



**BLACK  
MINISTRIES  
IN THE**

**EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR BLACK MINISTRIES**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. IS THIS LAY MINISTRY? BY: NELL BRAXTON GIBSON	3
3. LAY MINISTRY	7
4. EVANGELISM	9
5. YOUTH MINISTRY	12
6. BLACK COLLEGES	14
7. URBAN MINISTRY	16
8. BLACK WOMEN AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT BY: VICKI REID, DEBORAH HINES, NELL GIBSON, MARY ADEBONOJO, BARBARA HARRIS, SANDRA WILSON, MYRTLE L. GORDON, AND MATTIE HOPKINS	18
9. AN ESSAY ON BLACK MINISTRY BY: THE REV. RICHARD C. WINN	21

## Black Churches for the 80's

parish renewal that stand at the foundation of response and the context in which that response must be taken in regard to all of the issues raised below.

We invite comment on the total, or on specific parts, and will initiate where applicable, direct dialogue with our sister commissions and/or allied agencies within the church for which specific items of this agenda are relevant. Our hope in doing this is to begin the process of reshaping and reprioritizing the church's response to the Black agenda --- an unfinished agenda which requires urgent attention NOW!!

## IS THIS LAY MINISTRY?

by Nell Braxton Gibson  
Member of the ECBM

I am a black woman, a wife, mother, homemaker. I volunteer my time as a member of the Board for Theological Education, the Episcopal Commission for Black Ministries and the Berkeley Board of Trustees at Yale Divinity School. I have served on the Episcopal Consortium for Theological Education in the Northeast (ECTENE), Inter Seminary Theological Education for Ministry (ESTEM), and the Bishop's Committee on Minority Unrest. I have been a vestry member, Sunday School teacher, parish secretary, Society for Girls (SFS) leader and camp counselor. I have counseled and taught seminary students, sung in church choirs, been active in Canterbury, and done hard physical labor building classrooms and a chapel in the African bush of Tanzania. I've tested Fair Housing Laws in California, registered black voters, picketed and been jailed in Georgia. I grew up in the south and spent my formative years living in Mississippi. I have fought for human rights all my life.

### *I am a Christian*

Sometimes when people (who know I don't work at a paid nine to five job) ask me what I do, I tell them I am an unordained minister. They don't always believe me. Maybe it's because I don't always believe myself. Ministry is a difficult business which can leave one with many self doubts and feelings of inadequacy. Lay ministry is harder in many ways than ordained because it isn't always recognized. When I stop to think about what I do, I know that I listen to others, lend my support to them, try to understand their points of view and do my best to love and remember them in my prayers. When I think about it I realize this is ministry. But there are times when no one asks me what I do and times when I go about the business of living without much thought of God or ministry. Like the day I left my sick ten year old son home alone so I could attend a meeting. I promised him I'd return as soon as I could and bring him a lunch from McDonald's as a treat. But I ran into a friend on my way home and she was in tears, so I called home, explained why I'd be late and bought her lunch. She told me her ex-husband was late with the child support payment, her lover was leaving her for another woman, there was an eviction notice on her front door and her children needed shoes. We talked of many things that day -- our families, our responsibilities, our aging parents, our getting older. Toward the end of lunch we found ourselves "singing the praises" of black women; women who have supported their men, nurtured their children, just "hung in there" and survived. We talked about the burden laid on us to always be strong and we admitted how hard it is to live up to that image. We acknowledged that there are times when we want to be weak, to be taken care of, held, loved and understood. We admitted to having cried during these times and then come out on top again, stronger and more determined than ever. I left her feeling a new surge of life.

## Is This Lay Ministry?

I took Bert III, his special Big Mac treat and played backgammon with him when he had finished eating. When eight year old Erika came home from school I drove her to track practice and worked on a book I am writing while she and her teammates got ready for Colgate Women's Games. After track practice I drove several of the girls home and picked up the suit my husband Bert, had asked me to get from the cleaners for his up coming business trip. Then I went home and began preparing dinner, stopping to help Erika with homework, give young Bert another dose of medicine and to iron a week's supply of shirts for Bert's trip. Within minutes he came through the front door dejected and tired. He is Financial Vice President of a large non-profit organization and that day he'd discovered his projected budget was one million dollars over! His staff had to work overtime and he was going to have to work during the weekend. His boss was out of town and he would have to call her at home and break the news as soon as she returned. After unleashing all of his angry feelings, he turned to me accusingly and asked if I had forgotten to pick up the suit he needed for his Monday morning trip. I put my arms around him, told him I hadn't forgotten the suit and suggested he change his clothes while I made two gin and tonics and played our favorite Chuck Mangione album.

I don't know a great deal about balancing budgets but I do know what kinds of administrative changes might help prevent a situation like that from reoccurring, so I suggested some of them. He agreed with me and by the end of the evening he had figured out how to cut the deficit in half. He felt that with a good night's sleep he'd probably be able to present to the Board, figures close to his originally projected budget.

Several days later I was off to the mountains with the ISTEM seminary students for a retreat. I led a group exercise on racism which proved devastating to the black and Hispanic students because of the attitudes expressed by many of their white colleagues. There were heated discussions and verbal attacks. When we broke for dinner everyone was upset. We came together after dinner and wrestled with the problems some more. We ended the night with prayer but without having resolved the issues. Several of us poured drinks, others played ping-pong, went for walks or sat around and talked. The other black staff member and I asked a couple of students to join us in a game of bid whist. In the middle of the game a black male student used the word, "priestess" to describe one of the female students. Tempers were still running high from the earlier exercise and she lashed out at him calling him a "closet sexist". He became defensive and verbally fought back-- yelling about all society had done to him as a black man and of all seminary had done to him by demanding of him an education which alienated him from his own people. He talked about the white minister he worked for who was continually saying he was too aggressive, impatient, arrogant and too anxious

## Is This Lay Ministry?

to express the black point of view. Tears welled up in his eyes when he told us of how he had tried to commit suicide two years before. As he talked I took both his hands in mine and when he had finished I said to him, "I've been there". He was astonished! I told him I'd felt the same pain he was feeling, known the same hurt, cried the same tears for all the same reasons. I told him I had lived through it and he would too.

A few months later I found myself at a Board meeting asking questions about whether or not the accounting firm we had chosen to review our budget had any blacks or women working as accountants; whether our donors were also supporting apartheid in South Africa and why there are so few blacks entering seminary. At another Board meeting a clergyman whom I love and care about got up and walked out in the middle of a report. I sensed he was not himself that day and I worried about him all the way home. When I had a few minutes I called him and asked if everything was alright. I could tell by his voice that he was grateful for the call. He told me he'd been going through a painful divorce and was feeling low. He was the second priest I'd talked with in less than a year who was struggling through a divorce. I listened to both of them and let them know of my deep concern. I told each I'd be praying for him.

In a book called *MONDAY'S MINISTRIES, The Ministry of the Laity* (Parish Life Press, Philadelphia), Nelvin Vos says that ministry is performed in the struggles of human life; that those struggles include:

*Living with a hassle*

*Caring, no matter what the cost*

*Responding, with no strings attached*

*Seeing others' needs*

*Being vulnerable*

*Being open*

*Perceiving suffering*

*Responding nonverbally*

Our tradition as blacks is to "tell the story". That is why I find illustrations better than any other means of sharing my ministry. I know Christ works through me, healing my brokenness as he helps me heal others. I know I am sustained through prayers as God helps me comfort and support others through prayer. I know I need the love and support of those around me in order to carry out my ministry and that support

## Is This Lay Ministry?

and love comes from the people I serve most -- my family and friends.

Two weeks after I underwent major surgery, the friend I took to lunch came to my home and cleaned it. She also cooked dinner for my family and kept me company while her own children ate at their home alone. She said she did it because she did not have money to buy me flowers and candy. My daughter, who taught me "The Rock" and the "Patty Duke", urged me to swallow my pride at her father's office party and get out on the dance floor to show them what she had taught me. She reminded me that I'm always telling her she must overcome her shyness and that I had to overcome mine too. My son took me to Central Park and helped me field baseballs so that I shouldn't be embarrassed by missing easy pop-ups when I pitched for his Saturday ball game. My husband leaves love notes pinned to my pillow when he goes away on trips, reaches out to me with understanding when I am discouraged and strongly supports my independence by encouraging me to be my own person, "do my own thing" and live my life fully. That is how they minister to me.

The true meaning of ministry is service. The meaning of laos is people. I am a lay minister because I am one of the people who serves.

## THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR BLACK MINISTRIES

### SPEAKS ON LAY MINISTRY

It has been noted in the Theological Statement that "Lay leadership is the foundation upon which the Church is built". We wholeheartedly support the statement and feel the ordained should be encouraged to broaden the base of participation, and support the validity of lay ministry, so that each group may be mutually supported and supportive.

Lay Ministry should provide the opportunity for the laos to work out the Christian challenge, grounded in faith, which helps the lay to understand the nature of their ministry in the context of the Church and the larger world; thereby allowing them to use their talents, skills and expertise with a greater degree of assurance and security.

The Church can and should serve as a conduit for providing a stimulus which nurtures and develops the kind of effective and meaningful lay leadership which has served the past, met the needs of the present and provided role models for future lay ministries. This can be done in a variety of ways. What follows are some suggestions for structuring and fostering effective lay leadership within the Church's national organizational bodies (Commissions, Committees and Seminary Boards). Idealistically, the Church should reflect its commitment to lay ministry by sharing the ordained and unordained responsibilities with a 50% ratio of involvement by each group, but under no circumstances should there be any less than an involvement of:

60% - 40% clergy/lay

60% - 40% male/female

60% - 40% over 45 years of age/under 45

60% - 40% ethnic diversity

It is understood that at the local level (i.e. vestries), there may be times when there is only one ordained person, and that at these times the laity will far out-number the clergy; but this is the exception in the above ratio.

Laypersons should officiate over vestries, commission, committees and boards in their full capacity as chairpersons, with strong clergy input in establishing the agenda.

Laypersons must take the initiative in locating and bringing onto boards and committees, other members of the laity, so that they replace themselves with strong new lay leaders. In this regard, as with ordained clergy, identification of lay expertise, strengths and special interest areas should be tapped and fully utilized.

THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR LAY MINISTRY

## Lay Ministry

Finally, the clergy must show a greater sensitivity to the time constraints of the laity when scheduling meetings so that the laos are not always the persons who must sacrifice pay loss and job absences in order to attend important meetings.

We hope this report is seen as a beginning, and not in any way definitive, in terms of creating a more effective laity. It should be seen as one way to incorporate and strengthen the effectiveness of the laity, as well as a means of grappling with some of the issues which have surfaced. It is time for a mutual sharing of responsibilities between lay and clergy if members of the laity are ever to be seen as anything other than second class ministers of God.

## THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR BLACK MINISTRIES

### SPEAKS ON EVANGELISM

We accept the National Church's program on Evangelism theologically. However, that program must be interpreted by the various ethnic groups which are addressed since this is not a homogeneous church. Each ethnic group must therefore be involved in the formulation of national and local evangelism programs and review of documents disseminated by the National Office of Evangelism, Church Growth and Renewal. We have expanded our concern for evangelism in order to relate to our Black heritage based on the premise that the quality of our lives can and should be improved by the presence of Christ and the church in our lives.

We see evangelism as having many prongs:

1. Evangelism should be directed to the masses of people. It should transcend socioeconomic classes. The "good news" should particularly be taken to the low income and dispossessed people. The great commission (Matthew 28: 19-20) does not restrict evangelism to the middle income or well-educated portions of our population.
2. Evangelism should promote and utilize effective role models. Role models of diversified backgrounds (clergy, laity, educated, uneducated, rich, poor, black, white, the elite and the grass roots) give more visibility and testimony to the "good news" of the gospel. These role models take advantage of the fact that the oppressed identify with and can be motivated more by those from within their ranks.
3. Evangelism utilized the traditional gifts of the spirit. (1 Corinthians 12). Among Black people it would be greatly enhanced by incorporating those gifts that are unique to us. By incorporating our music, styles of preaching and drama, our people would receive the "good news" in language(s) we understand.
4. By recognizing our history and heritage in the Episcopal Church, Evangelism would foster an atmosphere that encourages a true sense of belonging (membership) and promote even more contributions being made to the church.
5. Evangelism should recognize our oral tradition and use this medium to compliment with, not in competition or to the exclusion of, the liturgical tradition of the Episcopal Church.

## Evangelism

6. Evangelism should have an educational component that deals with the governance and policy of the National Church. For if disciples (the fruit of evangelism) are to be effective evangelists, they must have knowledge of these things as well.

Evangelism is colored by the socioeconomic context of the day. Taking direct from Matthew 10: 5-8, where our Lord admonishes his disciples to minister to the needs of the people, we recognize that the soul exists within a body that also houses a mind. We cannot minister to the soul without going through that body and mind. We must minister to all three. Evangelism must not be portrayed in a purely spiritual form, but take on physical properties by feeding and clothing the minds and bodies of those we wish to reach.

Finally we wish to remind our white brothers and sisters who compose the minority of the Anglican Church worldwide, that love without action is naught. True evangelism goes beyond the expression of pious platitudes and good intentions. This church will grow only when all of God's children share in the fruits of his presence in their lives.

### PROPOSED STRATEGIES

1. Educate Black clergy and laity in the strategies of Evangelism.
2. Make Evangelism strategy a key note theme of an annual UBE meeting.
3. Move to have Black representation on the National Evangelism Church Growth and Renewal Committee, seeking representation from ECBM and UBE where possible.
4. The traditional Episcopal Black Colleges should be targeted for evangelism campaigns. These campaigns should involve the clergy and laity of UBE.
5. The ECBM should develop and distribute a resource reading list on evangelism containing critiques on evangelism literature and bibliography of the same.
6. The ECBM must explore ways in which its visibility can be increased so that the media of the Episcopal Church as well as our own Newsletter, can project more clearly our concerns regarding Evangelism and its relation to social witness.

## Evangelism

7. The ECBM should develop a talent bank of Black Episcopalians whose names may be used in the Evangelism movement.
8. The ECBM should choose a model congregation(s) to work with and then document that congregation's growth. (Toot our own horn.)

**Conclusion:** An excellent example of our concern and approach to the issue of Evangelism is contained in the paper delivered by the Reverend Frank Turner to the Evangelism Conference meeting in St. Louis, in the fall of 1980. For, as he points out in that document, "true evangelism has as its by product faithful witness to the gospel in our times, and we must always hold in tension the concern for social justice and the proclamation of God's love and mercy".

## THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR BLACK MINISTRIES

### SPEAKS ON YOUTH MINISTRY

We begin with youth ministries because it stands at the core of our concern. Whether we are talking about urban mission, evangelism, recruitment for the Sacred ministry, or lay ministry, the seeds that are sown among our young people are the ones that will most often bear fruit in their later maturation in the various critical roles that they may play in the church.

This is especially important for the black church, for the estrangement of our youth from it is a most distressing concern. It is distressing because our black youth not only are the most highly unemployed, unskilled, ill-trained and ill treated segment of our population, but because they are our future, require redressing of their grievances if we are indeed to have a future.

The new educational document "Free to Choose" provides a golden opportunity for us to take new initiatives in the area of relating to our young people seeking better to understand them and seeking ways to make them able to understand us. In this context we speak to our parishes with deep concern that they reexamine the role of young people, especially teenagers and young adults in the decision-making and leadership roles in the parish.

Their exclusion from Vestrys, lay ministry opportunities, lay reader positions, often lead to their rejection of the church as an old folks club. We must avoid this image if we are to even begin to relate to their needs and have them share honestly their concerns.

Not only did Jesus say "suffer the little children, to come unto me" but he also pointed out that unless we become as little children in our own clarity of faith and understanding, we will not enter into the Kingdom. It is very easy to forget and neglect this aspect of the gospel, and at the time when the problems of our society are bearing down ever more heavily upon our youth and our elderly, it is critical that we redeem this portion of the gospel and apply in practical ways in our relationships with young people.

Therefore the following strategy and action initiatives are offered as a way to begin this process. You will also notice that we approach this with a catholic view, one that embraces the plurality of cultural traditions and suggest that the whole earth is the Lord's, and therefore, we are concerned not only with the souls and spirits of the young people, but their vocational and ethical growth, political awareness and their educational, social and human needs.

## Youth Ministry

**STRATEGY 1:** The development of a sermon from the ECBM to parish clergy and lay leadership that builds on the historical record developed by our office of the achievements of black people in the Episcopal Church.

It is recommended that this be made available for Black History Month 1982.

**STRATEGY 2:** The lifting up of "Free to Choose", our new educational resource for urban christian education in regional workshops where both lay and ordained persons can be trained in its use in order to strengthen their relationships with young people, and improve the quality of the Christian education programs in our parishes.

**STRATEGY 3:** We should take the occasion of our publication of our hymnal supplement, and tie it to a black arts program that embraces the indiginous and contemporary, and relate them to the proclamation of the word and sacraments.

This project could be especially useful in the teenage and young adult area with the use of contemporary film and drama.

**STRATEGY 4:** Seek to amend the by-laws of parishes to admit youth participation in all activities and programs of the church so that young people will be encouraged, and become aware of the nature of the church and it's functions, how it survives by their beginning to assume responsibility for discussion that determine that process.

A good beginning might be in the area of voice and vote on Vestry.

**CONCLUSION:** With God's guidance and initiatives and support from ECBM, UBE, local lay and clergy, it is believed that these strategies can be used to strengthen our youth program.

We want to move now from identifying and talking about our problems to acting on them. With the help of God we can move to a new age of growth and development. Young people are not simply a future of the Church, but a very real and present part of the Body of Christ. A body in which we all, through faith and action must share.

EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR BLACK MINISTRIES  
SPEAKS TO AND ABOUT THE BLACK EPISCOPAL COLLEGES

"The legacy of black colleges is ... that they have developed most of the leadership that has emancipated the black man's mind and made a contribution to America." Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President Emeritus, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia.

That the three Episcopal Black Colleges, Vorhees, St. Paul's and St. Augustine's, are one of the great success stories of the Episcopal Church is not the sole reason that the Episcopal Commission for Black Ministries is concerned about their future. Bankrupt and singularly lacking in quality ghetto schools which produce under-educated graduates, spiraling minority youth employment figures that approach fifty (50%) percent across the nation, and the continually widening economic gap between white families and black, place the need for these schools in bold relief. Poorly prepared and further victimized by the lack of employment opportunities and marginal family income, the majority of Black young people are denied the advantage of a college education, at a time when our nation has a desperate need to fully utilize its human resource. Their minds are wasted.

Because they provide a caring environment conducive to mental and social growth, remedial assistance which compensates for academic deficiencies and builds self assurance and an easily accessible support system that makes financial assistance and student employment available to large segments of their student bodies, the Episcopal Black Colleges play a vital part in preparing minority youth for the roles of employment and leadership.

A historical fact to be considered is that the three Black Colleges have proved to be a training ground for young people who might be interested in church vocations. Indeed, a significant number of Black Clergy are graduates of one of these colleges. The loss of Episcopal Church presences would remove this vital training ground.

Since American society is competitive, however, the Episcopal Commission for Black Ministries firmly believes that Black colleges must foster academic excellence and assume their responsibilities in adequately preparing students for their roles in the larger society. (Here we should add backup material.) Black colleges have the responsibility to develop the mind to the ultimate.

The Episcopal Commission for Black Ministries to strengthen the valuable resources of the Episcopal Black Colleges and to enhance the support of the whole Church, especially the Black Church, recommends the following:

## Black Episcopal Colleges

1. Establish a Black Episcopal College Day, preferably a Sunday within the church's year for the purpose of promoting and providing a forum for exposure to the colleges existence and the recruitment of financial support through (a) educational and promotional materials about the colleges including their histories; (b) through speakers and graduates of the colleges; (c) through an open or pledge offering taken on the established day. Such funds are to be sent to the national Church and administered by the Commission for Black Ministries.
2. The establishment of a revolving loan scholarship fund for the Black Colleges in the amount of \$100,000.00 to be administered by the Union of Black Episcopalians at the rate of two (2%) percent interest and paid after graduation. Also, the Commission should determine the availability and seek Venture in Mission (VIM) monies in support of the effort.
3. Encourage the establishment of an Advisory Committee consisting of Black Episcopal College presidents, their Board presidents, and representatives from Black Ministries for the purpose of planning and providing for special needs and ministries.
4. Encourage the Black Colleges to establish "positions in residence" whereby outstanding churchmen who have been successful in other areas of endeavors are invited to return to the various campuses for a period of time as resource persons (speaking and teaching) on church vocations and in an effort to recruit possible candidates for such vocations.
5. Encourage the seeking of foundation funds through the efforts of Black Bishops, Clergy and Laity for the purpose of visitation to the campuses for conferences, meetings, etc. Linkages should be established through the Commission's office to encourage Black Clergy and lay people to secure the assistance of foundations and private resources to be committed to the Black Episcopal Colleges by way of monies and services.
6. Black colleges should be encouraged to give special recognition, awards and degrees to its outstanding Black Clergy and laity thus encouraging their support of the Black Colleges and their efforts.

## THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR BLACK MINISTRIES

### SPEAKS ON URBAN MINISTRY

The Black Episcopal Church exists as an urban entity and any discussion of urban mission within the Episcopal Church must begin and end with the recognition of the central role that the Black Church must play in its implementation, evaluation and support.

The financial, recruiting and education/training needs of Black clergy and laity are critical to an effective urban mission, and was recognized in the report that came out of the Episcopal Urban Caucus. We applaud the leadership that was chosen by that Caucus in terms of its representative sensitivity to the critical role of minority persons in the development of that ministry.

The following ten points represent our posture on the emerging emphasis on urban mission in our church for the 80's:

1. The affirmation of the task and the initial direction of the Episcopal Urban Caucus in terms of its goals, its leadership and its style of operation. We would seek to have further dialogue with this group to work out ways in which our Commission could be more helpful in directing them to creative urban ministries that are currently being supported with our funds.
2. We affirm the relationship between evangelism and urban mission. That is to say, that we see no necessary dichotomy between the need to proclaim the Gospel to individuals and to work out the Gospel in the social context in which those individuals must live.

We would resist strongly any attempt to suggest that these two concepts of mission and evangelism can be separated either theologically or practically, in terms of the Church's ministry and the demands of the Gospel.

3. We affirm the target of urban mission as *"revitalized minority parishes under minority leadership engaging the communities in which they exist"*. This must be the primary criteria for the evaluation of any urban ministry in our major cities.
4. We affirm Venture in Mission as a valid effort in renewing urban parishes and the funding of the same. However, we would be very concerned that the implicit criteria represented in the first three affirmations would play a large role in the decisions about where these funds should go.

## Urban Ministry

5. We reaffirm our own theological statement, especially in terms of its articulation of goals for parish renewal as found on page 2 of that document.
6. We encourage mutual ministry problem solving, which relies heavily on the professional experience of our lay people, rather than clergy-centered programs.
7. We believe that the identity crisis of Black Episcopalians continues and, therefore, requires more broad-based articulation of our goals beyond parish survival.

This would include a re-emphasis on ecumenical relations with other Black churches as well as a clearer statement of our practical commitment to our Black religious heritage, without giving up our Anglican traditions or theology.

8. We reaffirm the need for self-supporting urban parishes and an end to further dependency, either on diocesan funds or any extraordinary outside support.
9. We encourage a growth of ecumenical neighborhood based programs consistent with point #7.
10. We affirm the need for new work consistent with a clear mission development strategy. By this we mean the starting of new congregations in areas that have been abandoned by the mainline churches over the last ten years.

We feel this is critical if we are to give meaning to our stewardship task and involve people in terms of their time, talent and money in the challenging world of strengthening Christian witness in our urban areas.

## BLACK WOMEN AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

There are some basic ideological differences between Black and White women. These differences make the Women's Movement not only less attractive, but a conflict of interest to many Black women who have come to terms with being Black in America. This "coming to terms" is an ongoing, difficult task, as the Black woman must resist contradictory signals from the larger community, from the Black community, and especially from Black men.

Perhaps the primary, and most overriding conflict comes in the attempt to equate racism with sexism. Sexism appears in all groups (ethnic and racial) in varying degrees and in varying manifestations. Yet somehow, White women, in their push for equality, have allowed themselves to fall into the trap of seeking "minority" status for purposes of compensatory treatment. Women are one-half or more of all populations. Therefore, the confrontation between women and men should not be that of cutting the 5% - 10% - 12% wedge of minority pie in half to accommodate women, but of cutting the whole pie circumferentially. The result of this entrapment is that a Black woman vs. White woman vs. Black man battle emerges, while the White male continues in dominant status -- limping, crying loudly to feign pain -- as he escapes unscathed.

The practice of using Black women to take care of "both minorities" would be impossible were it not for this basic fault in the Women's Movement itself. If we have misjudged that Movement, and this is purely the artifice of White males, then White women have done nothing to call attention to and address this error.

All people must set priorities, We do not buy fur coats before bread, or cadillacs before shoes -- though that may be hard for some White people to believe. In a world of racism and sexism -- which is our priority? We all know the history of racism in this country. Yet what Whites have said to Blacks over and over is: "That's enough on racism! We're tired of hearing about it." Of course, the war is not over, the battle's not won, the last skirmish isn't completed, but we have other interests which take priority over yours -- peace, ecology, feminism, nuclear development, etc., etc., etc. We have learned the hard way that the continued survival of our persons, our cultures, our souls -- are of first priority only to us -- Black folks. Black women cannot afford to desert that priority. Women in most other segments of the population are trying to reach the same status as their men. In too many instances, we as Black women are trying to get the status of our men up to ours. We cannot afford to fall into the trap of wrestling around on the bottom of the heap, holding Black men

down, while other groups scramble over us, stepping in our eyes and faces, telling us what a good job we are doing, as they claw up and stand on our heads. We have known for a long time that we must pull each other up, support each other as we stand against the racist pushes, pulls, trap doors and triplines if, in fact, we are to stand at all.

Black women are not looking to surge ahead of Black men, take their jobs, then stand alone with no support base and no trusted friend -- as a token in a racist society. We are ever cognizant of the fact that racism is not a male prerogative. Chapters and verses are available on request. Our experiences have also shown that middle-class White Movements -- male, female or intergrated -- speak to the needs of Whites, and only peripherally to Blacks.

What are these needs as they refer to Black women:

- 1) Most Black women are poor and at the bottom of the economic ladder. How does the Women's Movement relate to the issues of the empowerment, advocacy and remediation of the ills of the poor? Does the Episcopal group relate seriously to the Episcopal Urban Caucus, to the challenges of To Hear and To Heed?
- 2) The position of Black men is tenuous and insecure and we cannot afford to be at odds with them.
- 3) Great numbers of young Black men are already lost to the Black community through incarceration, dope addiction, alcoholism, or they are unskilled and in hopeless poverty.
- 4) There is a historical trust gap between Black and White women which cannot be bridged by pointing out to us how stupid or shortsighted we are for not joining you. Black women are cognizant of and constantly dealing with the fact that the cream of Black males are actively sought after by White females.
- 5) Historically, when Blacks have chosen up sides between feuding Whites, when the feud is over, the Whites go off hand in hand, while Blacks are left behind, bitter, bewildered and worse off for the battle. (Just refer to the results of any American war.)

If you feel that these points are too trivial to deserve your serious time and consideration, then there is no reason to expect more Black participation and support. You can, however, expect dissatisfaction with the use of generally collected Church funds to deal with issues that ignore our needs.

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## AN ESSAY ON THE BLACK MINISTRY

BY

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When I look back across my exposure to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church as practiced by blacks, I am filled with pride and pain. Pride because I see a witness to leadership, devotion and dedication of heroic dimensions. Pain because men of deep Christian commitment were subjected to constraint and harassment by the powers and practices of the church they served.

Being in Philadelphia, Absalom Jones comes to mind because he was both from the Philadelphia area and his trials are widely acknowledged. Through the years, pain and humiliation have been the not uncommon lot of the sons of Absalom Jones. The record shows Christian perseverance in the face of devilish obstacles. It attests to vocations to holy orders that were frustrated out of many who sought to "follow me." The record shows that those who despite every discouragement, finally reached ordination, had only begun to face "The Trouble I See". The exercise of the ministry sought so single mindedly, often meant isolation from any other Episcopal Church people, exclusive of the pastoral flock. Too often the very reason there was a mission church at all was to assure discrimination between the races. Black Episcopal Churches were typically small, ill-equipped and maintained marginally. The priests were left to their imaginative resourcefulness to

carry on and proclaim the gospel. One still shudders at the hardship faced by the pastors and their families and people as recounted by veterans of these years.

Tollie Caution had a unique vantage of the work done amongst people of color. Early in his ministerial life he worked in Philadelphia and had a first-hand exposure to an indifferent and unenthusiastic mission policy toward blacks. Later he worked as a General Administrator for the National Church office. From this post Dr. Caution could see a national attitude. From a national perspective, he could witness a pervasive pattern of discouraging actions and attitudes by our fellow church members directed toward black church members.

He could also see, despite very human cause to sputter and go out, the light of faith grew to a greatness, disproportionate to the small numbers of black Episcopalians. For example, every mode and model of ministry of the Episcopal Church has been exercised by black Episcopalians and often the successful model was pioneered by these rejected people. Blacks were "urban work" in the USA before the national office discovered the word or the work. Blacks were monks, rural circuit riders, chaplains, parish clergy, mission clergy, (foreign and domestic) teacher-priest and worker priest despite despicable exclusion from the process of education and policy.

The joyous side of the story is blacks have been "rebuffed and rejected of men" but "True to our God and True to our Native Land". Despite small numbers, blacks in the Episcopal Church are still giving out of that rich storehouse of merit and grace built up by the personal passion of our history. To add to the

already impressive use of grace by our people a new and significant contribution to the organized ministry has been the admission of black women to holy orders. Now those sisters whose contributions have been limited or obscured by their lay status will have the focus and recognition they have always deserved. It is noteworthy that a black pastor and his congregation had the insight into the unfairness of female exclusion from holy orders and served as the host site for the first ordination of women in this church

Black congregations have been the site of many contests between the power of oppression and the power of freedom. Some of our congregations are the inheritors of foundations built on sweat, tears and blood. Sacrifice was often long and painful but worthwhile, when crowned by success. There are churches of proud foundation in each highly populated area. In addition to those founded to separate blacks, there are those congregations that were left to black ministry, as the white founding population fled to the out-lands and suburbs. The black Episcopal congregations have grown. They administer the sacraments, care for the living and comfort the dying. Because of the history of their pursuit of excellence and leadership, they have drawn to themselves, those of other religious traditions as well as the unchurched. They are the natural haven of immigrating families of the Caribbean and West Indies.

At this time, the Episcopal Church as a whole is not in an ascendant position. Black congregations seem to be in a lethal crisis. The meagerness of material resources cannot be the pivotal cause. The history of our growth has always been accomplished by frugal husbandry. Although some small number

have achieved an economic status of adequacy, most blacks have remained in the modest to meager areas of income. The attractiveness of the Episcopal Church to blacks has not been economic "clubiness" so much as it has been attitudinal. The minds of families in our congregations have been set on improvement and freedom. Our congregations have aligned themselves with those causes that set as their goal the righting of the disadvantage of political and economic limitation. Aware black people have never been slow to realize that any institution that cannot be used as a means to freedom is of scant value.

The black pastors of our congregations both in their own lives and in the lives of their people, have waged a contest to achieve the glory of the gospel - the liberty of God. Almost every pastor, has been assaulted and tried by the racism that lurks in the halls of Academe. The exclusion from justice as a habitual state of life is no less the clergys' lot than the lot of any other black person.

I have set this survey context and background to my views on ministry to black people in a contemporary world because it, to me, is a vindication of any attempt at the construction of a model for ministry in PECUSA.

To me, part of the test of the value of our sacrifice and toil is the accomplishment of some of those goals and aspirations that triggered black Episcopalianism. I am at base, a product of the described historical process and still under the influence of that matrix. Recently I attended the gradua-

education of one of my people. The graduate was the fourth generation of active life in the Episcopal Church. Her family had moved from one community to another (self improvement). She was being awarded a graduate degree (education, as far as possible, as a means to social equality). Her field is social work, (responsibility to help others). If in a modern time of change, challenge and confusion a young black woman could both represent and adhere to her practiced conviction, these three themes she has built on a strong foundation. The trust of freedom for self so others might be free too, is the best of black Episcopalianism. This young woman is not alone. In church life, she is joining the major part of active church people, men and women who view the church on the parish level as a cohesive force for positive changes in the life of its members and the life of the race of black people and indeed the race of all people. This graduate, her relatives, her fellow parishioners all belong to the church because they believe it is a point of action. Almost the total active membership of the parish I serve is involved in some sort of social action. They believe in the perfectability of humanity and have committed their available time to the task. Though Christians of this quality may be small in numbers, they are potent by their distilled converted nature. This parish is not alone in a witness to faith and works that is amazing, given the numbers involved. In a word, when I look at the history of black ministry in this Church, I think it is a job well done.

Looking at its' main product, the life and people it has enabled, and one says amazing! The results demand we continue this ministry. This manifestation of the spirit is of God and its' fruits are abundant and sweet. The very presence of blacks in the church has brought many white church people to the realization of the limitation enslavement imposes on slave and master.

It is the black parishes that have given haven and refuge to white clergy when they could no longer serve their natural constituency because of a radical commitment to follow Christ. It is the black clergy and people that give legitimacy to "love those that hate you." Without Absalom Jones the early Diocese of Pennsylvania would have been nothing but a group of white men denying the humanity of a large part of the human race. In issues of peace, love, justice and liberty, the black congregation is the natural place of nurture. Change and new life can only enter through the birth date of resistance to evil. Stagnation is the sign of death and Christ has put down death forever. This is not elitism, but election to service. The soul of black folks is not theirs by merit but theirs as a gift of God. The burden of service is the lot of the rejected but the triumph of the rejected is the freedom of the worls.

Black ministry in PECUSA has been a ministry carried out by the whole people of color, ordained and non-ordained. Often those set aside by holy orders have carried out their professional duties under trying circumstances. Circumstances of hardship endured by the ordained are only personalized examples of the treatment of the whole congregation. The general contempt for

blacks by PECUSA is the reason blacks in holy orders have been regarded with such low esteem. Power and money have been the main crippling spirit of "the powers of the church". The church like the nation has thrown away more black talent than society will ever be able to afford. This has been done on both sides of the altar rail. Sometimes it appears the powers that be, have not played fairly nor been judged justly, by requiring attainment of standards thought just, because the same final standard is for all. Equity requires a contest begin at the same spot as well as end at the same destination. Despite these things, black congregations and their clergy have equaled these models and standards. Looking at the black ministry in the church brings to mind a story told of W. B. DuBois. When he was asked why there were no more PHD's among blacks, he replied, "the real question was why there were any". The mission and ministry of blacks is a gift of God and has a validity in excess of its numerical manifestations. If the church fails to respond with care and regard for blacks, by living out the clear command of the Gospel, to set the imprisoned free, the church shall face the judgment reserved for the faithless. On the other hand, blacks cannot fail in their faith and mission to serve by the testament of Love through sacrifice.

For the present and the future I see sacrifice and hardship being the lot of the black ministry in this church. The impressive financial pledges and other calls for the death of racism make interesting press. But so did forty acres and a mule. Blacks do not have the mule nor the land. The necessary

commitment does not seem to be forthcoming. For the good of our people and for the good of our oppressors, we must plan for the mission. There may be many new types of approaches but we must renew and revive the foundation and heritage we have received - the strong black congregation.

It is felt by many, any congregation of blacks without black clergy is being served at less than its best level. The black community needs leadership and spiritual support that is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. Black clergy have proved their worth in staff and administrative positions and in special ministries. However, there remains a suspicion, more has been done for the good feeling of the white power structure than for black people. Leadership needs to be known and shown in the black community. Downtown offices seem to confuse things. Leaders are called from bases of power to levels of power that prove to be only the appearance of power. The "back home folk" become confused and disillusioned by the lack of delivery. Clergy are not the only ones drawn into this dilemma. It is so easy when one is around power to think one is powerful and thereby be powerfully used.

The strong black congregation on the other hand has a potential for community based power that commands respect. Because such power is gained rather than granted, it has a higher potential for accountability. Perhaps most importantly, the model of local leadership must be black if developing talent is to be inspired and motivated. The community is enriched by the near at hand example of rewarding public service. Black youth need to know and see many models of success and authority

that have a base easily identified and related to their lives.

The immediate racial identification by young people in black

congregations is an important image builder. It is important

in things sacred and profane. Black power must be more than

a slogan. Black power must be black power empowered by their

solidarity under leadership, reflective of the black

constituency. If the Episcopal Church seriously chooses to

have a mission to black people, black clergy must be a priority

component. The period of growth and strong support in the

church among blacks, was a time of indigenous clergy. In this

time of rediscovery of roots and self, indigenous clergy are

a must if there is to be any acceptance of the church's

integrity, and authentic concern.

"Africanization" is the wave of the future. Blacks are

consciously seeking institutions that express positively the

black ethnic heritage. They are demanding black professional

input across the board. As the various experiments toward

the bright hopes of the civil rights movement fail to produce

the desired end and the sense of disillusionment and betrayal

grow, many blacks are returning to basics. Part of this

return to basics is a seeking to support the indigenous

professional.

The Africanization of the church as it touches black people

is its brightest hope. The opportunity to serve as one of the

agents in black communities is ready made for black Episcopal

parishes. This ministry will in some cases be a ministry to the

poorest of the poor but most often a wider economic spectrum

will be possible. If the parish leadership will exert itself in

matters confronting and organizing for change and the relief of the constraint of liberty, growth in numbers and influence will follow. There will always be the need for the pastoral function - visiting the sick, comforting the sorrowful, burying the dead, etc. However sick or well, the only pastoral concern ultimately that can be shown someone in chains, is to work for their liberty. The congregation and hence the ministry must work to set the captive free. Set the captive free from the grind of material want. Sometimes the want may be housing. Another time it may center on some other need - education, food, justice, etc. These are important and basic. They touch every black man and woman who walks in the shadows before the dawn of realized liberty.

Just as vital is the reinforcement of the mind and spirit. The captive must be freed from the captive image. A slave is never fully chained until the mind is convinced of the body's enslavement. The church must celebrate the redeemed humanity of black people. It is not enough to say blacks are reborn in Christ and not carry out that truth in visual affirmation. Liberation theology emphasizes the liberation of the image. The images of power, divinity, sanctity and cultural positiveness must be displayed in cultural terms that do not deny validity to the culture and aesthetic of black people.

Image building will be reflected in the liturgy and style of a black congregation. Africanization is more than just drums, spears and fabric. It is also an exultation of the social values of the traditional culture, e.g. umoja, etc. Black culture has a root to Africa but there have been many inputs and enrichments as that culture has interfaced with a

variety of experiences and other ethnic traditions and conditions.

A parish might well have American blacks, West Indians, Panamanians, Cubans, Haitians etc. The final product from this interface has a common soul but many facets. It is a deep cultural well and has only been barely utilized as a means for devotional and spiritual expression.

The opportunity for the creation of a lively church is mammoth. Black congregations have a heritage of church life based around a common community of needs, ideas and resources. This foundation is the ideal base for making an important contribution to the spread of the Kingdom of God, and the rededication of humanity.

The ministry cannot be a self-serving venue to keep alive buildings in certain spots. It can and should be used to serve the cause of liberation - the good news of God.



