

This section was deleted from 2007 annual report, because I have said all this before, and my words are way out of sync with current thoughts on ministry in the Episcopal Church and most, if not all, others.

### ADDENDUM

We as the Episcopal Church seem to have a touch of “omnicompetence” and “mission-without-boundaries” – as we appear to try to respond to virtually every human need that surfaces (unfortunately, with the exception of speaking loudly about effective family planning at the root of so many global problems); **too often** we react as if we were the only Christian Church able to take action and, further, as if skilled secular agencies were non-existent. I have heard aspects of this approach referred to as “popcorn brain” - one who leaps from topic to topic without thinking anything through.

Concurrently it seems that we try to relieve our exaggerated sense of responsibility, frenzied responses, and lack of realistic goals (consistent with our mission statements) with all kinds of trendy/historic “spiritual” exercises, workshops/seminars, reports, commemorations, retreats, commissions, committees, resolutions, and faux “prayer”.

We need, I believe, to “get a life” – one clearly grounded in our respective families and as a people of God with unique ministries and a mission statement with goals that truly guide us (rather than a statement so vague that everything/anything can be justified); **I am convinced that our uniqueness is expressed primarily in:**

- (1) **reverential worship** (not human focused “entertainment-of-the-moment”),
- (2) **religious education** (especially preparing people well for their “great moments” – e.g., baptism, confirmation, marriage/blessings, etc. – when they are most motivated), and
- (3) **balanced pastoral care** (within our congregations - and beyond our doors to the extent that we have genuinely capable resources).

I believe further that we have become wasteful and almost arrogant in what we imagine we can accomplish to the point of negligence of who we are called to *be* and what we are called to *do*. **We appear to have become expert at providing little-understood ceremonies, quick fix, short-term bandages, and shallow verbiage.**

With regard to the Anglican Communion, that “we all have need of each other” is hyperbole and refers in its best usage as a godly, metaphorical ideal for all humanity as well as collectively for all Christians. Regrettably, because even Holy Water and Holy Oil will not mix, we are wasting time and energy as we try to preserve in a traditionally loose fellowship those who are psychologically unable to tolerate the time-honored Anglican plurality of beliefs and practices, a heritage encompassing both “preservers” and “pioneers” since the Communion's inception. The media accounts of the current debacle, as well as the reality itself, are in no way inviting to the unchurched or sustaining to ordinary members. Companionship with other dioceses throughout the globe need not be jeopardized by a far-reaching reconfiguration of the Communion. In any case, as Anglicans, we certainly neither need nor want an international, faux Roman expression of Christianity.

I should like to add *without any disrespectful intent* an item from #12 of our last May's “A Lament at 70” (found at [www.philosophy-religion.org/criticism/lament70.htm](http://www.philosophy-religion.org/criticism/lament70.htm)):

“Furthermore, we are concerned with the degree to which many clergy and laity are trumpeting claims of private divine revelations or definitive ‘calls’ and messages from God (or Saints) as well as their growing preoccupation with New Age-like superficialities. This strikes us as radically individualistic, unverifiable by others, self-serving, and delusional – with no positive benefit to Christian communities of faith. We suspect that the **‘sanctification of their own desires’** (an apt turn of phrase offered by author-priest Barbara Brown Taylor) is at work in most of this holyspeak. A British priest, scholar, and writer recently commented in London’s *Church Times* on many current ‘spiritual’ experiences as ‘an empty form of free-floating flatulence.’ Indeed!”

If our beloved Episcopal Church is going to be inviting/appealing to well-informed, everyday, psychologically well, unchurched people and nurturing of the flock, we must examine ourselves for the overload of delusion and “peasant religion” on the rise. It sometimes seems that as our influence has diminished culturally, the more elaborate and less credible we have become. Furthermore, we need to develop a way to assess our capacities for responding to all types of human needs everywhere; it might “feel good” to act “omnicompetently,” but does the Episcopal Church really want to be just another dispenser of superficial band aids? Do our many resolutions passed at conventions have any actual effects on the issues they try to address? Or, is much of this a desperate attempt to be “meaningful” and “relevant”?