



INTEGRITY/Houston Newsletter

P. O. Box 66008, Houston, Texas 77266-6008, (713) 439-1209

JANUARY, 1985

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, January 8

Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
7:30 p.m., Autry House, 6265 South Main
At this our first meeting of the year we elect our new officers. Please try to attend.

Tuesday, January 22

Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
7:30 p.m., Autry House, 6265 South Main

Tuesday, February 12

Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
7:30 p.m., Autry House, 6265 South Main

Tuesday, February 26

Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
7:30 p.m., Autry House, 6265 South Main

How precious are the hours of our earthly pilgrimage, since on them alone depends our eternity. Each moment may be used for an act of more ardent love, the principle of a closer union with God, and of a greater splendor of the beauty of God in our souls. And my minutes are numbered. Oh, the value of time.

— Cardinal Mercier

The following sermon is by The Rev. L. Paul Woodrum preached at the ninth anniversary service of Integrity New York, in the presence of the Suffragan Bishop of New Jersey at the Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy, New York, N. Y., November 8, 1984.

IN THE NAME OF GOD, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

I rejoice in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm a loyal son of the church. Indeed, I'm even an Episcopalian—generously willing to grant everyone his or her religious space, but always slightly puzzled that anyone would want to travel to heaven in protestant or papist steerage when it's possible to go Anglican first class.

However, when it come to gay issues, I find myself agreeing more and more with our atheist brothers and sisters that religion—at least the church—is the problem and not the solution.

Regardless of how ineffective it may at times seem, the church does set a moral tone and is looked to, at least for its imprimatur, if seldom its prophetic judgment, on the standards of even this secular age.

Churchfolk are expected, especially by the nonchurched and unchurched, to have higher standards. Commonly this gets expressed as, "Sure he goes to church every Sunday, but he drinks, smokes, and enjoys sex." Now, to an Episcopalian that's two minor vices and a major virtue, but to many whose understanding of the Christian doctrines of sin and grace is dim at best, it looks like sheer hypocrisy.

While I generally shrug off such criticism as the foolishness of the theologically ignorant, I find myself in an uncomfortably similar critical position when it come to how the church sees, understands, and deals with gay people.

From the church—especially from the church—I expect to find love and acceptance. From the church—especially from the church—I expect to have my integrity as a gay person acknowledged and respected. From the church—especially from the church—I expect to be seen as a fellow bearer of the image of God.

Instead, what I find is condemnation, rejection, derision, and restriction.

Consider just some of the official ways in which the church goes about expressing its attitude towards lesbians and gay men.

We have Jerry Falwell spending millions to send out vicious hate literature declaring homosexuals to be America's number one enemy.

We have the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York going into court to gain the right to discriminate against all gay people as a class.

We have the Methodist declaring they will no longer ordain "avowed" (curious word) and practicing homosexuals after January 1, 1985. (My first reaction to that is "wanna bet". My second is a bizarre mental image of bishops being besieged by applicants trying to beat the deadline. My third is one of sadness because this decision has driven Paul Abels, one of the most sensitive pastors to the gay community in New York, from his congregation rather than oppose the discipline of his church, and because hundreds of other Methodist pastors will be driven deeper into closeted hypocrisy to retain their jobs.)

And in the Episcopal Church, our bishops say it's O.K. to ordain a homosexual—heaven knows they've ordained a few already—but the person should be celibate, the old "no sex outside of marriage" argument with the catch 22 of no "marriage" for gay or lesbian couples.

Forgive me, my Lord Bishop, but may I suggest the House of Bishops take upon itself the discipline of celibacy before forcing it on others? It might give the bishops more time to be the pastors to their clergy they're called to be and so seldom are.

Many bishops strongly discourage parish priests from permitting Integrity chapters to meet in parish churches in their diocese. Few will support a gay priest if he comes under attack because of his sexual orientation. One thinks the crucifix was an early gay plot to introduce the nude male figure into the church. It took until the 20th century—and a granddaughter of Winston Churchill—to get a nude female figure on the cross: no doubt a lesbian plot!

Mind now. These are official policies and actions. These are the actions and policies which justify a thousand personal hurts—the put-downs, the firings, the excommunications, the snide remarks aimed at gay people week after week, year after year.

How can a body which proclaims a Lord who was despised, rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, itself despise, reject and give grief to so many of its daughters and sons simply on the basis of their God-given, natural sexual orientation?

Of course there are all the old rationalizations, false premises, and unwarranted assumptions. "The Bible condemns homosexuality." It doesn't, with perhaps the exception of one passage in Leviticus—part of a code rejected for Christians by the apostles at the First Ecumenical Council in Jerusalem.

"Homosexuality is unnatural." It isn't, except for heterosexuals. "Homosexuals are child molesters." Some are, but child molestation is a problem which cuts across lines of sexual orientation.

"Sex is only for procreation." Perhaps for animals, but for humans it has a far richer, relational meaning and use. "All sex outside marriage is wrong." Since when? As my college housemother used to say, "Would you but a car without test-driving it?"

The list goes on, but I suggest the real problem for the church is that it has conformed to the world and tackled the wrong issue. It keeps seeing homosexuality as the problem rather than examining its own homophobia for the hateful problem it is. The church conveniently forgets the admonition of its Lord to get the beam first out of its own eye before looking for the speck in the gay eye.

Homophobia, now homosexuality, should be the issue for the church because it is homophobia which imprisons and harms so many who are God's children.

The sad thing is that not only does the church's homophobia support society's homophobia, but so many gay church members buy into it because "holy mother church says". We are too often victims supporting our own victimization. We don't speak up when gays are put down. Sometimes we even join in the dirvision to protect ourselves. That's being a victim. We allow commissions on human sexuality to discuss homosexuality without any openly gay representation. That's being a victim. We stand by silently as gay priests are dismissed-not on morals charges—but just because they're gay. That's being a victim. We write our classified personals saying how straight-appearing we are and looking for same. That's being a victim.

Frankly, all this is sick and sinful and if we're to be the healthy, whole, and holy people God calls us to be, attitudes—both those of the church toward gays and those of lesbians and gay men toward themselves—must change.

Integrity/New York has been around for nine years. I think it's done some good, especially in helping gay Christians to accept their gayness and their faith. But may I suggest a new agenda for the next nine years? An agenda that is educational and political.

Can we any longer in good conscience encourage gay people to be reconciled to a homophobic church? Let's attack the homophobic attitudes of the church and work to raise the consciousness of gay people to recognize them.

Can we any longer in good conscience permit sexual orientation to be a barrier to ordination? Let's work through our dioceses and the General Convention to eliminate all such barriers.

I have some other things I'd like to see: e.g., a gay bishop coming out of his or her magenta-lined closet; openly gay people on vestries, commissions, and councils; and every gay and gay-supporting Episcopalian a member of Integrity; but I think the above need to be our agenda in the 80's.

Above all, it's time to stop acquiescing in our own victimization. For the church, homophobia, not homosexuals, is the problem. It's time to stop humbly submitting. It's time to start demanding, not that gay people be reconciled to the church, but that the church seek to be reconciled to those it has for too long persecuted.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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FEBRUARY, 1985

NEW OFFICERS. . . were elected at the January 11 meeting. Ray Hatch is the new Convenor. The new Assistant Convenor is Shelly Brown, the Secretary is Bill Roberts, and the Treasurer is Don Whittaker. The new officers have asked for your cooperation and your prayers during their terms of office.

YOUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED. . . for Bob Harrison, former officer of Integrity/Houston and Integrity/Los Angeles, who is recovering from an ulcer and a bad case of nerves. He is out of hospital, and taking things a bit easy for awhile. Your prayers are asked for the Editor's sep-father, Bill, who still has cancer and still does not like it one bit. Also pray for the editor, Earl Gregory, who broke his big toe while getting ready to go to church on January 27—(Honest!).

PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS. . . of David Carter, Rowland Bachman, Michael Combs, Luis Castreasana, Birdsall Theiman, and others who have been victims of A.I.D.S.

OUR CONGRATULATIONS. . . to The Rt. Rev. Timothy J. Barvin, former Bishop of Johannesburg, South Africa, and noted for his good relationship with the Gay Christian Community/Gay Christenbond in that town; is now the translated Bishop of Portsmouth, England. His successor is the Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu, who recently won the Nobel Peace Prize, and got some good television coverage. We hope that good relationships will continue between the Anglican Church in southern Africa and the G.C.C./G.C.B.

CLERICAL BAN LIFTED . . The ban on Hymn 243, "I sing a song of the saints of God", was lifted at the January 11 meeting. We sang the whole song without so much as a snicker. Well, the last time we tried it, the Lutherans were there and they were really the ones who broke up the congregation.

BISHOP APPLAUDED. . . We must laud our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Maurice M. Benitez, Bishop of Texas, for his courageous position taken in the recent election regarding the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the City of Houston's non-discrimination ordinance. He quite rightly pointed out that a vote against the ordinance was a vote for discrimination, and Episcopalians are committed to fight against discrimination against all persons. This is the same concern that has always motivated us in the fight against slavery, racial discrimination, prejudice, bigotry, and other social evils. To get a sense of where Episcopalians stand, see the Prayer for the Oppressed in the Prayer Book (BCP p. 826), or, for the unreconciled, the Prayer for Social Justice on page 44 of the 1928 Prayer Book. It would be quite impossible to profess the faith contained in these prayers and support public policy which could discriminate against homosexual persons. We do congratulate the Bishop on his very public posture in favor of righteousness. That is, after all, a meet, right, and a bounden duty of a Bishop, and we are most pleased that our Bishop chose the morally correct position.

CALENDAR

February 12, Chapter Eucharist, Autry House, 6265 Main, 7:30 p.m.

February 18, Executive Committee Meeting, 5215 Hazard, No. 4, 7:30 p.m. (all members are welcomed — these are the meetings where the Chapter's business is transacted).

February 25, Chapter Eucharist, Autry House, 6265 Main, 7:30 p.m.

EDITORIAL

We have just endured an election that has polarized this city and traumatized the gay community. It seems that all those bugbears of hate and rejection that attack our personhood and deny our status as Children of the Living God—bugbears that we like to pretend really don't affect us—have come out of their closets and proved the almost palpable reality of that hate.

It is a hate that I have felt first-hand. The day before the election I witnessed an anti-referendum rally led by black ministers on the steps of City Hall. These good "Christian" people actually had placards that contained the words "fairy" and "queer". And worse, these placards were supplied by one of the ministers, a man who certainly should know what oppression is all about, a man who as an adult has undoubtedly been called "boy" and "nigger".

I was appalled as I walked away from this scene. I was appalled that ignorance and hate were that strong and that they were directed towards me.

I also knew as I walked away from this pathetic demonstration that these people and their seemingly innumerable adherents could not really hurt me, that they could not take away my self-respect, my dignity, my integrity unless I gave it to them. I came away knowing that I have been accepted by God in His well-beloved Son and that I have been accepted and loved and supported by his gay daughters and sons and many others within the Church, and that, yes, I love and accept myself.

I also came away with the realization that I was morally superior to these people. This gave me no small satisfaction, at least until I realized that everyone at that rally had walked away with the same air of self-righteousness.

Jesus had a word for the professionally self-righteous of His day: "Whores and tax collectors shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven before you." I do not mention all this to wallow in our common sinfulness. I mention it because Jesus proposed an extremely distasteful remedy: "Pray for those who persecute you and spitefully use you." We are told in no uncertain terms that we must forgive our enemies from the very bottom of our hearts.

All this of course, does not mean that we should acquiesce to Evil, that we should in any way lay down and allow ourselves to be called "fairy" or "queer" or in any way allow our dignity as persons to be trampled on or denied. It does mean that we can identify with Him who was despised and rejected and yet said from the ignomy of the cross, "Father, forgive." It does mean that we can enjoy the liberty of being the sons and daughters of the Living God, something that those who are full of hate and fear can never know. It does mean that we can be the sign of God's love to an often sad and lonely world.

It also means that Goodness is greater than Evil: I was confronted by hate at a rally and in it realized my own dignity and worth. At that same rally I was confronted by my own self-righteousness and realized the power of love and forgiveness. May this election for all its putridness and deviousness only serve to reinforce our own sense of dignity and worth and draw us closer together in love and mutual support.

—Ray Hatch,
Convenor

* * * * *

Recently there was another election—hopefully less notorious—that elected me Convenor of Integrity/Houston. I want to add a few words about my hopes for our organization in this new year. Above all, I want us to continue to grow as a community of love and support. I want us to, in so doing, become a sign of God's love and our own dignity to those within and without the Church, especially to those who need it the most.

Specifically, I would like for us to do the following:

—As members and as a community, to examine and define our goals, objectives and mission.

—With those things defined, to increase our attendance and our membership.

—To recognize, develop and employ the talents of all members.

—To provide a ministry, both social and spiritual, to all members of the Community.

Each of these specifics contain at least a variant of the word 'membership'. These are not things that I would not even dream of accomplishing by myself. Nor are they tasks for the Executive Committee. Rather, they are things to be done by the whole membership.

So please, please give us your help and support. I know that all the officers of Integrity/Houston join me in making this request. Please let any of us know of your ideas and hopes for this organization. And please feel free to attend Executive Committee meetings.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be your Convenor. Please pray for me, that I will do the good job that you deserve.

—Ray Hatch

EDITOR NAMED. . . The Board has elected Earl Gregory as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Publications and Editor of the Newsletter. If you have some comments, he can be reached at (713)526-0555, or at P. O. Box 66243, Houston, Texas 77266-6243. Articles, editorial commentary, and art work are solicited. Other Standing Committees are open at this time, so if you are interested in programs, Clergy contact, outreach, or inter-faith relations, just contact any officer.

MORE ON ELECTIONS. . . No human rights issue is ever decided at an election. They did not hold a general election to free the slaves, to give the vote to women, to de-segregate the schools, to declare independence from England or from Mexico, or even as far back as Magna Carta. Elections do not effect changes, political processes effect changes. When we saw the hatred and venom from the forces of evil, we probably should have quietly backed off for now, and let the matter drop. Now we have egg on our faces, having lost the election by a 4:1 margin. It will be years before the damage is repaired. Sure, we can probably 'get' the people who lied to us and betrayed us, but that will take time. City Council sees the fear and hatred in the city, and they see that we cannot win an election when our rights are on the line. G.P.C. has lost a heck of a lot of the clout it once had, and it is now 'open season' on gay people. Let us rebuild our power base carefully, and reguild our influence.

RETREAT TALK. . . There is some consideration to a one-day retreat for this chapter of Integrity, some time toward the end of March. Further discussions at the Executive Committee meeting on February 18. Please attend.

NATIONAL LIVES. . . "Integrity News & Notes" for December was actually published, and it is a right nice looking magazine. If you have not gotten a copy, check with the Treasurer to see about the status of your national membership.

SORRY WE'RE LATE THIS MONTH—Diocesan Council got in the way!



AUGUST 1985

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sunday, September 1 Brunch at Fonda San Miguel
Alabama and Shepherd, 1:00 p.m.
- Monday, September 9 Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
Autry House Gallery, 7:30 p.m.
6265 S. Main
- Monday, September 16 Executive Committee Meeting
Autry House Gallery, 7:30 p.m.
6265 S. Main. All members are
welcome and urged to attend.
- Monday, September 23 Fall Kick-off! Eucharist at
7:30 followed by Pot Luck
Supper. Autry House Gallery
6265 S. Main

GENERAL CONVENTION

There's still time to support Thom and Larry, your I/H delegates to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Anaheim, California in early September. They have volunteered to work in the Integrity Booth and they need our support. We will take up a special donation at our next two meetings for their travel fund, or you can send us a check payable to Integrity/Houston: General Convention. Thanks.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Family illness and increased job responsibilities have made it necessary for Integrity/Houston Convenor Ray Hatch to resign his office. Please remember Ray and his parents, Mildred and Ray Sr. in your prayers. Earl Gregory has also resigned his position as Newsletter Editor to take a much deserved break after many years of service to I/H. Our thanks to both Ray and Earl for their efforts. New officers to fill these positions were appointed at the August board meeting and confirmed at the following general meeting. Shelley Brown is now Convenor, with Thom Baynum taking her place as Co-convenor. Maryann O'Brien is Newsletter Editor and chair of the publicity standing committee. These three, with "old faithfuls" Bill Roberts (Secretary) and Don Whittaker (Treasurer) make up Integrity/Houston's board. William Stevens is making his ongoing support official by agreeing to act as newsletter "publisher."

FALL PROGRAM PLANNING

The next few months should be exciting ones for Integrity. Based on the results of this summer's questionnaire, we are planning several discussion workshops and inviting guest speakers to share their ideas with us. Here is a tentative schedule of the special activities coming up:

September: Fall Kick-off

Monday, September 23: Eucharist at 7:30 followed by a Pot Luck Supper, announcement of the fall program schedule and guest discussion leaders, and delegates' report on the General Convention.

October: Homosexuality in the Bible

Where is it? What did they think of it? What do we think of it? Can historical perspective and linguistic sophistication shed any light on this issue? A reading list will be distributed in September so we can have an informed discussion.

November: Gays and Lesbians in the Church

How do we see ourselves in our parishes? How do our parishes see us? (or do they?) What restrictions do the clergy have to operate under when dealing with Gays and Lesbians in their parish? To what extent can the clergy minister to our needs? How are our needs different from those of our straight sisters and brothers? (or are they?)

December: Homosexual Relationships

What are the most important factors in a relationship? How can we work towards committed, lasting relationships? How can we get the support we need from each other and from the larger community?

INTEGER: "a complete entity; whole"

We're human, Christian, and gay. We face the same emotional, ethical and spiritual questions as our straight brothers and sisters, and like many of them we seek as Christians to find answers within the framework of our faith. As gays we often find that our parishes, no matter how supportive, don't speak to the ways these issues arise in our lives. So what can we do about it? For one thing, we can talk to each other. I/H has voted to start a support/study group which will meet every Sunday afternoon starting late in September. We'll use books and speakers as takeoff points for discussion, followed by Evensong. Topics and worship will be shaped by the group, but we expect to focus on spirituality and sexuality as a general theme for the fall.

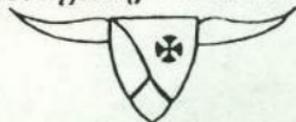
INTEGRITY SOCIALIZES

Episcopalian "good taste" is legendary. I/H is no exception. Cultural events and brunches head the list. Fourteen members and friends of Integrity and QUICHE picnicked through "Chaplin" in the Park, and on July 28 several of us went to Eddington's for brunch. We decided to make this a monthly fete! The first Sunday in the month we'll be "brunching" at various cafes around town. September 1st will find us at Fonda San Miguel at Shepherd and Alabama (next to The Book Stop). Come at 1:00 and bring your friends.

WARDROBE FEVER HITS I/H

It happens the second and fourth Monday of every month. You stare blankly into your closet and mutter "I simply don't have a thing to wear to the Integrity meeting tonight!" Well, friends, your troubles are over! We have designed the ultimate in Integrity meeting wear. Picture, if you will, a "Hanes 50-50 Blend" T-Shirt in a bright (yet tasteful) shade of red. Heads will turn when you walk into your next Integrity function and you'll be greeted with "oohs" and "aahs" by the dazzled crowd. How much would you expect to pay for this? But wait, there's more! You will also receive the new I/H logo (below) tastefully printed in black above the left breast of this delightful chemise. One might expect to pay \$500, \$1000 or more, but for an unlimited time only, I/H will sell them to you for the low, low price of only EIGHT DOLLARS! This offer is not available in stores or shops, so act now and talk to Shelley or Thom about getting your own I/H-T. You won't want this shirt to stay in the closet!

integrity-houston



INTEGRITY/HOUSTON QUESTIONNAIRE

Many thanks to those who filled out the recent questionnaire. The purpose was to get a consensus of what our members see as Integrity's mission and how to best carry it out. With this in mind, it is clear that the questionnaire was a great success.

The response to "Issues and Concerns" shows a desire, as Episcopalians, to explore sexual orientation as it affects the individual, the Church, and the community as a whole. Responses indicated a desire to explore the harmony of being gay and Christian, a desire to bring the spirit of Christianity to bear on our sexual orientation, and a desire for a place to "stop compartmentalizing our lives" by integrating our faith with our lifestyles. There was also a general agreement to broaden the scope of Integrity to include outreach, community projects, and activities with other gay/lesbian religious groups. Perhaps this is a natural outgrowth of a more secure self-understanding.

Those areas of greatest interest under "Programs and Activities" were: Homosexuality in the Bible, Homosexual Relationships, Psychological Issues, and Spirituality and Sexuality. Generally speaking, those issues that are addressed by other groups like GPC, Parents-FLAG, KS-Aids, Lambda AA, etc., did not raise the same amount of interest as the obviously religious or spiritual concerns. This does not necessarily rule out our interest as a group in those areas, but it does provide an excellent focus for the question "What does Integrity offer to gay Episcopalians that no other group can?"

Under "Format of Meetings," we generally agreed that regular Eucharist is desirable as a focus, but that Evening Prayer and Compline have a place too. That's it for the recap but just the beginning of the implications. Thanks again for all your ideas. Now come to the meetings and watch it happen!

ON GHANDI

Two English homosexuals once came to Gandhi - this was in the 1930's - and asked him what he thought about their relationship. After questioning them for a bit, Gandhi fell silent for a short time, and then said, "The greatest gift God gives us is another person to love." Placing the two men's hands in each other's, he then quietly and smilingly asked, "Who are we to question God's choice?"

(reprinted from The Dig/In Voice)

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INTEGRITY/HOUSTON

A MINISTRY OF GAY & LESBIAN EPISCOPALIANS AND FRIENDS

JUNE 1985

CONFERENCE REPORT

The Southern Regional Conference of Integrity was held in San Antonio May 24-26. Several members of Integrity/Houston, including Shelley Brown, co-convenor, Bill Roberts, secretary, and Maryann O'Brien were among the forty people present, making this the largest regional conference held. The San Antonio Chapter was host to Bob Armstrong, Integrity's National President; Fred Mahaffey, Southern Regional Director, and delegates from eight chapters: Washington, D.C., Richmond, Atlanta, Tulsa, West Texas, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.

The Conference began Friday night with a get-together at Papa Bear's where old and new friends met. The Reverend Ted Boya of Houston celebrated the opening Eucharist at St. David's Saturday morning. In his sermon, Ted stressed the importance of staying in the Church and working for understanding and acceptance; as he said, we need the Church, but the Church also needs us. The program included four excellent workshops: "Evangelizing the gay community" by Robert Williams of Dallas, "Issues before the General Convention" by Daniel Hyland of Atlanta, "Setting up a speakers' bureau" by Fred Mahaffey of Richmond, and "Marketing your Integrity Chapter" by Robert Parks of San Antonio.

Fred Mahaffey, Regional Director, led the business meeting. After informal reports from each of the chapters present, there were reports from Daniel Hyland on Integrity's presence at the Anaheim General Convention and from Bob Armstrong on the state of the national organization, both of which are detailed elsewhere in this newsletter. Proposed bylaws for the region, substantially the same as those adopted recently by the other three regions, were brought before the convention, which voted to recommend that the region adopt them. The convention also recommended the establishment of regional dues in the amount of \$5, in addition to the \$15 national dues. Both recommendations will be brought to the vote in the next few months. The last item of business was the election of a new regional director. Fred Mahaffey will not be running again, for which both the convention and Bob Armstrong expressed regrets. Nominations will be solicited from the membership this summer, with the election in August and announcement of the new director in September. The meeting closed with a round of applause for Fred's efforts for us this past year.

After a Mexican banquet by the River Walk, the delegates sampled San Antonio's night life. The conference ended with Sunday worship services and a poolside barbeque. It was a great conference and everyone is looking forward to the next one in Washington, D.C. Thanks, San Antonio!

GOOD NEWS FROM INTEGRITY NATIONAL

Integrity/National President Bob Armstrong brought good news to the Southern Regional Conference in San Antonio. Integrity/National has substantially reduced its debts and expects to be running "in the black" by the end of 1985. A membership renewal campaign has resulted in an 18% increase in membership over the last few months. A change in publishing houses will half the cost (and maybe even the time) needed for newsletter publication. Fundraising efforts are producing \$3.00 for every \$1.00 spent, an outstanding record since on the average, fundraisers only gain \$2.00 for every \$1.00 spent. Congratulations and thanks to Bob and the Integrity/National staff for their efforts for us.

INTEGRITY'S MISSION

Integrity is the only voice that speaks to the Episcopal Church on the national level on matters of concern to Gay and Lesbian Episcopalians. Integrity is a Civil Rights organization within the Church. It is a membership organization. It is also an advocacy organization working with patience, concern, and love to eradicate injustice within the Church with respect to the Church's treatment of Gays and Lesbians in her midst. As such it can never be silent in the face of injustice, nor compromise principle for seemingly tolerant acceptance and support. Integrity's mission is not to get the Church or a particular Bishop or Diocese in the Church to like us. That is not important. Integrity's mission is to demand that the Church deal justly with its Gay Sons and Lesbian Daughters. Integrity must speak out and up, demanding that the Church be true to her redeemer by being just to the least of these her children. It must constantly remind the Church that there will never be any reconciliation whatsoever for any person or group of persons without justice. There has never been and there never will be.

(reprinted from the National Newsletter, Integrity News & Notes,
Vo. 2, No. 1, March 1985)

NEW INTEGRITY BROCHURE

Integrity, Inc. has printed a new brochure that replaces all other previous brochures. A sample copy is available at no charge from Integrity, Inc. at 235 W. Twelfth St., New York, NY 10014. Or come to an Integrity/Houston meeting and pick one up!

INTEGRITY'S PRESENCE AT THE GENERAL CONVENTION IN SEPTEMBER

At its last convention, Integrity/National resolved that its highest priorities were to work to remove obstacles to the ordination of gays and lesbians and obstacles to gay unions. Integrity's presence at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Anaheim, California in September, 1985 will be focused on increasing general support and understanding of our goals and on supporting positive efforts being made in the larger community. Among these are the gay or lesbian union ceremony proposals being developed by the Diocese of California and the National Standing Committee on the Liturgy, as well as a resolution from the Diocese of Michigan which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The Integrity/National General Convention Committee has prepared a position paper in the form of an open letter to the General Convention, and Integrity/National will also have a booth on the convention floor and a large hospitality suite in the main convention hotel.

Your support is needed. Chapters and individuals are urged to contribute to cover the estimated \$18,000 total cost for preparing for the convention and maintaining a presence there. \$12,000 has already been raised throughout the country; we need to do our part too. Please send your contributions, made out to "Fund for Integrity" to Kim Byham, President of the Fund for Integrity, 4 Bogardus Place, New York, NY 10040.

INTEGRITY IN THE PARK

On Friday night, July 19th, Miller Outdoor Theater is presenting its summer musical "Chaplin." Come join your fellow Episcopalians on the hillside at 6:30. Bring a pot-luck dish, something to drink, and a blanket to sit on. Look for us under the sign of the "I."

INTEGRITY IN THE PARK - PART II

Last month the Montrose Symphony Band gave a concert in the Miller Theater called "The Teddy Bears' Picnic." Four members of Integrity/Houston (and their Teddy Bears) walked off with first prize and three runner-up prizes. Other Integrity members (minus Bears) were also seen dotting the hillside.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Integrity/Houston wants to know what you want in Integrity. You'll find a questionnaire attached to this newsletter. The results will help us determine what direction you think Integrity/Houston should take. Please take the time to fill it out and mail it in, or better yet, why not bring it to the next meeting?

CALENDAR

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Sunday, June 23 | Walk for Unity, Cherryhurst Park 1:00 |
| Monday, June 24 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Autry House Gallery (upstairs) 6265 S. Main |
| Monday, July 8 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Autry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main |
| Monday, July 15 | Executive Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Place announced at preceding meeting.
All members are welcome and urged to attend. |
| Friday, July 19 | Pot-luck Picnic at Miller Theater, 6:30 p.m.
followed by the musical "Chaplin." |
| Monday, July 22 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Autry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main |
| Monday, August 12 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Autry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main |
| Monday, August 19 | Executive Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Place announced at preceding meeting.
All members are welcome and urged to attend. |
| Monday, August 26 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Autry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main |

INTEGRITY/HOUSTON QUESTIONNAIRE

I. General information

Sex: Female Male

Age: 20-30 30-40 40-50 50+

Are you currently a dues-paid member of Integrity? Yes No

Would you like to remain on the Integrity/Houston mailing list? Yes No

II. Issues and Concerns

What do you see as Integrity's ministry? (e.g. personal outreach to the gay/lesbian community, community projects, spiritual/personal support groups, activities with other gay/lesbian religious groups, education, etc.)

III. Programs and Activities

Please indicate your interest in the following program topics:

* = very interested + = interested 0 = not interested

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuality in the Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Being a gay parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homophobia | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol and drug abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality and sexuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents and family | <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuality and the law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Political issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological issues (aging, coming out, self-image, suicide, death, etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuality in a heterosexual relationship | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please list any others: | |

IV. Suggestions about the format of Integrity meetings (e.g. regular Eucharist, social evenings with pot luck dinners, outings, speakers, study sessions, etc.)

V. Please list any ways you would be willing to support Integrity/Houston (committee work, etc.)

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JULY, 1985

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Monday, July 22 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Atry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main |
| Sunday, July 28 | Brunch at Eddington's, 6121 Hillcroft 1:00 p.m. |
| Monday, August 12 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Atry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main |
| Monday, August 19 | Executive Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Place announced at preceding meeting.
All members are welcome and urged to attend. |
| Monday, August 26 | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Atry House Gallery, 6265 S. Main. |

* * * * *

GENERAL CONVENTION

From September 7 - 14 the Episcopal General Convention will be held in Anaheim, California. One of our members has generously offered to match travel funds from Integrity/Houston so that we can send two people to work in the Integrity Booth. This is an extremely important witness to the ministry of Integrity in the context of the whole church, and we are deeply grateful to our donor. Anyone wishing to participate in this travel funding may send a check made out to Integrity/Houston, Attn: General Convention, P. O. Box 66008, Houston, Texas 77266-6008.

MEETING THE BISHOP

On February 12, 1985, two members of Integrity/Houston, William Stevens and Bob Harrison, met with the Rt. Rev. Maurice M. Benitez, Bishop of Texas, in his office at Christ Church Cathedral. This was the first direct dialog held with Bishop Benitez by Integrity/Houston. Bob and William expressed the Chapter's deep appreciation for Bishop Benitez' affirmative public position during the recent referendum on the rights of gay people to have a job with the City of Houston. They also explained the purpose and goals of the ministry of Integrity/Houston, and of the national organization. Bishop Benitez was most cordial and receptive in this opening meeting, and the Chapter looks forward to continuing dialog and expanding its ministry to and for gay Episcopalians in the Diocese of Texas.

INTEGRITY RETREAT

Mark your calendars!! Plans are being made for a retreat sometime in January sponsored jointly by the Integrity Chapters in San Antonio, Dallas, Houston, and the members at large in these areas. If you're interested, please come to the next Integrity/Houston meeting and give us your suggestions. We enjoyed ourselves so much at the Southern Regional Conference in San Antonio that we're looking forward to another great weekend with all our Integrity friends.

THE BISHOP'S FUND

Recently Bishop Benitez sent out an appeal for contributions to the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in Austin. Integrity/Houston has shown its support for this important ministry by sending a donation to this fund.

INTEGRITY QUESTIONNAIRE

In the June issue of the Integrity/Houston Newsletter, you received a Questionnaire that we hope you have now sent in. If you haven't, would you please take a minute to fill it out and get it to us by the first of August so we can begin to plan for the fall. At our last meeting we decided to concentrate on worship and social activities for the rest of the summer, then begin our series of programs, etc. in September. Your ideas and suggestions will help us make the rest of the year an exciting one for Integrity.

INTEGRITY/HOUSTON DOES GAY PRIDE WEEK

Integrity/Houston members took an active part in the many activities scheduled during this year's Gay Pride Week. Integrity members' support of the many activities points out clearly our pride in the gay community and also the range of interests and talents we have available within our own group. Also, the events were just plain fun and it was nice to be able to work with and socialize with friends whom we see only at Integrity meetings.

Perhaps the largest single concentration of Integrity members was at the Second Annual Walk for Unity on Sunday, June 24, when several members poured lemonade at our Integrity Booth and several others completed the 5-mile walk. Monday evening's Montrose Art Alliance exhibit, "Affections: a matter of definition" also had a healthy representation of Integrity members. The exhibit included a wide range of artistic expression, from photography and painting to instrumental and vocal selections by area artists. Always a focal point of the week, Houston Interfaith Alliance's National Day of Remembrance Memorial Service at MCCR provided an important reminder that gay pride begins with ourselves and extends to our relationship to the gay community and community as a whole. The service was inspiring and insightful and tended to underscore much of what we're focusing on within

our own chapter where we're coming to an understanding of how we can incorporate self-growth with our mission to the Episcopal Church and to the community at large. The Interfaith Alliance Memorial Service helped to focus on just such a mission.

Saturday's Montrose Symphonic Band concert was a highpoint of the week. The band did an excellent job of building on the "Alive With Pride" theme with the help of local as well as Dallas talent. The culminating event of Gay Pride Week was the parade on Sunday and the "After Dark in the Park" rally at Spotts Park. If you attended the parade, it was hard to miss a couple of familiar Integrity faces winding their way down the parade route. The rally at Spotts Park altered the traditional political emphasis to concentrate on "Celebration" with music and fireworks.

As always, Gay Pride Week gave us a chance to see old friends and meet new ones, to celebrate our gay lifestyle, and to express that lifestyle through the diversity of artistic, religious and social interests. After attending several events, faces became familiar since there definitely is a "core" of interested, involved people in our community. It's always great to see just how many "core" people are also those with whom we share our religious and spiritual interests through Integrity.

THE BLESSING OF RELATIONSHIPS

A Study Document prepared for the Lesbian and Gay Interfaith Council of Minnesota

by

William D. Phillips (Dignity/Twin Cities) and Leo Treadway (Wingspan—St. Paul Reformation Church)

Before we address the matter of blessing we are obliged to say at least a few things about relationships. The exact beginning of any relationship is difficult to determine by any objective standard. However we can say, with some confidence, that a relationship comes into existence when a Self-Other connection is established. Relationships are unique in that no two are exactly the same, and they are organic, that is to say they are subject to, and evocative of, change. They have beginnings (however arbitrary), middles and ends. And while relationships are dependent on the Self-Other connection, they also offer unique potentialities that would otherwise not exist, and to the extent that they are recognized and brought to fruition, a relationship can be seen as having a life of its own, albeit a symbiotic one. With these

points in mind let us examine a model relationship, based on love, that may culminate in the celebration of the blessing rite.

Love is among the many potentials present in a relationship, and it can be recognized, expressed, and experienced in many different ways. As the relationship matures it is probable, even likely, that this love will pass from being either accidental or only a potential to being a constitutive element of the relationship. As this love broadens and deepens we, and the couple, may understand that it is integral to the relationship, both regarding its maintenance and continuation. At this point that element of love may be understood as transcendent, i.e., its whole is greater than the sum of its parts; and therefore becomes a motivating element itself in

the relationship as well as evocative, summoning the relationship to greater heights. As the couple comes to understand their relationship is rooted in love, they may also come to understand their relationship as well as their transcendental love is a sign of God's grace in their lives. This awareness might prompt that couple in making a public proclamation of their love and the relational covenant they now enjoy. With this brief introduction it is now appropriate to examine the rite of blessing.

In considering a "Blessing of Relationship" there are several questions that must be immediately addressed: 1) Who does it? 2) What is done? 3) Who witnesses it? 4) Where is it done? 5) What does it mean and why do we do it?

1. In answering the question "Who does the blessing?" it is necessary to make a distinction between who is the source of blessing and who performs the ritual action. The source of blessing is unquestionably God, who is the origin of all blessings. "Blessing is ultimately due to God's good will. (It) has to do with the entire life span of persons: their birth and growing up, with all that they experience and undergo, with aging and dying. God, in (this) all embracing goodness, sustains and envelops with care those called to life. It was love that gave rise to God's creative act; with the same love God showers blessings on all beings that develop and grow. . .

According to the biblical concept, it is possible for one to situate himself or herself in the stream of blessings that flow from God, their source, and through prayers, wishes, and requests, to apply this beneficent power to others." (The Rev. Thomas G. Simons) Clearly then, it is the people who perform the ritual and it is God who does or bestows the blessing. It is also important to note that, while over the years we have tended to place far greater importance on a blessing performed by a minister, we must now stress that all who believe in God have this capacity to recognize and invoke the sacred.

2. In regards to "What is done?", two elements are central to blessings: first is the element of praise; it is only after this that there comes the supplication for God's favors. This is true for all rites of blessing. Specifically in the "Blessing of Relationship," the individuals involved praise and thank God for the gifts of each other and their relationship, and then ask God, in faith, to continue to bless them in their love for each other, (which has become for them a sign of God's loving covenant.) In this particular type of blessing, called an "Invocation", that which is blessed retains its natural designation; It is not set apart or designated to the realm of the sacred from that time on. The object of the blessing remains the same as before, but our awareness of what it means changes. As a result, there is a renewed awareness of the presence of God in everyday life and in the everyday world about us.

3. The role of WITNESS most properly belongs to the community, particularly the faith community, for it is out of the community that the individuals have come to form their relationship. This role has been preserved in varying degrees in the liturgical actions of many denominations. With the advent of a clerical caste, the community has come to be represented by its minister. While this representational role is an important function there is another role that more properly belongs to the minister than to the community. The minister also may be understood as a symbol of God's presence and participation in the ritual. God's symbolic presence is essential to all communal celebrations, but it is made even more obvious when the community acts as its own representative rather than through a minister. Therefore, the "Blessing of Relationship" is most appropriately performed in the presence of both the community, which affirms the relationship and pledges its support, and the minister, who does the same on behalf of God.

4. The question of a PROPER PLACE for any liturgical action has a much broader application these days. On the one hand, we have seen in recent years a reawakening of the idea that the whole of creation is sacred, and so any place would be acceptable. On the other hand, there has been a long tradition and great importance placed on having any sacred action performed in that place set aside for worship, since it is the sacred space, and therefore an appropriate setting. It is of interest to note here that the word "church" which originally meant "the people" has come to be applied to the building where the people gather. Consequently, "church" has come to be a symbol of the community itself. Regardless, the blessing is neither added to, nor detracted from, by the place setting.

5. The MEANING or intent of a blessing rite is to lift up a covenanted relationship before the community as a sign of God's active participation in everyday life. It is hoped that with the community's love and support, a relationship will continue to be a sign of God's blessings. This is part of the reason why we bless relationships. But we also have this because it is appropriate to invite God's blessing on two persons who are seeking to live in a loving and life-giving way in relationship to one another. It is especially important for Gay and Lesbian persons to be surrounded by the love and support of the Christian community as they ask for the blessing of God upon themselves and their relationships because they are often the specific and undeserving victims of prejudice and discrimination.

It is obvious that this rite of "Blessing of Relationship" has some connection with the institutionalized rites of religion and society. While the "Blessing of Relationship" is not intended to subvert these institutions, some of the connections have become a source of

confusion and homophobic reactions. The "Blessing of Relationship" basically calls us to understand and apply some of our oldest theological understandings in a new and fresh manner. It also calls us to reclaim a meaningful part of life and to view it from a theological and sacred perspective. In this regard, it is helpful to recall recent work by John Boswell who suggests that the blessing of relationships, in fact, was viewed similarly at an earlier period in church history. The most obvious socio-religious rite with which the "Blessing of Relationship" has a connection is that of marriage. Both rites have an aspect of contracting or covenanting between two individuals and may even share some of the same specifics, but they are definitely not mutually inclusive. One of the most significant differences is the contractual aspect of Marriage, which is particularly endemic to the United States. Our society views the rite of Marriage as both a religious and legal act. However in certain countries, particularly those with a strong anticlerical bias, the legal and religious functions have been separated. In many parts of the world the signing of the marriage license (a legal document) is done in the presence of a civil official, while the religious "wedding" is performed a day or two later in the context of the worshipping community. While this practice is not generally the norm in the United States, it is not unheard of here. Keeping these distinctions in mind, the "Blessing of Relationship" as we understand it, is not a legal contract but is a spiritual covenant. In the aspects of mutual love and covenant, (an oath or pledge of commitment to another, before God and the community), it is quite similar to Marriage. What we said earlier about relationships and the presence and growth of love within them applies to both same-gender and mixed-gender couples.

The "Blessing of Relationship" is not to be construed as being instituted by Christ such as a Sacrament is viewed in the Roman Catholic tradition. From this perspective, the rite of "Blessing of Relationship" depends on the disposition of the individuals and the intercessory prayers of the community. Since the rite itself does not possess "inevitable effectiveness" it does not confer sanctifying grace directly but it does dispose the individual to its reception. There is obviously a great need for further education and exploration concerning the "Blessing of Relationship", its needs, expression, and its effects as well as its relationship to the American cultural understanding of Marriage. We have only scratched the surface in this paper. In summation, it is our opinion that the "Blessing of Relationship" is an event that has obvious religious and theological underpinnings. It does have a place in the worshipping community and does have a right, as all religious events have such a right, to be celebrated in the sacred space of the community. There is much work that needs to be done, but one thing is clear; whether we invoke such a blessing or not, the judgment is not ours, but God's.

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OCTOBER, 1985

OCTOBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday, October 6 | — | Brunch at Missouri Street Cafe,
1117 Missouri Street, 1:00 p.m. |
| Monday, October 14 | — | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
Autry House Gallery,
6265 S. Main, 7:30 p.m. |
| Monday, October 21 | — | Executive Committee Meeting
Autry House Gallery,
6265 S. Main, 7:30 p.m.
All members are welcome and urged
to attend. |
| Monday, October 28 | — | Chapter Eucharist and Meeting
Autry House Gallery,
6265 S. Main, 7:30 p.m.
Program: "Homosexuality in the Bible." |

NEW PRESIDING BISHOP

On September 10, Bishop Edmond Lee Browning from Hawaii was elected as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Browning was born in Corpus Christi and served for many years both in the U. S. and abroad. Described as a strong liberal, he is an advocate of the civil rights of homosexuals and the ordination of women, and an opponent of the nuclear arms race and racial injustice. He is also a personal friend of Bishop Tutu of South Africa. When interviewed at the General Convention just after his election, Bishop Browning reaffirmed his commitment to support the ordination of women and homosexuals to the priesthood. "I hope to offer a ministry of servanthood for the whole life of the church. I make that commitment with the greatest humility. I pray I will hold to it and pray I can keep it." We ask God's blessing on Bishop Browning's ministry and remember him in our prayers.

*(from The New York Times,
September 11, 1985)*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY INTEGRITY

This month marks the ninth anniversary of Integrity/Houston. Help us make this our most successful year ever. Renew your membership, come to the meetings and bring a friend, get involved in our fall programs and support us with your prayers and donations. We even have Biblical sanction: "God will withhold no good thing from those who walk with Integrity."

Psalm 84:11

INTEGRITY/HOUSTON WELCOMES INTEGRITY/AUSTIN

On August 11, members of Integrity/Houston and Integrity/San Antonio drove to Austin to lend their support to the formation of a new Integrity Chapter there. It was a most ecumenical gathering with 27 people from Dignity/Austin, Austin MCC, Gay and Lesbian Unitarians, a Baptist, Austin Lambda, Austin Lesbian/Gay Political Caucus, and the Waterloo Counselling Center in addition to the San Antonio and Houston people. We all wish Integrity/Austin well as they begin their new ministry, and judging from the excitement at their first meeting, this will indeed be a strong chapter. If you would like to offer your support to our sisters and brothers there, or be added to their mailing list, please write them c/o Integrity/Austin, P.O. Box 180272, Austin, Texas, 78718. Keep them in your prayers as they carry out Christ's work of reconciliation.

SUNDAYS OF FOOD, FUN, AND FELLOWSHIP

Our Sunday brunches are fast becoming the social event of Houston. Twenty people munched brunch together in September, one of us coming from as far away as Chicago! Join us on October 6th at the Missouri Street Cafe and bring your friends. And don't forget our study/support group that meets every Sunday at Autry House from 3:00 to 4:30.

FROM THE CONVENOR:

GENERAL CONVENTION: YOU WERE THERE, as Walter Cronkite would have said. You *were* there, through your prayers for the convention and for Integrity's presence, and through the contributions from you that helped finance the trip for our two Integrity/Houston representatives —and you made a difference. Thom and Larry are back, exhausted but full of Convention news and ideas for our chapter; we'll be hearing much from them at our Kick-off on September 23 and in our next Newsletter. Here are a few impressions from my own oneday visit to the Convention:

— At the Committee hearing on the AIDS Resolution, which later was adopted unanimously by the Convention, a rector from Albuquerque testified that his congregation lines up every week to take the common cup behind a young parishioner with AIDS.

— At the Integrity booth, a motherly-looking woman: "I've been very frightened about this issue, but I want to know more."

— On the Convention floor, hundreds of clergy and laity wearing rainbow ribbons provided by Integrity and the Parsonage, signifying compassion and support for those with AIDS.

Integrity's hope to "provide a healing presence" at this convention was fulfilled. Our special thanks to Thom and Larry, and to our benefactor David, who first thought of sending them and matched the Chapter's financial support. We have much to be thankful for, and much to do.

JOIN INTEGRITY/HOUSTON:

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NOVEMBER, 1985

C A L E N D A R

- Sunday, November 3 Integrity Brunch at Tacho's Restaurant
4315 Montrose, 1:00 p.m.
Integer Study/Support Group 3:00 p.m.
Atry House Gallery, 6265 Main.
- Sunday, November 10 Integer Study/Support Group 3:00 p.m.
Atry House Gallery
- Monday, November 11 Chapter Eucharist and Meeting 7:30 p.m.
Atry House
Program: Gays & Lesbians in the Church
- Sunday, November 17 Integer Study/Support Group 3:00 p.m.
Atry House Gallery
- Monday, November 18 Executive Committee Meeting 7:30 p.m.
Atry House Gallery
All members are invited to attend.
- Sunday, November 24 Integer Study/Support Group 3:00 p.m.
Atry House Gallery
- Monday, November 25 Chapter Eucharist and Meeting 7:30 p.m.
Atry House
- Thursday, November 28 Thanksgiving Dinner 6:00 p.m.
Atry House

"HAD A WONDERFUL TIME!"

It's mid-October as I write these impressions of General Convention, and most of my mental notes are beginning to fade in light of the many activities that have come up since then. However, there are a few areas that, even at this late date, warrant mentioning. For many of those working with Integrity, including myself, this was our first General Convention, and as one seasoned convention-goer commented: "You'll either love it or you'll seriously consider leaving the Episcopal Church." I think I managed to embrace both extremes during the ten days I was a part of Integrity's "positive presence."

Perhaps the first impressions that come to mind are those of Integrity National itself. This was the first time I had ever ventured outside of the security of my own chapter. I was amazed to realize to what extent Integrity is a forceful political machine. There was a definite sense of mission among many of our national leaders. Rather than being merely a positive presence at the Convention, I would perhaps suggest that I saw Integrity as a molding force, backed by a well-prepared and well-executed plan to bring about a change in the way the Episcopal Church ministers to its gay and Lesbian members. Since I've returned, I've noticed within myself a change in attitude towards our local chapter meetings. Since becoming involved with Integrity, I've been content to treat the organization solely as a means for fellowship and Christian sharing with other gay and Lesbian Episcopalians. And, to a great extent that belief is still vital to my relationship with Integrity. Now, however, I feel that my view has expanded to encompass a duality of mission—in part to serve the needs of the gay and Lesbian Christian and in part to serve the needs of the Episcopal Church. This duality was also vitally evident at General Convention as we came together at the Hospitality Suite after a politically charged day to share in prayer and thanksgiving at nightly Eucharist celebrations.

As for the Convention itself, I knew I was in for a mind-boggling experience when I set off to attend my first committee hearing (Social and Urban Affairs) on AIDS and discovered that it had been moved — and moved — and moved. After finding the correct room (or so I thought) the meeting moved twice more during the course of the hearing. Somewhere around day two I found the House of Deputies (down past the Snack Bar and to the left), and the House of Bishops became a reality only when I was determined to see Betty Ford and the Governor of California (what spiritual insight!). However, by the end of the Convention, I was beginning to piece things together, to recognize Bill numbers, to realize which bills were important to "the cause" and to recognize a few key names and faces. Working at the Integrity Booth helped a lot with this long process of assimilation for it gave me a chance to interact with people — both supporters and those seeking information.

Was I completely oblivious to the whole affair and was it a horrible misuse of Integrity/Houston funds to send a novice like myself? Of course not! Some things did sink in in spite of my confusion. (I wanted to say "innocence" or "naivete," but Maryann and William would never have printed it.) Foremost in my mind is the great work that Integrity was able to take part in to help educate the general population on the AIDS issue. I had gone to Anaheim assured that, for me, AIDS was an issue apart from my Integrity involvement; an issue to be handled by groups like KS-AIDS. However, I came back to Houston with the realization that the AIDS crisis plays a major role in my life as a gay Christian because I live in a world stricken with this disease, whether as a physical reality, a nagging fear, or a spiritual nightmare. I cried when a priest told of members of his congregation standing in line to take the Communion cup behind a PWA (Person with AIDS) to show their love and support. I thought it was because I was tired, but others, gay and non-gay, cried too.

WISH YOU'D BEEN THERE!"

At the same time that this soul-searching was going on, the Convention called us to the excitement of the election of a new Presiding Bishop. I think that the extremes that were forced on those Integrity members present made for an exhausting week: one minute in meditation at a prayer vigil for victims of AIDS and the next minute celebrating the election of Edmond Browning. This was never so clearly illustrated as when the announcement was made on the floor of the House of Deputies *during* the debate on the AIDS resolution.

This article must come to an end. Now that I've started, I could go on and on. I'm not sure I've really said that much about the General Convention, but you can always get the details from the *Convention Daily*. What I wanted to accomplish here was a way to tell you thanks for the experience and to suggest that the decision to send representatives from our Chapter was, I think, well worth the expense.

Tom Baynum, Co-Convenor.

THE "AIDS RESOLUTION"

Adopted by BOTH HOUSES of General Convention:

RESOLVED, the House of Bishops concurring, That this 68th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognizes with love and compassion the tragic human suffering and loss of life involved in the AIDS epidemic; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Executive Council is charged with:

- 1) The development of special intercessory prayer for people affected by the AIDS crisis;
- 2) The development and funding of programs of awareness, education, and prevention concerning AIDS;
- 3) The identification and funding of programs for ministry to all persons affected by AIDS;
- 4) The implementation of these programs beginning no later than March 1986 by appropriate program units of the dioceses, parishes, and missions of this Church; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church is requested to establish and lead a National Day of Prayer and Healing with special intentions for the AIDS crisis, and to communicate the concerns presented in this resolution to the President of the United States urging long term, substantial federal funding for research.

A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD

Our fall kick-off on September 23rd was a great success. Our planning and publicity paid off, and about 30 people participated in the Eucharist and the dinner and meeting that followed. Our special thanks go to our own Integrity musicians, "The Noisy Gongs and the Clanging Cymbals," and to Bill Wicker who wrote a beautiful setting for Psalm 8 for the service. Our convenor, Shelley Brown, delivered the homily. She spoke on the nature of Christian vocation and of the importance of listening to God in our daily lives. She also spoke on God's gift of our sexuality, a gift which, like all others, "is to be celebrated and not abused." Thanks to everyone who made the evening so joyful.

INTEGER

Our recently formed Sunday afternoon study/support group is proving very popular. We're exploring ways to lead an integrated life in the service of God and of our neighbors. We're using Esther de Waal's book *Seeking God* (available at the Cathedral Bookstore) as a background to our discussions. Everyone is welcome to join us every Sunday afternoon at Autry House from 3:00 to 4:30.



INTEGRITY/Houston Newsletter

P. O. Box 66008, Houston, Texas 77266-6008 (713) 524-1489

DECEMBER, 1985

DECEMBER AND JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

- Friday, December 6 Hanukkah — Christmas Celebration at Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection (MCCR), at 1919 Decatur, 7:30 p.m., sponsored by Houston Interfaith Alliance.
- Monday, December 9 — Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, Autry House, 6265 Main, 7:30 p.m. Eucharist with special intentions for our AIDS ministry.
- Monday, December 16 — Executive Committee Meeting, Autry House, 7:30 p.m. All members are welcome and urged to attend.
- Wednesday, December 25 — Merry Christmas

JANUARY

- Wednesday, January 1 — Happy New Year
- Monday, January 13 — Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, Autry House, 6265 Main, 7:30 p.m.
- Monday, January 20 — Executive Committee Meeting, Autry House, 7:30 p.m. All members are welcome and urged to attend.
- Monday, January 27 — Chapter Eucharist and Meeting, Autry House, 7:30 p.m.

— HANUKKAH —
CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

The Second Annual Hanukkah — Christmas Program will be held on Friday, December 6th at 7:30 p.m. at MCCR, 1919 Decatur. This event is sponsored by the Houston Interfaith Alliance, of which Integrity/Houston is a part. Each of the participating gay and Lesbian religious organizations will present a short segment of the program with music, prayers, and readings from their own holiday traditions. Integrity's focus in the program will be on Advent. There will be a reception in the Church Hall following the program. Please come and bring your friends and help us share the joys of this season with each other.

SAINT AELRED

At the General Convention, the House of Bishops added several names to the calendar of saints. Among these was Aelred, 12th century Abbot of Rievaulx, in England. Aelred was a friend of King David of Scotland and adviser to Henry II. He died in 1167. Under his rule, the Cistercian Monastery of Rievalux became the largest of its time in England, with 150 monks and 500 lay brothers. Most of his biographers believe that Aelred was gay, but took the vow of celibacy when he became a monk. He wrote two famous treatises on friendship: *The Mirror of Charity* and *On Spiritual Friendship*, which describes human love and affection as means of approaching divine love. The collect to be read for St. Aelred on January 12th is as follows:

Pour into our hearts, oh God, the Holy Spirit's gift of love, that we, clasping each other's hand, may share the joy of friendship, human and divine, and with your servant Aelred, draw many to the community of love, through Jesus Christ the Righteous, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Sources: *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*
by John Boswell
TWINtegrity Newsletter, October, 1985
The Oxford Dictionary of Saints
by David Hugh Farmer

INTEGRITY/AUSTIN

Our regularly scheduled meeting for November 11th was postponed till the following Monday because of the rain storms. Just as we finished calling the last person on our list to make this announcement, who should walk in the door but representatives from the new Integrity Chapter in Austin! We don't know how they got through the storm, but we were very glad to see them. We had a meeting anyway, and watched "An Early Frost" on T.V. It was a great opportunity for both chapters to catch up on what the other one was doing, and they promised to come back again. We all agreed on the importance of keeping in touch since we're in the same diocese. Needless to say, Integrity/Houston is more than welcome to visit Integrity/Austin too, rain or shine!

AIDS MEMORIAL SHRINE

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York announced the establishment of a Memorial to all who have died of AIDS or AIDS related conditions. This memorial is jointly sponsored by the Cathedral and Integrity/New York. The Dedication Ceremony was held on November 9th in St. Luke's Chapel in the Medical Bay of the nave of the Cathedral and led by the Bishop of New York, the Rt. Reverend Paul Moore, Jr. As the Memorial Book was placed on the altar, the choir sang this antiphon: "Give rest, O Christ, to your servants with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting." The names of those who have died will continue to be inscribed in the Memorial Book, which will rest on the altar. Anyone wishing to enter the name of a deceased friend and/or contribute to the fund should write to AIDS Memorial, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street, New York, NY 10025. 85% of the contributions go to AIDS research, 10 % to the creation of a permanent memorial and 5% to the Cathedral for maintenance of the Memorial.

FROM THE CONVENOR:

For me the saddest thing about the uneasy relation of gay and lesbian Christians to the church has been the long silence between us. The church has been unwilling or afraid to know us as we are, and we have been afraid of revealing ourselves to the Church. We all have been the losers. "You can't love who you don't know," as somebody once said; and you can't love if you're not willing to *be* known.

The chance to break this silence—within myself, with my gay Christian brothers and sisters, and with the larger body of Christ—is what I have most wanted from Integrity's ministry. Our programs this past fall have begun to answer that need for me, and I am grateful. I am grateful to the clergy who formed the panels for our discussions, on "Homosexuality and the Bible" and on "Gays and Lesbians in the Church," for their obvious care in preparation and for their candor and openness with us. Several panel members expressed interest in our programs and asked to be invited back. I'd like to invite them, and all interested clergy and laity, to attend any of our meetings and programs. We have much to learn from each other.

Thanks also to the members of Integrity who planned these programs, and especially to Maryann and Thom for the set of questions that made our second program so productive. I think that both we and our panels learned a great deal, and hope we'll find many more occasions like these for knowing our church and making ourselves known.

Integer, our weekly share group, has been important for me too. Thanks to all who have been involved in this effort to know ourselves, and an invitation to everybody who hasn't been a part of that yet. We meet every Sunday (although we'll skip some during the holiday season). Call 524-1489 for information.

I regret the Bishop's decision to deny us official presence at Diocesan Council, but am encouraged by his continued willingness to converse with us.

We need to be heard, and we need to listen. Both the Church and the gays and Lesbians within it are a little afraid of this conversation—each side perhaps most afraid that it will be called to change. I'm as nervous of change as anyone is, but I know that we are incomplete without the rest of the body of Christ, and that they are incomplete without us. I offer to all of us the words of the BCP's prayer for the unity of the Church:

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior,
the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the
great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away
all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us
from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body
and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith,
one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all
of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth
and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and
one mouth glorify *thee*; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Shelley

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

The annual Diocesan Council will be held in Austin next February. In early October, Integrity applied for a booth at the conference. In the past week, we have received a letter informing us that again this year, Bishop Benitez has denied Integrity this opportunity to share its ministry with representatives and delegates from the Diocese of Texas. We deeply regret the Bishop's decision to exclude Integrity from official participation. Since the letter also stated the 'Bishop's willingness to discuss this matter with us, members of the Executive Committee will meet with him as soon as possible. We will continue to keep our members informed of the results of our talks.

INTEGRITY FUNDING

Integrity/Houston needs your financial support. Your yearly dues of \$15 go directly to the National Office – none of it stays with your local chapter. We rely solely on donations from individual members and friends. Sending representatives to the General Convention, printing and mailing our monthly Newsletter, renting space at Autry House, and printing business cards are all very important to our ministry, but our treasury is low. We need your contributions, so please give generously at the Offertory in our Chapter Eucharists, or send us a check in the mail. And don't forget that your prayers are as important as your money!

INTEGRITY/Houston
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