Lou Suhor

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Susan E. Pierce

SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Robert L. DeWitt

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Richard W. Gillett
Carter Heyward
James Lewis
Manning Marable
J. Antonio Ramos

STAFF
Ann Hunter
Susan Small

PUBLISHER
Episcopal Church Publishing Company

ECPC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR
J. Antonio Ramos

VICE-CHAIR
Carman St. J. Hunter

SECRETARY
Gloria Brown

TREASURER
Robert N. Eckersley

John H. Burt
Otis Charles
Migdalia DeJesus-Torres
Nan Arrington Peete
William W. Rankin
Chester L. Talton
Chris Weiss

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Barbara C. Harris

THE WITNESS



Table of Contents

-
- 6** Roger Desir: Creole revolutionary
Susan E. Pierce
-
- 10** 6 steps to 'where we ought to be'
William Rankin
-
- 12** The Annunciation: Let it be!
Grant Gallup
-
- 16** Women bishops: No question about it
Charles V. Willie
-
- 19** Curing the sickness of homophobia
Richard Hawkins
-

Credits Cover graphic by Sister Helen David, design by TSI Visuals; photo p. 7, Susan E. Pierce; graphic p. 9, courtesy Ministry of Money, Gaithersburg, Md.; graphic p. 11, Margaret Longdon; graphic p. 12, Sister Helen David; graphic p. 15, *Ecu-link*, NCC; graphic p. 19, Margaret Longdon.

THE WITNESS (ISSN0197-8896) is published monthly except July/August by The Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Editorial office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002. Telephone (215) 643-7067. THE WITNESS is indexed in the American Theological Library Association's *Religion Index One: Periodicals*. University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI, reproduces this publication in microform: microfiche and 16mm or 35 mm film. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright 1988. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$15 per year, \$1.50 per copy. Foreign subscriptions add \$5 per year. **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please advise of changes at least 6 weeks in advance. Include your label from the magazine and send to: Subscription Dept., THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002.

Legacy

by Susan E. Pierce

Family heirlooms can be more than silverware and pieces of furniture. Memories are the stronger legacy. When people die, they may not leave a will but they leave the gift of who they were, and the real inherited treasure is not a silver dish or a chair, but a remembrance.

I've thought about this a lot in the past weeks since my mother, Janette Skerrett Pierce, died without warning at age 56. She was a religious journalist, covering the news of the Episcopal Church. I work in the same profession, and am only beginning to find out through the deluge of phone calls and letters received since her death, what a well-known and much-beloved figure she was in the life of the church. She had always urged me to get into writing, and gently pushed me to examine my faith more, but only now do I realize what a rock her faith was, and what a comfort her Episcopal Church family has been to those of us left behind.

At her funeral, Bishop Lyman Ogilby, a long-time friend of my mother's, said, "We've done all we can here. Jan is in God's hands now." It was comforting to think of it being in God's hands, because my hands weren't big enough to encircle all the emptiness. Now I know what is meant by "offer it up." It's like saying, "It's too big for me, I'm going to drop back five yards and punt and it's over to you, God."

I don't reckon she ever expected to die so soon, but she didn't expect to live forever, either. She had buried almost everyone in her family — father, brother, mother and a sister — so death was a familiar occurrence. What she feared more was being between death and life, in an artificial limbo maintained by respirators and feeding tubes, her body slowly betraying her. She found life far too interesting to worry about dying. Death was another of those mundane details, like straightening out her papers or cleaning her kitchen, that were too boring to entertain. A rich life fully lived is like a deep and swiftly flowing river that takes everything that falls in along the way, so when it dries up, it leaves behind a great deal of sediment. We, her bereaved and puzzled children, are like archaeologists digging through the rubble of a busy life stopped in full stride. She left barely a clue behind, obviously planning to keep us busy for years putting her affairs in order so we wouldn't have time to sit and brood.

My mother was an evangelist in the best sense of the

word. She loved to bring news, to talk about what was happening in the world and was a great storyteller, descended from a long line of raconteurs. She believed in the good news of Jesus Christ, and she brought that good news to everything she did. Not interested in personal gain or power, she preferred a modest and simple Christianity — one that reached out to people and said, "All that is asked of you is that you believe — in yourself, in others and in Christ."

Religious journalism was a vocation for her, it was a *calling*, and not just a job. She cared deeply about the Episcopal Church and she was dedicated to making it a more just, open and caring institution. She had a great sense of humor and could be pretty irreverent — much of what went on in the church appealed to her highly developed sense of the absurd. She also often felt let down, angry and cheated by bureaucratic timidity, and the way the church treated women and minorities never fully met her standards. But she never broke faith. She had made a deal for life, and after.

She found racism, class snobbery, sexism and heterosexism a waste of time — prejudice cut you off from too many interesting friendships. A Black man who knew my mother, upon hearing of her death, said, "When I looked at Jan, I never thought in terms of Black or White." Her lack of bias was remarkable in a way, because she was raised on Philadelphia's Main Line, chiefly an enclave of rich White Anglo-Saxon Protestants who were so bigoted that even Catholics who met every standard but "Protestant" were not permitted into their world.

My mother had an ironclad sense of duty, being the descendant of several generations of women who did "good works." It was understood that you had obligations to your family and your community, and that you would fulfill them, come what may. When my maternal great-grandmother died in Hazleton, Pa., a Pocono Mountain coal-mining town, the local paper lauded her considerable contributions to the community, including one that sounds positively sinister today. "Of the noted anthracite family," her obituary read, "Mrs. Gayley was concerned about miners' families. She was often seen in the mining towns fondling the miners' children." Fondling obviously had different

Continued on page 18

Creole revolutionary

by Susan E. Pierce

Roger Desir, a Haitian Episcopal priest, has seen his country bleed. The island republic of Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world; 6 million people live on an island almost half the size of Cuba; 80% of its population is illiterate; the average life expectancy is 54 years; the average wage is \$3 a day, and unemployment is estimated at 50%. Tied to Haiti's economic woes are political ones. Last November, the country's first free presidential election in 30 years was halted when gunmen attacked voters waiting at polling places, leaving 34

dead and many wounded. Just when many thought that the dictatorship of the Duvalier family had been overthrown, the mechanism of state repression and terror which the United States had helped put into place was now being used by the new ruling class.

The Christian church in Haiti, for centuries a champion of the ruling class, now has many priests in its ranks who have been transformed into advocates for justice and social change. Desir is one of the clergy in Haiti who has worked to make Christianity relevant to the Haitian people. He took a bold step 15 years ago when he resigned as dean of Holy Trinity

Cathedral in the capital city of Port-Au-Prince, to return to his roots and live among the rural people. He also took on a 17-year task of making the first-ever translation of the Bible into Creole to make it accessible to a far greater number of Haitians.

"I met an old teacher of mine and told her I was translating the Bible into Creole. She wept and said I was wasting my time and my intelligence," said Desir.

Desir was in Philadelphia in February to share information about Haiti, its problems and aspirations. And he made it very clear that, despite the continuing violence, he and countless other Haitians have faith that the present government will be replaced. But he also came to offer some advice.

"I have worries about what's going on here in the United States," Desir said. "I think you have lost control of your foreign policy. It's like in Haiti — (the government) is a smokescreen. They make wonderful statements, but it's what they are doing underground that is important. Not only for the sake of Haiti do I wish you could do something, but also for the sake of your own democracy. If you lose control of your government, then your democracy is in jeopardy."

Desir has personal experience in dealing with a government out of control. Before giving his talk Desir sat





Roger Desir

quietly in his chair in the chilly parish hall of Calvary Episcopal Church watching a videotape of a CBS news report on the situation in Haiti. A colorful shot of a crowd of people dancing in the street filled the TV screen. Suddenly the camera cut to two men in blue uniforms and dark glasses, with arms folded and wooden batons in their hands, who stood scanning the crowd. At the sight of these men, Desir jerked back ever so slightly in his chair and gave a quick, dry laugh. The men in uniform were members of the national security force, descendents of the *ton ton macoute*, the dreaded secret police of the Duvalier regime.

He sat calmly through the rest of the report, occasionally shaking his head as policemen and soldiers were shown storming houses, dragging people into the street and beating them until their heads streamed blood. At the end of the tape, he began his remarks by saying, "What you have just seen, what you read in the paper, is just the tip of the iceberg about Haiti. There's much

more under the sea."

Haiti's history is a painful one, similar to that of many other small countries in Central America and the Caribbean, and Christianity played a crucial part in the darker moments of the island's past. "Since 1492, when Christopher Columbus brought Christianity to Haiti under the Spanish banner, it has been on the side of the powerful," said Desir.

Haiti became a French colony in the 16th century. The French brought in great numbers of slaves from Africa. In 1804, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the slaves revolted against their French masters and waged a successful war of independence, making Haiti the first independent Black republic in the world. However, Haiti could not escape its colonial past. On-going conflicts between the rural peasantry and the urban power elite were exacerbated by firmly entrenched colonial economic interests and the colonial mentality, both of which were fully supported, said Desir, by Christianity — in particular the Roman Catholic Church.

"It was an oppressive structure — the church always blessed the establishment," said Desir. He noted wryly that "the French were not religious, but very practical. Religion was fine as long as it supported the organization."

The Roman Catholic Church, closely allied with the ruling class, was the most powerful religion. Voodoo, the indigenous belief of the Haitians, derived from the African rituals of their ancestors, was ruthlessly suppressed by the church. The Roman Catholic hierarchy was French — the first Black Haitian-born bishop was not appointed until 1966 — and French, not the native Creole, was the required language in the Catholic Church-run schools and in the workplace. It was more desirable to be mulatto — light-skinned, closer to

White — than to be Black.

"Christianity was a way of getting Haiti closer to the West; it was part of the garment we put on to look Western. The Haitian oligarchy struggled to be White. Our identity as Haitians was denied, our cultural creativity crushed," said Desir.

In the years after the U. S. Civil War, newly freed Black Americans brought their Protestant faiths to Haiti. The Episcopal Church was an independent, native church from 1861 to 1911. But these churches were never a significant challenge to the state religion, said Desir, because "the Roman Catholic Church was jealous of its power and persecuted the Protestants."

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, there were mass movements for politi-



From *Bib La* — Lik 4:16-24

A sample from the Bible — Bib La — translated into Creole by Roger Desir appears below. Desir translated the Old and New Testaments. In searching through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John — Matié, Mak, Lik, Jan — THE WITNESS chose a passage from Luke 4:16-24, to give a flavor of Desir's work. Bib La is copyrighted by Alliance Biblique Universelle.

Jézi alé lavil Nazarèt koté-l té grandi-a, Jou répo-a, li antré nan sinagòg la tankou-l té toujou konn fè. Li lévé kanpé pou-l li pou yo. Yo rinmèt li liv profèt Ezayi-a. Lé li louvri-l, li jouinn kote ki té ékri:

Léspri Bondié-a sou mouin.

Li chouazi-m pou-m anonsé bon nouvèl la bay pòv yo.

Li voyé-m pou-m fè tout prizonié yo konnin yo lagé,

pou-m fè tout avèg yo konnin yo kapab ouè ankò,

pou-m délivré moun yap maltrété yo,

pou-m fè you konnin lè-a rivé pou Bondié vi-n délivré pèp li-a.

Apré sa, Jézi fèmin Liv la, li rinmèt li bay moun ki tap édé nan sèvis la. L-al chita. Tout moun ki té nan sinagòg la té gin jé yo fiksé sou li. Lè sa-a li konmansé di yo:

— Jòdi-a, pandan nap tandé paròl ki ékri la-a, li rivé vré.

Tout moun tap palé byin pou li. Yo té sézi tandé bèl paròl ki tap soti nan bouch li. Yo tap di konsa:

— Se pa pitit Jozèf la sa?

Jèzi di yo:

— Koulyé-a, nou pral di provèb sa-a sou mouin: Dòktè, gèri tèt ou. Na dim tou: Nou tandé tou sa ou té fè lavil Kapènaròm; fè yo isit la tou, nan péyi pa ou la.

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagoge on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:

The spirit of the Lord

has been given to me,

for he has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring

the good news to the poor,

to proclaim liberty to captives

and to the blind new sight,

to set the downtrodden free,

to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed upon him. Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen." And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips.

They said, "This is Joseph's son, surely?" But he replied, "No doubt you will quote me the saying, 'Physician, heal thyself,' and tell me, 'We have heard all that happened in Capernaum, do the same here in your own countryside.'" And he went on, "I tell you solemnly, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country."

cal and social change in Haiti. In 1915, the U.S. Marines went to Haiti to begin a 19-year occupation — officially to “restore order,” which the Marines had been doing all over Central America and the Caribbean to protect U.S. business interests. Between 1918 and 1920, at least 3,000 Haitians died fighting the occupiers.

“The church, the import-export industry and foreign interests were all in collusion against the revolution,” said Desir. “Christians in Haiti feel pain that during the struggles for independence, voodoo was the only motivation for the people.”

The tension between the Creole-speaking peasants and the Frenchified urban bureaucrats was a result of French colonial policy. Since the first war of independence, Haitians have had a tradition of confronting their rulers. Voodoo played a big part in the struggle for liberation, said Desir.

“Voodoo is the religion of the oppressed. It has been the stimulus and the cohesion for the independence movement. In the 1820s, the rural code, which was a kind of apartheid, was passed, tying the peasants to the land. So the peasants made their own community and the voodoo cult was the basis for local organization “ said Desir.

Christianity and voodoo have some similarities — both the voodoo service and the Eucharist are based around the sharing of a meal. The Haitian rural network was also suited to the establishment of Christian base communities — called *ti legliz* (Creole for “little church”) — because of *lakou*.

“*Lakou* is a small social unit, where you have 10–15 houses all together around a yard, and the people work and raise their children together there. They have their own common law and a very strong solidarity that is not under the control of the upper class,” said Desir.

He explained that the communal nature of Haitian society has been strengthened by Christianity, particularly by liberation theology. Liberation theology became a major influence on the Christian church in Haiti in the early 1970s, when the Duvalier regime closed the French-run Roman Catholic seminary and opened a native one. Cut off from Europe, said Desir, Haiti came under the influence of the liberation movements in Central and South America.

The Christian churches in Haiti, like in Central and South America and other parts of the Caribbean, have become major critics of the present regime and supporters of the popular struggle against the government. Desir said Americans need to be aware of what their own government is doing in Haiti.

“The United States is making the same mistake it made in 1915. By modernizing and training the Haitian army, it has created a Praetorian guard surrounding the oligarchy,” said Desir.

Since the late 1960s, the United States has been responsible for creating and funding the Leopards, a special Haitian Army unit trained in counter-insurgency, who, according to Desir and others, have gone completely out of control and are used to terrorize and demoralize the Haitian people. The Leopards and the national security forces — consisting of many former *ton ton macoutes* — are considered responsible for much of the violence and murder that has haunted Haiti since the overthrow of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 and subsequent attempts to have free elections.

“The regime says it wants law and stability,” said Desir, “even if it is like the law and stability of a concentration camp.”

But despite Haiti’s terrible troubles, Desir has a solid faith in the future of his country and his people. “It’s a long

fight,” he said, “but we’ll get out of it. There is a real determination now.”

Asked if the Haitian people received no help from outside, could there be widescale genocide by the government, Desir said, “It’s possible to have genocide, but the world would not allow it in 1988. I believe that no man is an island and no island is an island. We are all interconnected. We live in a small world — we can’t find answers for Haiti only in Haiti.”

He closed his talk with a prayer, asking for guidance for his people and the people of the United States. And during the prayer he made a request that showed the patience and determination of his people. “We don’t ask for success, God,” he said, “We just ask for faith.” ■



6 steps to ‘where we ought to be’

by William Rankin

Our Christian heritage contains moral themes which shape our imagination of a just human community. If we are clear about what we intend for ourselves and others in community, then we should be able to specify the things to value both positively and negatively in the unfolding future. That the human community is threatened by war, poverty, racism, nationalism, sexism, and the like is unarguable. “Where we are” precisely in human community should be left to the social scientists; “Where we ought to be,” however, is an appropriate issue for Christians who believe that God is summoning us to a certain kind of future in relation with other people and to creation as a whole. And enough is known about God to enable us to specify with sufficient clarity the certain kind of future to which we are called.

In order to be “Christian,” our model of the future must relate directly to the Bible, since the Bible is the primary authority in the Christian tradition. Yet to acknowledge the importance of the Bible raises a series of other questions. As writer/theologian William Stringfellow admitted, “in today’s world, biblical ethics do not pretend to know the social or political will of God; biblical politics do not implement ‘right’ or ‘ultimate’ answers. In this world, the judgment of God remains God’s own secret.” Stringfellow goes on to note that the “ethical posture” of Christians assumes essentially an adult people freely taking risks and making choices in favor of general “enhancement of human life in society.” It is difficult to speak comprehensively and definitively of *the* biblical model for an imaginative vision of the future, but it is valid nonetheless to speak of a Christian model for such a vision.

The particular sort of vision I propose is based on a “jubilee” model. The “jubilee” first appears in Leviticus 25:8-34, and

according to theologian John Howard Yoder it forms the basis of the “political ethic” of Jesus: “The ‘acceptable year of Yahweh’. . . [means] the jubilee year, the time when the inequities accumulated through the years are to be crossed off and all God’s people will begin again at the same point.”

The political and moral significance of Jesus, according to Yoder, is that he presumes to announce the presence of the jubilee: The long-awaited promise of God is fulfilled; God’s kingdom is indeed “at hand.” The unique social ethics of Jesus therefore is a new order characterized by a new political, social and economic arrangement. Yoder writes: “We must conclude that in the ordinary sense of his words, Jesus, like Mary and like John, was announcing the imminent *entree en vigueur* of a new regime whose marks would be that the rich would give to the poor, the captives would be freed, and people would have a new mentality (*metanoia*), if they believed this news. . . We may have great difficulty in knowing in what sense this event came to pass or could have come to pass; but what the event was supposed to be was clear: It is a visible, socio-political, economic restructuring of relations among the people of God, achieved by God’s intervention in the person of Jesus as the One anointed and imbued with the spirit.”

As if with the enormous class distinctions of our world explicitly in mind, Yoder characterizes the jubilee year as one in which debts are canceled and those forced into servitude by debts are released from their slavery. Further, says Yoder, Jesus called for a “jubiliary redistribution” of land and flocks, or what today is called “capital”:

So when Jesus formulated the celebrated commandment, “sell what you possess and give it as alms” . . . this was not a “counsel of perfection,” but neither was it a constitutional law to found a utopian state of Israel. It was a jubilee ordinance which was put into practice here and now, once, in A.D. 26, as a “refreshment,” prefiguring the “reestablishment of all things.”

The Rev. William Rankin is rector of St. Stephen’s Parish, Belvedere, Cal., and a member of the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

Such a redistribution of capital, accomplished every 50 years by faithfulness to the righteous will of God and in the expectation of the kingdom, would today be nothing utopian. Many bloody revolutions would have been avoided if the Christian Church had shown herself more respectful than Israel was of the jubilee dispositions contained in the law of Moses.

Again, as if with the most pragmatic attention to the crushing, seemingly intractable human problems of today in mind, Yoder finds in the explicit teachings of Jesus three different elements for social rearrangement: the cancelation of debts, the release of debtors from servitude, and capital redistribution. These were to occur by means of recognized political authority and generally accepted political mechanisms. Needless to say, the time and place in which we find ourselves is different from the culture of Jesus' time, but the values which he held, according to the "jubilee" model, are clearly evident. Moreover, they speak with relevance to the roots of social inequality and hopelessness.

A fourth element in our model for an imaginative vision of the future might be "indiscrimination," which is that quality of indiscriminate love which Jesus enjoins his disciples to practice. The idea is conveyed again by Yoder in his exegesis of *Matthew 5:43-48*, where the disciples of Jesus are exhorted to be perfect.

"Perfect" here means "indiscriminate" or unconditional—a quite conceivable, even attainable, imperative. Modern concepts of "perfection" as meaning that one has gone beyond finite limitation, as being flawless, living up perfectly to every demand of the law, or having a nature devoid of temptation or self-concern, are brought into this text by those who want to use it to prove a point of their own. All such side meanings distract from the simplicity of

the Gospel demand, which is that because Christ does not discriminate, his disciples are called upon likewise not to discriminate in choosing the objects of their love.

The idea of indiscrimination is central to Paul's teaching as well, signifying the universal justification which Christian theology has claimed to be a peculiar Christian view. The *Galatians 3:28* passage regarding the new human community in which there is no difference between Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free, precisely articulates the principle of indiscrimination. These days, women and other minorities especially are correct in reminding us of this principle.

A fifth element in the jubilee model is designated by French theologian Simone Weil's term, "respect." In *The Need for Roots*, a document written by Weil to form a philosophical basis for a newly-established France following liberation at the end of World War II, she writes:

The object of any obligation, in the realm of human affairs, is always the human being as such. There exists an obligation toward every human being for the sole reason that he or she is a human being, without any condition requiring to be fulfilled, and even without any recognition of such obligation on the part of the individual concerned!

She goes on to differentiate between obligation to "human collectivities" and to individual human beings:

This obligation is an eternal one. It is co-extensive with the eternal destiny of human beings. Only human beings have an eternal destiny. Human collectives have not got one. Nor are there, in regard to the latter, any direct obligation of an eternal nature. Duty toward the human being as such—that alone is eternal.

"Respect," in Simone Weil's understanding, is that disposi-

Continued on page 22





The Annunciation: Let it be!

by Grant Gallup



The Annunciation is not a “saint’s day.” The feast belongs not to the *Sanctorale*, the calendar of saints and worthies which celebrates the consecration of human lives, but to the *Temporale*, the consecration of the cycles of time and nature — of all life. In the midst of the Easter cycle, based on the cycles of the sun, a masculine symbol, comes this feast based on the cycles of the moon, a feminine symbol.

In antiquity, this day was thought to be the anniversary of the first day of creation. Other legends marked it as the day on which the serpent tempted Eve, honored it as the day on which Abraham offered to sacrifice Isaac, observed it as the day of Exodus from Egypt, and calculated it as the day of Jesus’ crucifixion on the first Good Friday. Based on this legend, we arrive at our present observance of the day, for it was argued that Jesus, being perfect, had lived 33 perfect years — thus if he died on March 25, he must have been conceived on March 25 and was born nine months later on December 25. Besides the burden of all these remembrances, March 25 was also designated by the ancients as the day on which the Last Judgment would occur.

Until 1752, it was observed as New Year’s Day, the beginning of the civil year, in England. In Germany in the late middle ages, a choirboy was often dressed as Mary on this day and was led through the church and churchyard, receiving the Hail Marys of the people. Another chorister, dressed as

The Rev. Grant M. Gallup is vicar of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Chicago, Ill.

an angel and suspended on a rope from a hole in the ceiling called the Holy Ghost hole, was slowly lowered into the nave. When he called out, "Mary!", the congregation would look up; while everyone was distracted, mommas would put cookies in the pews and all enjoyed the pretense that Gabriel had dropped them from heaven. Trivial? Perhaps not — there's good theology acted out there — good things from heaven often originate in children's play and women's workplaces. The feast has in fact been trivialized in far more serious ways than Holy Ghost holes and cookies in the pews.

In the past, a male-dominated church has talked of this feast primarily in terms of Mary's "sexual purity," as it was called. She was depicted as a kind of pregnant nun. The picture of prim, she must have kept her hands folded and both feet on the floor all during the interview with Gabriel. Mary's obedience, presumably to an incredibly dominant masculine figure, was held up as a model for all women.

But there is another way of looking at this story. As Luke tells it, can we hear Mary's "*Let it be!*" as positive and active words of someone taking charge instead of being merely receptive and passive? Can we hear her saying, "*Let the enfleshment of God begin! Let the liberation of the world proceed!*"

It's true that her immediate response to Gabriel was less: "Who me? How can I, a mere woman, participate in this? Seeing I know not a man?" Gabriel's reply, paraphrased in the

words of a recently much-quoted saying, was: "Nonsense! A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle. You and the Spirit will parent this child of God."

Mary's response immediately changes: "Right on! Let it be!" Gabriel adds, "With God nothing shall be impossible. Go see your cousin Bess — she's six months pregnant, and everybody thought she was barren."

In mythology there are many stories of love affairs and unions between immortal gods and mortal women. Luke's account, however, is an entirely Jewish story. The Jewish traditions had no miraculous births without a human father, so Luke understood that this was an absolutely unique event. It was not about avoiding "original sin," for that doctrine had not yet been developed. Luke thought of it instead as a breakthrough into historical events, a divine starting over.

The salvation of God's people was not to come only out of the inheritances of the "sons" of Israel, the princes of the people. The highest and best human tradition cannot save. Inherited male prerogatives or a fully-empowered patriarchy cannot save. Even the best genetic material from Nobel Prize-winning geniuses is not what is needed for the liberation of the human community. Neither was a biological freak event, if that's how we understand what took place on Announcement Day. It is Mary's faith we celebrate, for without faith no miracles can happen. Without our "Let it be!", God cannot save us.

From God's side, the Incarnation is

seen as a self-humbling of the eternal utterance, the *logos* of God. It is the first step towards the death that would be Jesus' own acceptance and self-giving. It is surely why the church's ancient notion that this was also a day of crucifixion has an instinctive wisdom. For the Incarnation is in itself an acceptance of mortality. Theologian Karl Rahner has written that "the Incarnation is already a soteriological event in the proper sense of the term, and not merely a condition for the possibility of redemption."

But what happens on Mary's side, on our side, is our liberation. We have seen it in the purest form of the self-giving response of a human life to God's loving purposes. The Annunciation liberates Mary from only understanding herself as a sex object. It is the liberation of her own personhood, based in a feminine sexuality which is not dependent on a male and not derivative, secondary or subservient to men. Our freedom is the effect of Mary's "*Let it be!*" It is thus not at all inappropriate — as theologian Leonardo Boff has surprised us in saying — for us to speak of Mary as co-redeemer.

This feast preaches that salvation comes for all, not by the expected act of heterosexual intercourse which conveys only the privileges of patriarchy through a power trip, but instead by a sexuality made new by the act of redemptive discourse, from cooperation with the loving Spirit of God in renewing creation. "Behold — I am doing a new thing! Will you help?" Mary's answer: "*Fiat.*"

In 1979 in Zapopan, Mexico, Pope John Paul II spoke of Mary as Liberator: "From Mary, who in her *Magnificat* proclaims that salvation has to do with justice to the poor, there flows authentic commitment to the rest of humanity, our brothers and sisters, especially for the poorest and most needy, and to the transformation of society." If we see our Lady not as Lady Bountiful, dispensing graces with noblesse oblige to the unladylike, but as *our* Lady, the lady who is one of us, then we know her as the Woman for Us. Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether says that by endorsing our Lady as a champion of justice for the poorest and most oppressed, the Pope and the bishops have allowed "a piece of dynamite to be smuggled into their well-secured ecclesiastical houses."

The dynamite of the Virgin Mary is not so much a biological explosion as a socio-political one. God chooses women, slaves and outcasts to be the new initiators for the redemption of the world. Despised lackeys, sick people, and out-of-wedlock pregnant young women enter the Reign of God before the self-assured and privileged clergy and politicians, who have always had other people's sex lives in their power.

Ruether points out that the Incarnation of the Son of God in the womb of a young woman is the emptying, the *kenosis* of masculine symbolism for God into a feminine *locus*. It is a new metaphor, a new beginning, a new image. A poor woman of a despised race is to become first believer, head of the church. She is the first of a new priesthood, a new covenant based not on gender, race, family connection or inherited privilege, but only on obedience and the "listening" of faith.

Mary's priesthood is the model for the highest and best Christian priesthood because it is a priesthood which

must cut the umbilical cord, after nurture and protection, and ultimately grant life and freedom and risk. The priesthood of the womb goes into travail, so that personhood may be liberated. It is not the priesthood which "continually offers sacrifices which can never take away sins." But it is the one, written of in the letter to the Hebrews, which is like Jesus' own — based not on the fact of his maleness but on the truth of his obedience.

The miracle was that "though he *was a son*, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." Mary's priesthood not only makes it possible for women to be priests, but also for Lesbians and Gay men. This was impossible in the original covenant, which limited priesthood to males who sexually transmitted it. Indeed, even celibates could not be priests, for they could not pass the priesthood on to their sons.

The Christian priesthood was not instituted on Maundy Thursday during what is traditionally depicted as a kind of lodge meeting, but instead on the first Lady Day — it took place not in an upper room, but in a young woman's body.

"Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body thou hast prepared for me." The body prepared in the womb of Mary is the Body of Christ, which makes possible the eucharistic body. She consecrated in her self the first real presence of Christ, the sacrament of our encounter with God, which we celebrate and share in a holy communion. The Christian's ministerial priesthood, a share in Christ's presence, in Christ's suffering, in the Resurrection glory, is open to everyone who can say with Mary, "*Let it be!*" ■

Back Issues Available

• **Central America in agony:** Articles on U.S. involvement in the area, including F. Forrester Church, son of the late Sen. Frank Church, on his father's fight in Congress to expose CIA covert activity during the 1970s; Mary Lou Suhor's account of her meetings with women and children in Nicaragua, many of them survivors of Contra violence; and a look at U.S. military build-up in Honduras. Also: Map and chronologies detailing the history of the turmoil in Central America.

• **Eleven myths about death:** Lead article by the Rev. Charles Meyer discusses: Pulling the plug is suicide/murder; To die of dehydration or starvation in a hospital is inhumane; Dying is 'God's will'; Where there's life, there's hope and seven other myths about death which serve as impediments to decision-making concerning life support systems. In this issue also: the Rev. Glenda Hope's reflection, Why fast for Lent — or anytime.

• **AIDS: The plague that lays waste at noon,** plus articles on the rights of gays and lesbians in church and society. Authors include John Fortunato, Zal Sherwood, Anne Gilson, Dom Ciannella, Madeline Ligammare.

To order, fill in coupon below and mail to THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler PA 19002.

Yes, please send me the back issues I have checked at \$1.50 each. (Pre-paid orders only.)

- Central America in Agony
 11 Myths about Death
 AIDS, Gay and Lesbian Rights

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Short Takes

Forgotten patriots

The real work of the resistance was often carried on in villages and towns, in the country as well as the city, by forgotten patriots. These now nameless men and women were the people who spun, wove, and wore homespun cloth, who united in the boycott of British goods, and who encouraged neighbors to join them and stand firm. Many came together in crowd actions and mass meetings to protest and served on, or supported, local resistance committees. They refused to obey the statutes and officers of the British Crown, which so short a time before had been the law of the land. It was these various acts of resistance and noncooperation that struck most openly the authority of the Crown.

Walter Conser et al, *Resistance, Politics and the American Struggle for Independence*
Pittsburgh Peace Institute Newsletter

Vanunu's moral conversion

Some say Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli technician who revealed his country's nuclear secrets, did it for money. Others accuse him of being a communist or simply a traitor. But supporters of the Israeli assert that his has been a moral cause, one inspired by a religious conversion in Australia a year and a half ago. The Rev. John McKnight, rector of St. John's Anglican Church in Sydney, said Vanunu disclosed details on an Israeli plant because of his moral opposition to nuclear arms proliferation. The priest quoted a letter from his parishioner in which Vanunu said, "I choose to obey the Lord Jesus, to obey his commandments to love one another and bring peace to the people."

Inside the American Religion Scene
12/87

Quote of note

What the hell — you might be right, you might be wrong. But don't just avoid.

Katherine Hepburn



Many lamps, one light

The Episcopal Church issued a news release that poses the most difficult ecumenical challenge ahead. Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie asks, "Shall we have the courage to recognize others along the journey of spiritual pilgrimage?" as we consider the uniqueness of Christ and the living presence of other great world faiths. "Or shall we fight for the exclusive possession of the light of Christ by Christians?"

NCC's *Ecu-Link* 10/87

Taxing thoughts

Those with large amounts of property control the parties which control the state which takes through taxes the people's money and gives a certain amount of it back in order to keep docile the populace while reserving a sizable part of tax revenue for the oligarch's use in the form of "purchases" for the defense department, which is the unnumbered, as it were, bank account of the rulers.

Gore Vidal in *Bread* 1/17/88

Finesse is what your butcher would have if he were a surgeon.

Anon.

Terrorist in a wheelchair?

Many incredible things have happened over the past few months. The Navy decided to run over me rather than remove my body from the railroad tracks at the Concord Naval Weapons Station. I survived a 250,000 pound locomotive crashing over me. Ironically, I now have more "standing" as a peace wager than I had with my legs. I am in good health. *Every* munitions train that has moved on the tracks at CNWS toward Central America since Sept. 1 has been blocked by people like you and me.

Rather than laboring in depression I am a blessed human being. I have millions of new friends all over the world. I feel a metaphysical and spiritual consciousness from the experience of standing up to the death train that is beyond my capacity to articulate. Ironically, I have learned that the four participants in the Veterans Fast for Life, myself included, have been placed on a special FBI list to be watched as "terrorists." Fortunately, at least one FBI agent refused to investigate us and has been fired as a result.

Brian Willson

'Club-gate' brewing

A controversy is brewing within the establishment of the Bay Area's Episcopal churches, with a San Francisco rector challenging another church official for holding membership in private clubs that discriminate against women and minorities.

The Rev. Robert W. Crome of Trinity Episcopal Church has criticized the Very Rev. Alan Jones, dean of Grace Episcopal Cathedral, for belonging to the Bohemian, University, and Olympic clubs, and for using church funds to pay for his memberships. . . Jones has staunchly defended his club memberships.

"There's no excuse for racial discrimination at all," he said recently. "That's repugnant. The issue here is whether to try to change the system from without or within."

Religious News Service 1/2/88

Women bishops?

No question about it

by Charles V. Willie

It is during times of crisis that truth is often revealed. In 1941, theologian H. Richard Niebuhr published *The Meaning of Revelation*. The book, he said, was based on three convictions:

1) That self-defense is the most prevalent source of error in all thinking and perhaps especially in theology and ethics; 2) that the great source of evil in life is the absolutizing of the relative, which in Christianity takes the form of substituting religion. . . (or) church for God; 3) that Christianity is "permanent revolution" or *metanoia*, which does not come to an end in this world. . . or this time.

To speak of self-defense as an error while war raged in Europe must have required great courage. As the ancient Greek historian Polybius said in his work, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, the character of a people can be better understood if their actions are examined at times of conspicuous success or failure.

The character of people in the church has also been revealed during times of crisis. The 1974 "illegal" ordination of women to the priesthood caused a crisis that revealed the character of Episcopal Church members, especially the bishops. By rejecting the ordinations in a majority vote, the House of Bishops was found wanting. The house members committed the error of self-defense in defending the

Charles V. Willie is Professor of Education and Urban Studies at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

More to come

This article by Charles V. Willie is excerpted from his sermon during the conference on "Women in the Episcopate" sponsored by Episcopal Divinity School Jan. 11-13.

Among the speakers were David Booth Beers, Pamela Chinnis, the Rev. H. Arthur Doersam, the Rev. Carol Cole Flanagan, Ann K. Fontaine, the Rev. Barbara C. Harris, the Rev. Suzanne R. Hiatt, the Rt. Rev. Edward W. Jones, the Rev. Diedra Kriewald, the Rev. Barbara K. Lundblad, the Rt. Rev. H. Coleman McGehee, Jr., the Rev. Nan Arrington Peete, and Warren C. Ramshaw.

THE WITNESS will present excerpts from papers delivered at conference in a future issue.

church against any change in its customs and traditions, especially the tradition of an all-male priesthood.

We know, on the basis of experience and according to the wisdom of the Scriptures, that God is love. We also know according to logic and the principles of deductive analysis that the church and God are not synonymous because all that happens in the church cannot be classified as love. Yet, the House of Bishops, at a meeting in Chicago following the 1974 ordinations, adopted a resolution which in essence declared that order is as important as love in the church. They affirmed that the orderly existence of a social institution — the church — is as significant as the loving presence of God. In the Chicago resolution, a majority of the members of the House of Bishops

committed the error of absolutizing the relative. Religion is necessary, but like the family, government, economy, and education, it is an activity of a social institution. Institutions are essential to our ongoing social life; but they are creatures of history. All historical happenings are relative to the time and place in which they occur. It is wrong to absolutize that which is and should remain relative, such as an all-male or all-female priesthood; or a priesthood of single people only or married people only. It is wrong to absolutize a priesthood for people who are celibate only or who may not be celibate. All of these circumstances and conditions are relative to the time and place in which they occur, and are subject to change. They represent relativity that is inappropriate when absolutized.

I also embrace Niebuhr's conviction that Christianity does not come to an end in this or any other time. Similar to an idea advanced by Martin Buber, his theory is that religion is not consummated in history. At no time can anyone declare that he or she has been saved; that one's race or tribal group has been chosen as the role model for others; that one's nation-state has a manifest destiny to rule. Based on the analysis and discussion thus far of the error of defense and the inappropriateness of absolutizing the relative, there is no reason to question whether women should be deacons, priests or bishops.

Those who oppose women as deacons, priests or bishops misunderstand

that in history, change and stability are equally important; we change that which harms and stabilize that which helps. If men are not more helpful as bishops than women could be, and if women are not more harmful as bishops than men have been, why should either gender be excluded from this office? None of us is sufficiently wise to know which, if any, relationships between people and creatures of this world are proper and appropriate for all times.

Those who oppose women as deacons, priests or bishops misunderstand that God — not men or women or bishops — is the only defense of vulnerable people and fragile institutions. Social organizations, including the church, that place order and survival of institutions above the love and security of individuals are courting self-destruction, as the histories of all empires have revealed.

Forty-two years after Niebuhr's book, Joan Chittister, author and theologian, wrote *Women, Ministry and the Church*. In it she indicates that we continue to struggle with some of the same issues. She calls dress, rank, abstinence, rituals and titles "cultural and arbitrary vehicles of commitment" that have nothing to do with "religious identity." An authentic religious community is, according to Chittister, "a quality of life, a set of priorities, an attitude of mind, not simply a set of 'religious' behaviors or exercises . . ." Chittister points out that a religious institution must adapt and jettison its arbitrary vehicles of commitment if it is to continue to respond in a helpful way to human need.

Chittister makes another observation that I find most interesting. She says that "patriarchy and rampant clericalism have denied the church its full measure of insight and ability." She says, "it is not possible to talk about ordination without also talking about

power, because the church is run. . . by the ordained." And, she reports, "as women have begun to seek ordination, they have been criticized for seeking power." She notes, however, that "men who seek (ordination) are not credited with the same motives."

Chittister also co-authored with Martin Marty a book entitled *Faith and Ferment, An Interdisciplinary Study of Christian Beliefs and Practices*. A 234-item questionnaire was given to a sample of members of all churches in Minnesota. A total of 1,017 questionnaires were returned and analyzed. That study revealed that 93% of the clergy in the survey were convinced that God had called them to the work they do.

The question of how one is called by God brings me to the issue of women in the episcopacy. Has God called women to be deacons, priests and bishops? Since none of us is God, none of us can answer this question with certainty, nor can we answer with certainty the question of whether God has called men to be deacons, priests and bishops. One who is sufficiently humble to have developed a personal relationship with God may hear and know the call by God when an invitation is offered. But how can one who is not God be certain that he or she knows fully the mind of God?

As a sociologist, I offer this observation: None knows for certain whether one has been called by God. But there is evidence when one may not have been called by God. If God is love, then those who aspire to be deacons so that they may rule over lay people are devoid of love and therefore have received a questionable call. The same is true for those who aspire to be priests so that they may rule over deacons and lay people, or those who aspire to be bishops so they may rule over priests, deacons and lay people. The fundamental fact of love is that it enables

human beings to serve rather than rule others; it encourages individuals to be meek, not mighty. Power and authority are of questionable value in a loving relationship.

Many men have not understood these characteristics of love, especially some who are bishops in the Episcopal Church. They have an authoritarian conscience, which could be called false conscience, because they aspire to be in charge.

Knowing full well that freedom is an essential condition of any loving relationship, the male bishops of the Episcopal Church in the United States continue to extract a promise from candidates for ordination that they will *obey* their bishop and other ministers who may have authority over them (*Book of Common Prayer*). Such a promise is no different from the oath required of members of the military to obey the commander in chief. Colonel Oliver North testified that he knew some of his activities pertaining to the Iran-Contra affair were irregular, but he proceeded to do what he did because he assumed he was acting in accordance with orders from his commander in chief. An obedient military officer, he said he would go into a corner and stand on his head if the commander in chief asked him to do it. Thus far, there is no record of male bishops asking obedient priests to go into a corner and stand on their heads. But there is the possibility that one day a disreputable bishop will order an obedient priest or deacon to participate in an unjust activity and will apply sanctions against reluctant clerics for not obeying. To extract a promise of obedience is to deny the freedom that is essential in a loving human relationship. I have no problem with bishops asking ordinands if they are willing to be loyal to the church and its leaders, but not to be obedient.

If women are called to be bishops,

there must be a reason why they are called. My guess is that they are called to transform, rather than conform to, the episcopate as it presently functions; to root out pride in being a prince of the church; to eliminate practices of abusive power and authority; to treat as insignificant the arbitrary symbols of rank and title; to proclaim that this world and its territories are under the jurisdiction and protection of God and not of a diocesan bishop. If women are called to be bishops, my

guess is they are called to do these things because they are helpful and not harmful.

As Chittister has so wisely said, rampant clericalism has denied the church its full measure of insight; rank and title are arbitrary vehicles of commitment that have nothing to do with religion.

There is no reason why men ought to be bishops in the church, nor any reason why they ought not to be. There is no reason why women ought to be

bishops in the church, nor any reason why they ought not to be. The call to be a bishop is a call to a Christian vocation. If 90% of men say that they were called by God to their Christian vocations in the church, then how dare we say that God has not called women? The call to a Christian vocation is a mystical matter between each person and his or her God. Woe unto the wicked who claim to know the mind of God and the gender of humanity whom God calls to serve. ■

Legacy . . . *Continued from page 5*

connotations then, because the Hazleton library was later dedicated to her.

Mom followed in the family tradition of liking children, though not fondling them. There are seven in my family, and she told me once that she liked us not only as her children but as people in our own right. She liked everybody in their own right. If she couldn't totally agree with everything a person did, she would let the difficult parts slide and concentrate on the parts she liked. When she died, people called and wrote from all over the world, saying they'd known her for years, or had only known her for three days and those who'd known her only a short time mourned her as deeply as did her old friends.

After Mom's death, while trying to gather information for her obituary, we came up with a lengthy list of church and community organizations she'd been involved in, and we knew we were still missing some. If someone needed her, she was there. Her house and her heart was open to anybody, anytime. For most of my childhood, I can remember her on the way out the door to a meeting, or having people in for a meeting, or pasting up a brochure for a meeting, surrounded by dogs, cats, and kids, most of whom were hers but some of whom weren't and preferred our family to theirs.

She didn't spare herself, but would go to great lengths to spare others. I think she had serious heart trouble that she hid because she didn't want us to worry and also so we wouldn't nag her to stop doing the things she loved — traveling, working and smoking cigarettes. Like my grandmother, who had a heart condition but chucked her prescribed low-salt food into the trash and had the grandkids sneak her packs of Kents when she was confined to bed, Mom had a devious streak when it came to protecting her independence.

She was a public person with a very private side. Bits of information about parts of her life are slowly being revealed. A colleague of hers told me that when my parents divorced about 10 years ago, my mother never said a word and he knew nothing about it until he noticed my father wasn't showing up at events anymore. I realized, in looking over some of her favorite books, that the sort of writers she enjoyed reading were those who led unconventional, solitary lives. She loved the work of Emily Carr, a Canadian painter who turned to writing in her later years and was eccentric, brilliant and cantankerous. Another favorite was Julian of Norwich, who sat in her anchoress' cell and talked to God.

She had a boundless enthusiasm for the new and different. She indulged her free-spirit side with wildly fashionable clothes, outrageous earrings, and adventurous hairdos. She was addicted to buying shoes — we nicknamed her the Imelda Marcos of Malvern, Pa.

Her courage to be herself was not easily won. When she really needed support, she turned to her family and her church — the two were at times synonymous. Her faith in Christ was complete and was woven into everything she did. Once, after watching a TV documentary about Christian Fundamentalists, she told me that she could never believe in a harsh and punitive God.

She had a greatness of spirit, an enthusiasm for her work, and an obsession with shopping that will never be duplicated. I miss her terribly and will always miss her, but she believed so firmly in life everlasting and gave so much of herself to everyone she met that I never feel she is very far away. I take what I learned from her about my profession and, without trying to be exactly like her, attempt to keep my work up to her standards. Because she taught me that telling the story and sharing with other people is what we do on this earth. The rest is in stronger hands than mine. ■

AIDS ministry:

Curing the sickness of homophobia

by Richard T. Hawkins

A columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote recently that “people in high risk groups for AIDS lobby for a cure, for research funds, for ‘education,’ and against mandatory testing.” She goes on to point out that a cure may be a long time in coming “and money for AIDS research must be shared with money for research on cancer and other diseases that are killing more than AIDS.” She concludes that “the problem is not education, it seems to me. It’s learning to say no.”

Why does a responsible newspaper print such shortsighted and misguided opinions on such a sensitive issue? Perhaps it is because a recent *Los Angeles Times* poll found that 70% of all Americans and 80% of all Protestants support the Roman Catholic Church’s position regarding homosexual behavior. That means four out of five Protestants believe homosexual behavior is a mortal sin and that abstinence is the only moral solution for those with a same-sex orientation.

That is why newspapers print simplistic solutions to a worldwide epidemic to pander to peoples’ prejudice. The AIDS crisis is a mirror revealing us to ourselves; it thrusts our buried fears onto the cultural landscape, and it is from this cultural context that we address a religious perspective on AIDS.

The Rev. Richard T. Hawkins is rector of St. Thomas Church, Whitmarsh, in Ft. Washington, Pa.



Say what you want about hemophiliacs and infants born to mothers with AIDS, in the public mind, in the suburbs, AIDS is considered to be primarily a gay disease (and secondarily one of drug users.) What we see in the mirror is homophobia exaggerating the puritanism of our culture, distorting the humane instincts that otherwise would be brought to bear on the suffering and inevitable end for those with

this disease.

It is important to discuss our attitude towards gays and lesbians, because it colors our religious perspective.

I am awed by the hues of color which entrance us in the fall foliage. I marvel at the winter snows in which no two flakes are identical. I am fascinated that no two fingerprints are the same, a symbol that each one of us is truly unique.

To this infinite variety of creation, God has molded humanity with a wide scale of male/female components. That scale moves from the rare 100% female to the equally rare 100% male. Fortunately, most of us are blessed with components of both so that we can experience a fuller humanity. We can be nurturing *and* aggressive. Is the balance of components for the individual the result of prenatal brain formation? Is it the result of trauma to the unformed sexual identity of early childhood? Whether the balance of components is a product of nature or nurture is an interesting scientific issue, but the fact is that the balance is something given to each of us, not something we choose. It is a gift, a gift of God, a gift of God the Creator. Blessedly each of us is uniquely formed with a variety of kinds and mix of these components our culture identifies as masculine and feminine.

Further, God has added to this beautiful variety of hues and differences the gift of a powerful drive in which to manifest our unique mix of sexuality. It is a special gift, for in its outward and visible manifestation we experience intimacy — that which creates and preserves the experience of being more fully human. Sex is, finally, a sacrament; it is an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual. It is a sign of what God is calling us to become; more fully human.

Yet rather than stand in awe of God's marvelous and fascinating creativity, some would say that there is only one narrow expression of sexuality that is valid: the monogamous, lifelong union of male and female that is blessed by the church. Any other expression of our sexuality is opposed to the will of God.

That is to say, God has created all kinds of variety in this world, and it is perfectly appropriate to be awed and fascinated and to marvel at that variety

— until it comes to sexuality. Then there is but one narrowly-defined type that is awesome, fascinating and marvelous. All other varieties of God's sexual creation are sinful.

To put it another way: If you happily fall within a particular band of the continuum of male/female components of sexuality, then God says, "Be fruitful and multiply. Sexual fulfillment is exclusively your right." If however, you fall outside that particular band, then God says four things to you:

- I have created humankind with such infinite variety that a same sex-orientation is possible for you, not as your choice but as my gift; and
- I have provided you with one of the most powerful drives you possess to express your sexuality; and
- I have made sex the way to express love and intimacy in its most intense form so that you may experience a deeper humanness; yet
- Because you don't fit into a narrow category of my Creation, I, your loving and compassionate God, forbid you from ever experiencing the full expression of intimacy. I condemn you if you ever express sexual and selfless love in the only way you can. I consign you to involuntary celibacy. I say to you: "No, you must never, in all your days on earth, allow yourself to be open to the fullness of life that comes with My gift of sexual expression."

I just don't believe God is so sadistic.

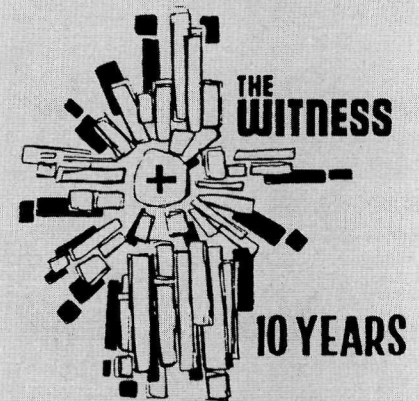
I believe that the kind of criteria required to judge sexual behavior from a religious perspective involves other-regarding love. Were we not taught that the other-regarding love of humans is a reflection of Divine Love? I believe that, religiously speaking, we should be empowered by God's gifts to become more fully human.

That is not to say that there is no relevant morality. The freedom to ex-

press one's unique individuality stops at the boundary line of another's self-esteem. To use another person as a thing or to treat an expression of profound intimacy lightly is wrong. To be promiscuous or predatory is categorically evil. But morality must also affirm that expressing true intimacy, giving pleasure and sharing oneself with one's beloved, and becoming more fully human is good.

This is the proper context from which to examine the religious perspective on AIDS. I must address the position that AIDS is a visitation of God's chastisement, though I have little patience with such a homophobic

**Travelers to Lambeth:
Don't leave home
without it!**



**Daughters
of Prophecy**

**For Extra Copies
THE WITNESS**

will be happy to provide this special 10th anniversary issue about women's priesthood in the Episcopal Church for \$1.50. Write Ann Hunter, THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002 or phone (215) 643-7076.

prejudice. Suffice it to say that I pray regularly for a cure to AIDS. I cannot believe that the answer to my prayer will thwart the will of God.

But if we are to stand in the religious context I have advocated — the context of the Creator God — then AIDS is not seen as God's judgment, nor even as God's disapproval.

AIDS is but one more example of the human predicament. Different forms of life created by God evolve in various patterns and at some point may become incompatible with each other. Humankind is not the boss! We are, like all God's creations, subject to the laws of nature, which is to say, from dust we came and to dust we shall return — as hard as it is to accept. Though God does not shield human creatures, even "the deserving", from the forces of nature, God does make available love, grace and strength from the infinite storehouse of omnipotence and love. It is available for all who call upon God in the vicissitudes of life.

If that is our religious perspective, then how shall it be reflected in our ministry? By our presence we will affirm the presence of God, thus affirming our common humanity.

A common humanity transcends our differences. If our ministry is of God, then it is without judgment. It requires acceptance of gay lifestyles and identity. It was once thought that AIDS would force the religious community to reconsider its views of homosexuality. What has developed, however, has been comfort without acceptance, and caring without affirmation, which patronizes both God's gifts and the AIDS patient. Our ministry must affirm our common humanity by our presence.

Those with AIDS minister to us. It is a mutual ministry. AIDS patients are dying, which is the most proud and inescapable reality they present to us. They witness to us that our cultural

denial of death is false. We are *all* dying. By their very presence they require us to consider how we are spending *our* last days. It is time to put away the superficial, and by their ministry they challenge us to grapple with the substantial. The person with AIDS raises for us the ultimate questions: Why are we living? For what purpose? To what end?

Yet there are roadblocks, on both sides, to mutual ministry. They are the emotions we are privy to by the very nature of our upbringing: guilt, fear and isolation. They are the emotions that "ride the whirlwind and direct the storm" of the AIDS virus.

The horseman of guilt rides the emotions of the person with AIDS for having expressed the full range of his humanity in the most natural way. There is also guilt for the caregiver, who knows full well that the same range of humanity is owned by all of us, yet in some secret recess of the heart fights the feeling that the patient got what was coming to him.

The horseman of fear, of course, rides ruthlessly through the emotions of the one with AIDS. But fear is even a greater roadblock for the caregiver: There is the fear of facing our own mortality and of being infected, but there is also the paralyzing fear of revealing concern for one with a "homosexual" disease.

The horseman of isolation gallops full tilt into the life of the AIDS patient, who feels condemned, and is angry about it. Despite some touching reconciliation, the 80% of the Protestant Church that is anti-homosexual includes friends and even family — especially family. The caregiver, too, feels isolated. In the difficult straits of being a channel of love to the dying, one is isolated from those who continue to live as if the superficial will get us by for now, as if death is not stalking all of life.

And yet guilt, fear and isolation have the last say only if we permit them. They are what the world teaches. The teacher of the inner soul, however, directs our mutual ministry with a non-anxious presence one to another. That presence enables us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. That is what God requires of our mutual ministry, and AIDS is too awesome for anything less. ■

Bagwoman: 20th St.

Outside Jerusalem
in the valley of Hinnom,
it is said,
the fires fed ceaselessly
on the city's refuse,
giving a name
to Hell: Gehenna —
place of the excluded
and tormented dead.

But here,
in Mammon's capital
our heaped rubbish
in its plastic sacks
is treasure to a lost tribe
of living dead.
This bitter morning
a woman stakes her claim
on the stack
below my window,
prospecting slowly
for familiar shapes,
salvaging old shoes,
sifting the tampons,
bones and bacon-rind,
the putrefying scraps
and broken artifacts,
for what is usable,
exchangeable.

The stench
does not reach me,
two floors up,
nor, burrowing in that filth,
can she sense my shame,
as our waste provides
another day's postponement
of her own inevitable
disposal.

Godfrey Wilson
(See Letters, page 3)

tion we have to honor individual human beings above the claims of corporate entities (“collectivities”). To sacrifice individuals for larger entities, such as the state, the economy, even the church, is simply not in keeping with this value, nor is it consistent with the fierce commitment of Jesus to each “little one,” as disclosed to us in the Bible.

Today the most obvious implication of this way of valuing individuals include, of course, that individuals ought not be subordinate to militaristic impulses — that is, the ready resort to the use of military force as a means to advance the interests of a national collectivity. Such a value also predisposes us toward an environmental ethic which cherished individual lives — even future lives — while most carefully scrutinizing practices designed to enhance the selfish “short-term gain” of any collectivity, whether political, economic, religious, or social. In the light of Weil’s value of “respect,” such abstraction as “national interest,” “super race,” and “the economy” stand exposed as mere political slogans. From a Christian point of view, it is the life of any individual, and his or her welfare, which counts as a highly precious item in the emerging social order. In other words, those social arrangements that optimize the life and welfare of individual human beings are infinitely preferable to social arrangements which appear to give higher priority to social abstractions.

A sixth element in our jubilee model is hope. A social order that offers reasonable grounds for hope to all individuals within it is a social order to be preferred over one that does not.

A significant aspect of hope and its judgment upon the present shape of things implicitly requires a transcendent critical principle, perhaps of the sort that Paul Tillich had in mind when he spoke of “The Protestant principle” which judges all given arrangements. That principle is informed by the Christian vision of the Kingdom of God which, among other things, points toward the ultimate hope of a community characterized entirely by mercy, loving kindness, and the inclusion of all people. Primarily because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Christian hope is an attitude of anticipation which offers the benefit of promises and future well-being to those who suffer now. In its openness to the future, Christian hope points to a new and better social organization of things for those who have nothing invested in the current situation.

In allaying both presumption and despair, hope injects into life a dynamic vitality which would not be justified by the circumstances of the world alone. Therefore those in greatest need of social change, that is those among the earth’s *miserables*, are those especially to whom Christian hope offers its greatest promise and power. In this particular sense the

element of hope in the jubilee model offers more to the relatively disadvantaged of the world than to the relatively privileged, and to the disabled, the chronically ill, the aged, the vulnerable of any kind. Hope does not intend ill toward those currently favored in the world situation, but it does point to a better future for those whose situation in the world appears otherwise to be hopeless.

In sum: I believe that the Christian heritage contains elements which, when combined in a model for envisioning a certain future for the social order, give us a fairly clear guideline of the kind of social situation we ought to foster. In the United States in particular, there are considerable extremes of economic, racial, ethnic, gender and religious exclusivity. In our country the cycle of material and spiritual needs is self-reinforcing, as it is everywhere in the world; the extreme positions of privilege and underprivilege seem to be as evident in our land as perhaps they are in many countries. As would-be Christians, we believe that the Scriptures contain important clues concerning the values we should hold in shaping our imaginative vision of a future social order. I believe that it is possible actually to approximate the order Christ had in mind.

In any case, the kind of society which is commendable to our sister and brother Christians around the world, especially to our sisters and brothers in the United States, is a human society in which such forces as crushing poverty, dangerous militarism, degrading racism, sexism, and the like are curbed. This is a vision of a future human community built instead upon at least the following biblical values, as held by Jesus our Lord:

- The periodic cancellation of debts;
- The periodic release of debtors from servitude;
- The periodic redistribution of capital;
- The principle of indiscriminate;
- Respect for each individual human being; and

Christian hope.

May God help us, as God has mercy upon us. ■

Resources

Jurgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope*. Harper & Row, New York.

William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*. Word Books, Waco, Texas.

Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*. Harper Torch Books, New York.

John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.



Back to Basics: People's education in South Africa

“**B**usiness Against Apartheid” is the title of a slick pamphlet recently published and distributed by the Industry Support Unit, a group of U.S. companies doing business in South Africa. The booklet details in glowing terms how some 214 corporations, all signatories to the Sullivan Principles, are working to combat the repressive system under which Black South Africans live. One area in which the companies have been particularly active is support of Black education.

By the end of 1966, the booklet reports, U.S. companies had spent about 128,000,000 South African rand to support Black education and training in eight years. About 49 million of that amount went to train and educate other Blacks, mainly through scholarship programs. The remainder was invested in an Adopt-a-School program and other general support for education in Black communities. School adoption, a practice widely followed by industry in U.S. urban areas, involves financial assistance, upgrading teaching and help of whatever kind the school needs to raise its standards.

Expenditures are difficult to translate into U.S. dollars, according to the report, but corporate contributions have grown “remarkably.” (The value of the South African rand has fluctuated greatly between 1979 and 1986

from a high of \$1.42 to a low of 38 cents.) Before we let go with the hurrahs and huzzahs, there are some things about the Three R’s in South Africa worth noting. In simple terms, it’s people’s education versus Pretoria.

A National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed in December 1985 as teachers, students, parents, academics and activists from across the country sought to bring some order out of the chaos apartheid had wrought on education for Black South Africans. The NECC envisioned a system of learning cleansed from top to bottom of the hated bantu education, a fundamental control mechanism for the perpetuation of apartheid and Black exploitation. The theme of the committee’s founding conference was “People’s Education for People Power.”

According to Eric Molobi, national coordinator of NECC, who was arrested and disappeared into a Pretorian prison in early December 1987. “People’s education is fundamentally different from alternative education programs that shun the reality of conflict in South Africa” and, in some cases, have a hidden agenda to depoliticize education and create an apolitical Black middle class. “In reality . . . these hidden agendas and intentions have a blatant political purpose: the

defense of the present situation.”

Meanwhile the government has proposed an Education Laws Amendment Bill that would bring all schools and institutions for the education of Black persons under the Minister of Education and Development Aid. It would redefine “school” as almost any educational activity in which Black people were engaged and would empower the Minister of Education to suspend such activities, monitor admissions policies, regulate access to the premises and discharge teachers.

In an unprecedented move, the government requested NECC to comment on the proposed bill. The irony of this was not lost on Black people since many of the NECC leaders, in addition to Molobi, are in detention and the Government Gazette dated Jan. 9, 1987 prevents the NECC from holding gatherings where discussions of alternative education take place.

It would be time for cheering indeed if the Sullivan signatory companies were gutsy enough to put some of that 128,000,000 rand into the work of the National Education Crisis Committee as it attempts to develop a relevant program of education which Molobi understatedly describes as “more appropriate for the conditions of South African pupils.” ■

Special Offer: Feminist Anthology

Yes, I want to take advantage of your special offer. Please send my _____ copies of **My Story's On!** at \$9.50 each. (Bulk discounts upon request.) Enclosed is a check in the amount of _____ (Prepaid orders only.)

Name

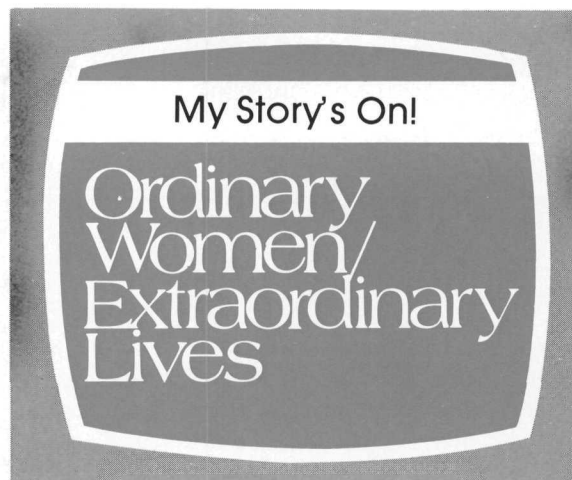
Address

City

State

Zip

Make check payable to:
THE WITNESS and mail to
P.O. Box 359,
Ambler, PA 19002.



Edited by Paula Ross, Berkeley, Cal.

Order this new feminist study guide today — for only \$9.50 — includes postage and handling.

(Bulk discounts upon request.)

Hear the voices of women mainstream feminism too often overlooks. Read about the retiring waitress who creates her own IRA; the war in El Salvador, from the point of view of a small girl; a dialogue between Palestinian and Jewish women; the Black woman who takes on the Bank of America, and wins. Fiction, poetry, essays by and about working class, middle class women; Asian, Black, Chicana, Native, Puerto Rican and White women; physically-challenged, very young, very old and incarcerated women. Lots more! 220-pages; 76 different contributors representing 24 states; 27 photos.

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company
P.O. Box 359
Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 121
North Wales, PA