

## **General Convention, 1991:**

### ***Debate on Sexuality Resolutions***

On Tuesday afternoon, 16 July 1991, under a Special Order of Business, the House of Deputies considered 3 items of legislation dealing with issues relating to the sexuality of ordinands: B-003a, A-104s/a, and C-032. The parameters of the debate were that each speaker would be permitted 2 minutes. Speakers pro and con would be acknowledged alternatively, if possible, and no motion to amend, substitute, or lay on the table would be in order until 10 minutes of debate had elapsed.

There were at least 3 openly lesbian or gay Deputies on the floor of the House for the first time in history. During the next several days, at least one additional Deputy would come out in a speech on the floor relating to sexuality legislation.

The 3 resolutions, as presented, were:

Legislative Number: B-003a  
Originator: The Rt. Rev. William C. Frey  
Diocese: Trinity School for Ministry  
Subject: Sexual Relations Outside Holy Matrimony

RESOLVED, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the 70th General Convention add a new Title I, Canon 17, renumbering all subsequent Canons accordingly:

Of Regulations Respecting the Clergy:

All Members of the Clergy of this Church, shall abstain from genital sexual relations outside of Holy Matrimony.

Legislative Number: A-104s/a  
Originator: HD Committee on Ministry  
Subject: Diocese to Determine Whom to Ordain

RESOLVED, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the 70th General Convention acknowledges that the teaching of the Episcopal Church is that

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physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the life-long, monogamous "union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind" is "intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord;" and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Church continue to work to resolve reconcile the discontinuity between this teaching and the experience of many members of this body; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this General Convention confesses our failure to lead and to resolve this discontinuity through legislative efforts based upon resolutions directed at singular and various aspects of these issues; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this General Convention commissions the bishops and members of each diocesan deputation to initiate a means for all congregations in their jurisdiction to enter into dialogue and deepen their understanding of these complex issues; and further this General Convention direct the president of each provinces to appoint one bishop, one lay deputy, and one clerical deputy in that province to facilitate the process, to receive reports from the dioceses at each meeting of their Provincial Synod and report to the 71st General Convention; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this General Convention directs the House of Bishops to prepare a Pastoral Teaching prior to the 71st General Convention to using the learnings from the diocesan and provincial processes and calling upon such insight as is necessary from theologians, theological ethicists, social scientists, and gay and lesbian persons; and that three lay persons and three members of the clergy from the House of Deputies, appointed by the President of the House of Deputies, be included in the preparation of this Pastoral Teaching.

Legislative Number: C-032  
Originator: Diocese of California  
Subject: Access to the Ordination Process

Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That Title III, Canon 8 be amended by adding a new section 1 (and renumbering subsequent sections), as follows:

There is no right to ordination in this Church. Subject to specified canonical requirements, all members shall have equal access to the selection process for ordination in this Church.

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Two openly Gay deputies rose to speak first (coincidentally). They were The Rev. Jane Garrett of Vermont (and the retiring Chair of the Standing Commission on Peace), and Patrick Waddell of El Camino Real (California). This marked the first occasion when the issue of sexuality had been discussed in either House with openly Lesbian or Gay participation on the floor. The two speeches follow:

Deputy Jane Garrett, Vermont:

A resolution that came before the 1988 General Convention [*D-009 submitted by John Harrison of Pennsylvania*] put forth the principle that "stable, loving, committed relationships" between gay men and lesbian women "provide a wholesome example for the Church" and that "such persons are entitled to the full love, acceptance, and ministrations of this Church." After 3 years of further talk about this, I am here to claim that full love and acceptance. Not just from my parish, my diocese, my province, and my committee, commission, and fellowship colleagues, where I already have it, but from the whole Church. It is time for those of us who have been quiet to speak out. It is time to stand beside our Black, Indian, Hispanic, and Asian brothers and sisters and claim for ourselves the justice that the Old Testament prophets, the Gospels of Jesus, and this Church proclaim. I do that, and I urge you to defeat this proposed canonical change, because it makes no provision for the committed, monogamous, same-sex relationships that are in your midst and that truly do offer a wholesome example in this age of promiscuity.

Deputy Patrick Waddell, El Camino Real:

There's a real difference in this debate - I can speak for myself, rather than being confined to gallery. I'm tired of being talked about; ignored, called names - I'm not "avowed and practicing," I am self-affirming and chaste. I uphold my God-given relationship of almost 13 years with Franklin. I am, have been, and intend to be faithful to him for life.

I feel no call to ordination, but if I did feel that call, I believe that I present "a wholesome example for God's people."

My own bishop, Richard Shimpfky's comments about this resolution say it best:

The church must develop an appropriate code of ethics for clergy, but the bishop's proposal is not the answer. Ethical behavior is more than sex. Bishop Frey reflects in his plan the terrible flaw of the new evangelicals who bash the rest of us with one literal word of God while carefully detouring silently around Christ's strictures against, for example, divorce.

Moral theology and ethical behavior is about much more than sexuality. His proposed canon is a legalism substituted for morality and enshrined in canon.

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The Ministry Committee's proposed substitute for A-104 is sound; California's C-032 is a wonderfully pastoral way of dealing with the canonical issues, but Bishop Frey's proposal is totally misguided and should be defeated.

### The Results

There were calls for votes by orders on all 3 propositions. Further, a number of Deputies insisted that the voting be done one at a time, with the results of each ballot announced before any further ballot was taken. This insistence delayed the action on the second and third propositions until the following day. The results of each vote are:

Ballot on B-003a [Bp. Frey]:

|            | <u>Lay</u>   | <u>Clergy</u> |
|------------|--------------|---------------|
| voting     | 114 dioceses | 116 dioceses  |
| Yes        | 46           | 43            |
| No         | 47           | 48            |
| Divided    | 21           | 25            |
| No+Divided | 68           | 73            |

The proposition failed in both orders. Given that divided dioceses occur when 2 vote for and 2 against the proposition, the "real" tally is Lay: Y 56.5, N 57.5; Clergy Y 55.5, N 60.5. In the Lay order it was almost even, but it failed by 52%, still not overwhelming.

The ballot on A-104s/a was:

|         | <u>Lay</u> | <u>Clergy</u> |
|---------|------------|---------------|
| voting: | 112        | 115           |
| Yes     | 99         | 106           |
| No      | 9          | 5             |
| Divided | 4          | 4             |

Here the results are much more lopsided, with the "real" tally running Lay Y 101, N11; Clergy Y 108, N 7. Percentages are roughly 90% yes in the Lay, 94% in the Clergy.

This Resolution, the House of Bishops amended the text slightly (changing "acknowledges that" to "affirms" in the first Resolved, and adding "as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer" before the "and be it further" at the end of the first Resolved. Rather than fight anymore over minor points, the House of Deputies concurred with that

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amendment.

The results of the ballot on C-032 were:

|            | <u>Lay</u>   | <u>Clergy</u> |
|------------|--------------|---------------|
| voting:    | 113 dioceses | 116 dioceses  |
| Yes:       | 63           | 67            |
| No:        | 36           | 38            |
| Divided    | 14           | 11            |
| No+Divided | 50           | 49            |

This makes for "real" results of Lay Y 70, N 43; Clergy Y 72.5, N 43.5. Percentages in favor were Lay 62%, Clergy 63%, not quite as large as on A-104s/a, but "comfortable." However, when informed of the magnitude of this vote, a Bishop was quoted as saying "What the Deputies do doesn't matter." The House of Bishops did not concur, and so much for collegiality.....