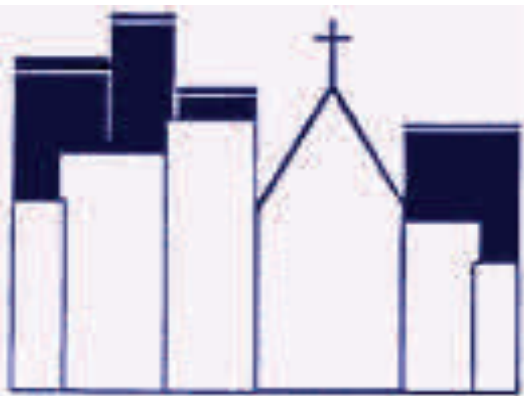




THE URBAN NETWORKER

MAY 2012

GENERAL CONVENTION ISSUE

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

MINISTRIES OF
RECONCILIATION,
SOCIAL JUSTICE & PEACE
Founded 1980

- **Check our web-site at:**
- episcopalurbancaucus.org

Inside this issue:

Keynote Panel
Robert Brooks

Excerpts from a
21st Century Ac-
tivist—Thompson

Gibson Honored
by PHoD — Di-
ane Pollard

Nell Gibson Steps
Down as EUC
Coordinator

Justice at Work
Eric Metoyer

Saints of the EUC
Honored

Peace Fellowship
Speaker—Michael
Hopkins

2012 ASSEMBLY KEYNOTE PANEL—Robert Brooks

Inspiration and hope lifted up the Episcopal Urban Caucus Assembly meeting in Atlanta. A keynote panel replaced the usual keynote speaker and imparted to the Assembly a resurgence through sharing stories of faithful and costly prophetic witness both in the 20th Century and in our own time. The panel presentation—"Blessed Assurance: Our Stories, Our Songs" - was given by 3 activists with ties to the Atlanta area who were engaged in the civil rights struggle in the 20th century—Nell Braxton Gibson, Priscilla Arnold Davis and Dr. Larry F. Hunter—and three young activists who continue that struggle in the 21st century—Katie Aikins, Lucas Johnson and Everette R.H. Thompson.

In fact, it was songs and stories as well as the witness of extraordinary people that formed the foundation of acti-

vism for civil rights in the presentations of panelists concerning the 20th century. All agreed that the song, "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round" gave courage and perseverance in the struggle both then and now. Singing hymns of God's deliverance growing up in their families was a wellspring for future activism. The influence of Mary McLeod Bethune on a young Nell Braxton with her marching orders for life—"People sacrificed for you and you need to commit your life to sacrifice for the next generation" - is still a defining event for Nell. The costliness of activism for civil rights with the assassination of family friend, Medgar Evers, assured Nell's activism. As a college student in the early 1960s at Spelman College, Nell was part of the Canterbury House community that was engaging issues of civil rights with its chaplain, Fr. Warren

Scott. After an African-American boy died due to segregated emergency rooms at Grady memorial Hospital, Nell picketed the hospital along with other members of the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights (COAHR). She experienced fear for her life but the poem, "If we must die" gave her strength. Nell went on to engage in registering first-time African American voters and was arrested and sent to jail for protests at the Georgia State Capitol to desegregate the legislative chambers. Later on in New York with her husband, Bert Gibson, they organized a Black and Brown Caucus at their parish, starting the first prison law library in New York state and working with the Black Panthers to host a breakfast program. She became active in the anti-apartheid movement after her arrest in 1985 outside the South African Consulate in (see Keynote, p.3)

Excerpts from a 21st Century Activist—Everette R.H. Thompson

Each day I am comforted by the gift of song. I hail from a rural area called Green Level, NC where my great grandmother and grandmother would sing everyday and in particular at church—their testimony. Their voices are etched in my heart and ring in my ears but one song in particular has been very present in my life over the past

couple of months. "We've come this far by faith," which embodies my patient hope and prayerful expectation that human rights can be realized in this world, in the US and particularly in the South. My story begins when I was a teenager and I teamed up with an organization that used improv to discuss current issues impacting teens. I did not under-

stand at the time how powerful our work was. We were just kids hanging out and having fun, but within our first year we began to receive requests from schools to come and perform. Thanks to the trust of our advisors, a fire had been sparked. We had something to give and could address the (see 21st Century, page 3)

NELL GIBSON STEPS DOWN AS COORDINATOR

At the February 29, 2012 Wednesday Board meeting of the Episcopal Urban Caucus Nell Braxton Gibson announced that she would be stepping down as Coordinator this year. She will be available for the next six to nine months to train a new person or people to take over responsibilities for coordinating the work of the Caucus including plans for the 2013 Assembly in Minnesota, publication of *The Urban Networker*, continuation of the EUC website and communications with the EUC member-

ship.

In her report to the Board Gibson indicated that her connection as an Elder to Occupy Wall Street has shown her that there are many smart young activists with forward thinking ideas and a commitment to social justice who can bring new vitality and a new vision to the EUC.

She said she has enjoyed her work with the dynamic Episcopal Urban Caucus Board of Directors but feels now is the

time for her to become a mentor to a new group of activists. She will remain an active member of the Episcopal Urban Caucus and will continue to work in its social justice ministry which she says has been some of her most rewarding work.

The New York office of the Episcopal Urban Caucus and the present mail box will both close down immediately following this year's General Convention.

EUC HONORS SAINTS

Sandy had a true heart for getting to know Appalachian people living in poverty

Sandy Majors Elledge whose name, for the past two decades was synonymous with ministry in Appalachia where she served as Executive Coordinator of Episcopal Appalachian Ministries (EAM), was a pillar of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia (CORA) and worked tirelessly to support community development in both CORA and EAM. Sandy was always at the forefront of activism and advocacy and once

said, "I come by my advocacy very honestly because Mother was one of the ones who fought so hard to be sure that wells were capped in Texas...." I can remember when I grew up at least once a summer some kid fell in a well and drowned."

Sandy had a true heart for getting to know people, especially Appalachian people living in poverty, and was best known for helping start the overseeing

of EAM work camps which she said were where "advocacy and education became ministry." As editor of the EAM newsletter she helped publicize the work of local ministries and provided staff support for the Working Class Ministry and "synagogy" movements within The Episcopal Church. She became an expert on small congregations and their ministries, truly believing that if she told people of the needs of (see Saints, below)

EUC HONORS SAINTS (continued from above)

others they would respond to those needs. For Sandy a picture was worth a thousand words which is why she was always organizing groups to go and visit ministry sites in Appalachia.

Sandy died at the age of 70 on Friday, October 14, 2011 from complications suffered from a medical procedure she had the previous week. She was born in Beaumont, Texas to Auvy Royce and Beulah

Majors. She retired as Executive Coordinator of Episcopal Appalachian Ministries in 2007.

The Rev. Crayton Dudley was born February 23, 1928 to Inell and Jack Dudley in Atlanta, Georgia. He attended Wesley Avenue Elementary School, David T. Howard Junior High School and Booker T. Washington High School, graduating in 1945. He entered Morehouse College one year before being drafted in the army in

1946. He was honorably discharged in 1947, graduated from Clark College in 1950 and married Allegra Lewis in October of 1952.

Fr. Dudley held degrees from Union Theological Seminary and the University of Pittsburgh. He served parishes in St. Petersburg, FL and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Upon retirement he returned to Atlanta where he attended St. Paul's Church. He died on December 1, 2011.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS (cont. from p.1) Robert Brooks

New York working with Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Namibian Bishop James Kau-luma. She became the first woman to preach at the largest parish in Soweto and was serenaded by the children singing, "We shall overcome." Nell continues to make her witness as Chair of the Diocese of New York's Reparations Committee and her EUC work.

Priscilla Davis was an editor of the student newspaper in 1953 when Horace Ward applied to be the first African

American student at the University of Georgia Law School. Led by its Chair, the Board of Regents decided to shut down the entire University of Georgia system. Priscilla and other editors of the student newspaper attacked the Regents' policy. They were all forced to resign and a censorship rule was implemented. She works today on low and moderate income housing.

Dr. Larry F. Hunter told the Assembly that the first "freedom ride was in 1943

when an African American woman was thrown off a bus. Bayard Rustin led a "Ride of Reconciliation" in 1947. Dr. Hunter joined a freedom ride in 1961 that was attacked by Alabama State troopers in Birmingham. Led by the Hon. John Lewis, Dr. Hunter joined freedom rides to "fill the jails in Mississippi" despite beatings and deaths. The notion of "movement" has been constant in his life, leading him to protest the Viet Nam War. He has worked with street gangs and underprivileged children.

The 21st century activists told of the issues that they face. Their engagement with those in prison, those without housing and the poor, have led them to work for abolition of the death penalty, prison reform, low income housing and challenging the war on drugs. Katie Aikins called "mass incarceration the new Jim Crow." She said that "racism is highly adaptable." She noted that the most stable housing for many in her congregation is jail. During the discussion time it was noted that the military is one total, viable option for economic stability in life, resulting in an "economic draft."

The Rev. Kimberly Jackson assembled the panel and moderated.

Nell Gibson Honored by PHoD—Diane Pollard

One of the high points of the 2012 Annual Assembly was a visit from Canon Bonnie Anderson, President of the House of Deputies of the Episcopal Church. Canon Anderson, a long time supporter of the work of the EUC visited the Atlanta gathering to present Nell Braxton Gibson with the President of the House of Deputies Medallion for Exemplary Service. The presentation was made on March 1st at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, site of the

celebratory Eucharist. Canon Anderson established the award in 2011 "to honor individuals and communities who have exhibited an exceptional commitment to the work of reconciling a broken world."

In presenting the award Canon Anderson said "the prophet Micah tells us that it isn't enough to love justice, God wants us to do justice and Nell Gibson is one of the greatest doers of justice our generation

of Episcopalians has ever seen." While a student at Spelman Nell spent time in jail for protesting segregated hearings at the State Capitol and after graduation became involved in struggles in newly independent African nations, spending a summer working in what is now Tanzania. Nell's desire to see justice done was never confined to a single issue or a single country. She is best known for her work against racism in all its forms, but she

has also worked on behalf of women's rights and was an early advocate for people living with AIDS.

The Episcopal Urban Caucus family rejoices with Nell Gibson on this singular achievement.



Canon Anderson and Nell Braxton Gibson
Photo: Courtesy of: Rosemary Braxton

21st Century Activist (cont)—Everette R.H. Thompson

current social ills using our voices. In my mind that was revolutionary. The power of our voices! This experience shaped my outlook and led me down this road to fight for human rights and the dignity of all people.

When I entered college I began to get involved in student politics. Moving to the big urban city of Durham, NC was my first realization that I was poor and that poverty was real,

systemic and limiting in various ways such as access to education, access to opportunities, ability to dream day to day. So many doors opened to me in college. I became the first queer Student Body President at North Carolina Central University and began my career in youth development working in Washington, DC. I was fortunate to work with my mentor the late Lisa Y Sullivan, who was a cutting edge thinker around black youth politics;

youth organizing and hip hop.

I was accepted in the Peace Corps and served in South Africa supporting and training young people who became heads of households due to the deaths of their parents from the lack of access to medication to combat HIV/AIDS. My experience in South Africa conjured up a desire to be home; in the South. The similarities of despair and need coupled with pride and joy in the midst of death strength-

ened my desire to be state-side and to work to address needless killing due to money or politics. When I returned I focused my graduate degree on creating a southern strategy to abolish the death penalty. In my mind and heart this would (See 21st Century Activist, insert p. 1 col. 2)

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

MINISTRIES OF
RECONCILIATION, SOCIAL
JUSTICE AND PEACE

P.O. Box 21182
Park West Station
New York, NY
10025

Phone: (212) 699-2998

Fax: (212) 699-2998

E-mail:

coordinator@episcopalurbancau

cus.org

WEBSITE:

www.episcopalurbancaucus.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers:

Sheila Sims, President

Canon Robert Brooks, Vice President

Velva Wright, Secretary

Diane Pollard, Treasurer

The Rt. Rev. Brian Prior

The Rt. Rev. John Rabb

The Rev. Michael Hopkins

The Rev. Glenna Huber

The Rev. Kimberly Jackson

The Rev. Philip Jacobs

The Rev. Charles Lane

The Rev. Eric Metoyer

The Rev. Matthew Stewart

Rosemary Braxton

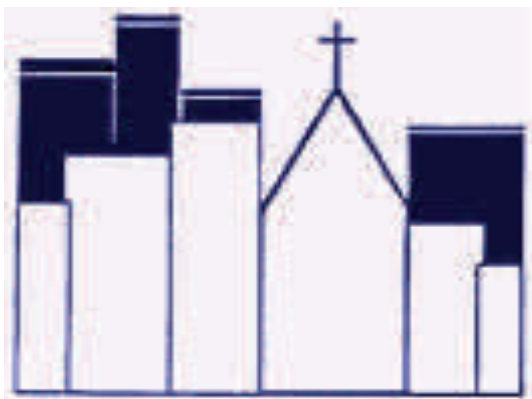
Bruce Ingram

Barbara Larsen

The Hon. Byron Rushing

**The 2013 Assembly, March 13-16
Minneapolis/St. Paul**

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS—Founded 1960



JUSTICE AT WORK —Eric Metoyer

I write this epistle from day one of the annual meeting of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, the gathering of the reconciliation, social justice and peace ministry workers of the Church. We are in Atlanta where 1960s Episcopalians picketed the Episcopal Cathedral and School because of their segregationist practices; a city where the Episcopal Diocese today supports incredibly active social justice ministries in underserved neighborhoods and fights for the voiceless to have a seat at the table of redevelopment.

The incredible thing about the Urban Caucus meeting is the sharing of stories amongst church workers involved in social justice work, especially whilst they work on their own in parishes, dioceses and local community networks. Social

justice work is a broad term for the many ways we build the kingdom of God on earth: human rights, civil rights, economic rights, immigration, workers, education and on and on. The work takes place in parish buildings, schools, storefronts and is part of our call to serve God in the church.

One of the places we visited in Atlanta was Emmaus House in Peopletown where anyone can walk in off the street, without appointment, and get help connecting with social services. "You're always open," a client remarked. "Yes we are," was the reply. That's ministry at its best, that we are available to help one another.

We also stopped at Holy Comforter which for decades has been a haven for the mentally ill. These are faithful Chris-

tians working in the name of God... whilst working to change the world.

(The Rev. Eric Metoyer is a member of the Episcopal Urban Caucus' Board of Directors.



Bishop Barbara Harris and Atlanta University student Marcus Halley sing during opening evening of the EUC
Photo: Courtesy of Eric Metoyer