

**Claiming the Blessing: An Occasional Newsletter** – Vol. 1, No 2  
February 2003

From the UK publication  
“Lesbian + Gay Christians”, Winter 2002:

*“At certain moments during the [CTB] conference I felt like I had been transported to the future. At the banquet there was a female bishop, I chatted with openly gay clergy and all of us in St. Louis were confident that by the end of next summer the Episcopal Church will have authorised the development of a liturgy for blessings. In St. Louis I realized that my vision of a more inclusive Anglican Church is not an impossible dream”*

– Nick Godfrey

That, my brothers and sisters, is a glimpse of the Blessing we’re Claiming ... the future we’re living into ... as we embrace the vision of an inclusive Gospel, the blessing of our Anglican heritage and the power of the Spirit moving us forward – to General Convention and beyond.

Nick Godfrey’s words about his experience at the Claiming the Blessing Conference in St. Louis are reminders of how far we have come ... and how far we have yet to go ... as we work to realize the dream of a church where ALL the baptized do indeed have full and equal claim on both the rights and responsibilities of being members of the Body of Christ.

Many of us take for granted the very things he found so extraordinary: women bishops, gay and lesbian clergy and laity working together to do the work of the Gospel. And many of us live in dioceses or belong to congregations not “there” yet. But all of us are united in our commitment to Claim the Blessing in the weeks and months ahead. To that end, here’s a quick update of where we are and what you can do.

**Where We Are:** The CTB Steering Committee met January 9-10 to chart the course for the next six months as we move toward Minneapolis. Out of that meeting came a couple of key “next steps.” Completion of the Theology Statement is first on the list and the final edit will be finished by the time you receive this mailing, with distribution timed so that all our bishops will have copies prior to their House of Bishops Meeting in March.

The final edit will make use of comments/critique received at the St. Louis gathering as well as incorporate several new elements into the piece: a copy of the text of “D039” (the relationship resolution passed in Denver), portions of the St. Louis presentations of both Michael Hopkins and Bill Countryman, and a study guide with discussion questions for use in parish or diocesan settings.

We hope the Theology Statement will be circulated as widely as possible before GC2003 and will need your help to do that. Please be in touch with the CTB office if you would like copies for your clergy or congregations, dioceses or deputations. We will make them as readily available to you as possible after their publication in March.

Also, a series of regional events focusing on CTB are in the process of being calendared. The schedule already includes San Francisco (February 2), General Seminary in NYC (February 5) Los Angeles (March 15) Portland (March 21/22) with tentative dates in Austin and Birmingham later in the spring and plans for Lexington and Denver as well. We are looking for as many opportunities as possible between now and July and if you have ideas or suggestions, please be in touch

One of the best places to monitor this important work is online through the Every Voice Network ([www.everyvoice.net](http://www.everyvoice.net)) ... where CTB Calendar items will be included with other cutting edge justice ministries throughout the church. I'm very excited about the potential for EVN ("Anglican Voices Uniting for Justice") to help continue the great collaborative effort which brought CTB into being and I commend it to you.

### **How You Can Help**

- ◆ **Pray:** Sometimes this part "goes without saying" but the work ahead of us is too important not to be intentional in both our prayers AND our witness. Some specific "prayer requests": for the CTB leadership team, for all our bishops and deputies; for the fear and anxiety of those who oppose us; for a sense of God's Spirit among us and within us as we move forward and particularly for the House of Bishops as they meet in Kanuga March 14-20.
- ◆ **Network:** Talk to your deputies, your vestries, your clergy, your bishops. Tell the Good News of what Claiming the Blessing has to offer the church as a way to move forward into the mission God is calling all of us to proclaim.
- ◆ **Give:** If you have not made a gift of financial support to CTB please consider doing so now. If you've made a pledge, thank you for keeping it current. And if you have those within your community or congregation who might be called on to support our work, please let us know so that we might be in touch with them.

With thanks and blessings,  
Susan Russell, Executive Director  
Claiming the Blessing