

## V. **MISSION AND MINISTRY PRIORITIES; ORIENTATIONS TO SOCIAL OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY**

### A. **Mission and Ministry Priorities: Overview**

In the 2002 diocesan survey only, a list of fourteen mission and ministry areas were included, asking respondents how important they considered each one area as a priority for the national church, their dioceses, and their congregations. Some mission areas are seen as particularly important for all levels of the Episcopal Church by the great majority of respondents (e.g. “spiritual development”); some are viewed as more important for the national church to pursue than for dioceses or congregations (e.g. “world hunger”); some are seen as more important for dioceses and congregations than for the national church (e.g. “poverty in this region or state”).

There are some mission areas which a clear majority of respondents see as important for all levels of the church, but not of the highest priority. These are:

- sexual misconduct and abuse
- racial or ethnic discrimination
- leadership training
- domestic violence
- ecumenical networking

By a clear majority, some mission areas are not considered as of major importance for any level of the Episcopal Church – and particularly not for their congregation. Those areas are:

- legislation for better medical care or welfare reform
- homophobia and heterosexism
- deployment and compensation of ordained and lay professional women
- ecology and the environment
- inclusion of overseas immigrants and overcoming cultural barriers
- misogyny, patriarchy and sexism

The lack of a strong consensus, among those surveyed, on the importance of these areas for Church attention indicates the presence of division among the people of those dioceses on their importance to the life of the church or the secular society. These divisions on goals and priorities other than women's issues, and especially the reasons for these divisions, are also likely to impact the level of attention 2002 survey respondents believe should be given to women and their concerns.

## **B. Social Outreach and Advocacy Preferences**

Some Episcopalians are involved in social outreach to the needy in their community or world; some are interested as much, or more, in changing the social policy and laws to help the disadvantaged or redress other causes. Some Episcopalians are more contemplative, preferring private prayer or meditation as well as participation in worship and Christian education and ministry to other parishioners within their congregations. Persons' orientations along these lines might also very well affect what, if any, kinds of social outreach or justice activities they get involved with outside of the congregation.

In part for this reason, and primarily because it would seem important to know what kinds of outreach and advocacy attract the attention of Episcopalians, the Committee added a list of possible activity areas to the survey.<sup>8</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate which of these areas they have been active in within the last five years. These were activities conducted outside the exclusive membership of their congregation, typically sponsored or co-sponsored with other denominations, ecumenical agencies, or secular and civic groups and organizations. These activities were further divided on the survey into "outreach" and "social advocacy or lobbying."

Written comments on this question series and particularly at the end of the survey indicated there was a division between those who felt the Episcopal Church should take a stand on matters of public policy and world concerns and those who did not. Because of the inclusion of this question on activities outside the congregation, it was possible to measure these different orientations for use in statistical analyses.

By analyzing individual scores on the basis of whether respondents had participated in outreach or advocacy activities during the past five years, a typology was developed which

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<sup>8</sup> The "outreach" areas listed in the survey are: providing emergency shelter or rent subsidies; donating time or money to shelters for battered women; serving in soup kitchens or food pantries; tutoring at-risk children; social activities for at-risk teens; housing construction (Habitat); visiting sick in nursing homes, hospices, or wards; visiting prison inmates; and "other." The "social advocacy" areas listed in the survey are: saving the environment; halting human rights abuses; expanding women's rights; lobbying for: gun control, adequate health care for all, rights for gays and lesbians, protecting animals from abuse, or prison reform; and "other."

indicates that there are four types of Episcopalians when outreach and advocacy ministries are considered.

- a. **Abstainers** (18% of respondents) are involved with neither outreach nor advocacy efforts inside or outside of their congregations.
- b. **Almsgivers** (36% of respondents) are involved in outreach activities but avoid social advocacy causes and lobbying efforts.
- c. **Advocates** (6% of respondents) focus their energies on trying to change systems through advocacy and financial donations.
- d. **Activists** (40% of respondents), who are more likely to be clergy than lay, are involved in both advocacy and outreach efforts.

These types are significant for this particular study on the participation of women in the church because different types are more or less likely to support efforts to increase women's participation in the church in leadership positions, lay or ordained. A full discussion of this typology is available in Appendix A.