

## **Historical Overview of the Civil Rights Era in the Diocese of North Carolina**

**Delivered at the Program entitled**

**“Changes, Challenges and Crisis: Remembering the Civil Rights Era in the  
Diocese of North Carolina, 1963-1973”**

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**St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, Durham North Carolina**

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Let’s begin our examination of the Civil Rights Era by noting where we stood as a diocese at the beginning of the 1960s. Our bishop at the time, Richard Baker, was content to perpetuate the practices of his predecessor when it came to race relations. Like Bishop Penick before him, Baker was a committed “gradualist,” that is, he upheld the principle of desegregation while he pursued a deliberate pace for its implementation. In keeping with this policy, Diocesan Council in 1962 adopted a timetable for the desegregation of summer camps over a 4-year period. By 1965, all diocesan-affiliated institutions had adopted racially-inclusive policies, and the Committee on Racial Subjects, first convened in 1956 to oversee gradualism, declared its work complete.<sup>1</sup>

Gradualism was not an uplifting policy; it did not yield inspirational speeches like Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream.” It upheld principles of justice and equality while curtailing their implementation; it let the sensibilities of reluctant whites speak louder than the long-suppressed aspirations of blacks. But even this

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<sup>1</sup> “The Bishop [Baker] stated that his position on matters of race coincides with that of the late Bishop Penick—that of gradualism.” *Minutes of the December 6, 1961, Meeting of the Committee on Race*. Baker Papers. Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. The multi-year timetable for integrating diocesan summer camps was announced to the Diocese in the “Bishop’s Letter” in the *North Carolina Churchman* (November 1962): 11. “The Report of the Commission on Race” *NCDJ* 149<sup>th</sup> (1965): 134.

cautious policy was met with intransigent opposition from a handful of clergy and congregations committed to preserving lily-white policies and practices. The matter was contested at diocesan conventions throughout the early 1960s, and one ardently segregationist priest, Jimmy Dees in Statesville, went so far as to leave the Episcopal Church and found his own denomination, The Anglican Orthodox Church, in 1963.<sup>2</sup>

Baker stepped down as Diocesan in July, 1965, after serving for six years. He was succeeded by Thomas A. Fraser, Coadjutor under Baker since 1960. Fraser's approach to societal issues and the church's mission was markedly different from Baker's, something that was already apparent during the time the two men served together. Whereas Baker was largely content to enumerate growth and change within the life of the church, Fraser highlighted the changes in society at large and called on the church to keep pace. In his 1963 convention address, Fraser noted the "tremendous progress being made in the Diocese," but then added: "we still bear the image in the eyes of many people that we consider ourselves the best church for the best people rather than God's Church for all people. This image which we have earned in the past must be destroyed."<sup>3</sup> A year later, Fraser challenged his convention audience to prepare for profound demographic shifts in North Carolina that would require fresh approaches to clergy deployment and building programs.<sup>4</sup> And in 1965, as he prepared to assume the mantle of Diocesan Bishop, Fraser announced that change, profound societal change, was a given, and the church must change with it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *Episcopalians & Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington, Ky.: 2000), 118. On contesting the desegregation of diocesan camps, see for example: *NCDJ* 144<sup>th</sup> (1960): 149.

<sup>3</sup> *NCDJ* 147<sup>th</sup> (1963): 83.

<sup>4</sup> *NCDJ* 148<sup>th</sup> (1964): 79.

<sup>5</sup> *NCDJ* 149<sup>th</sup> (1965): 85.

Indeed, the signs of change—and of growing restlessness with regard to the pace of racial progress—were already evident, here in North Carolina, across the nation, and within the national Episcopal Church.

In 1959, Episcopalians, black and white, clergy and lay, north and south, dissatisfied with the failure of the church to speak strongly against segregation, gathered to form a new organization they called The Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU) to promote a pro-integrationist, civil rights agenda in our denomination. Throughout the 60s, it would help lead the way for the Episcopal Church on issues of race. The organizing meeting happened right here at St. Augustine's, and the host for that meeting is here today: Father Joe Green, then the Chaplain at St. Augustine's and the Rector of St. Ambrose', Raleigh.<sup>6</sup>

In 1960, student sit-ins began in Greensboro and quickly spread. As you will hear in the stories today told by Fr. Green, Wade Chestnut, and David Smith, students from NCCU and St. Augustine's became involved. Faculty at Duke joined in, too.

A critical moment of conscience for the diocese came early in 1964, when annual convention was scheduled to meet at the Chapel of the Cross. A list of local motels was provided to the delegates, but two members of the Chapel of the Cross, Dr. Frank Williams and his wife Carter, sent a letter to clergy, calling on them to urge their delegates to boycott the University Motel for its segregationist practices. Dr. Williams attached a list of folk in Chapel Hill willing to provide room in their homes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 101.

<sup>7</sup> T. Franklin Williams and Carter Williams to Bishop Baker, January 25, 1964. Also Carter and Frank Williams to "Rectors, Priests-in Charge, . . . of the Diocese of North Carolina," January 25, 1964. Richard Baker Papers, folder "Committee on Race" Box 10, Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, Raleigh. Note that the attachment is not among the archived papers.

At the February 1964 convention, the delegates narrowly defeated a proposal to deny diocesan financial support to any institution or agency which did not open all accommodations and services to all members of the church. A month later, the laymen of the diocese invited noted civil rights activist William Stringfellow to speak about the racial situation in northern urban areas. And in its May 1964 issue, *The North Carolina Churchman* ran two opposing pieces, one by the same Chapel Hill physician, Frank Williams, and the other by a Raleigh attorney, on whether the church should be involved in public protests on behalf of civil rights. Gradualism would not bridge the widening divide.<sup>8</sup> Even Bishop Baker was being drawn off the sidelines, as he lent his endorsement to an effort by the clergy of St. Joseph's and St. Luke's to enlist funds from the national church for the legal defense fund for Duke Divinity School faculty members Robert Osborn and Harmon Smith. Baker continued to oppose civil disobedience as a matter of principle, saying "I cannot approve breaking the law, feeling that this hurts our cause," but he added: "I have determined that these men were not trespassing as charged."<sup>9</sup>

That was Bishop Baker. As Bishop Fraser surveyed what was happening in early 1965, he felt that the diocese and the state were being afforded a "second chance" to learn from the mistakes of other American cities with respect to urbanization and race relations.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *North Carolina Churchman* (February, 1964): 7; *North Carolina Churchman* (March, 1964): 12; *North Carolina Churchman* (May, 1964): 8, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Richard H. Baker to Arthur Walmsley, Telegram dated May 4, 1964. Baker Papers, folder "Committee on Race Relations" Box 10, Diocesan Archives, Raleigh. See also Charles Maclin to Arthur Walmsley, May 1, 1964, copy in the Baker Papers, same folder. Note also that in May of 1963, Bishops Baker and Fraser issued a pastoral statement to be read (voluntarily) in all Raleigh churches on May 12, 1963, urging desegregation of all Raleigh institutions serving the public and the patronage of those who comply. Baker Papers, folder "Committee on Race."

<sup>10</sup> *North Carolina Churchman* (October, 1965): 12.

But the time for observation and “second chances” was quickly drawing to an end. In September 1967, General Convention, under the leadership of Presiding Bishop John Hines, focused its attention on what was happening in America’s cities and created the General Convention Special Program (GCSP) fund: a nine-million-dollar grant program over three years to fund projects targeting black empowerment in the poorest neighborhoods. Moreover, the church elected to bypass its traditional leadership structures—white and black—in order to establish a more direct pipeline to grassroots organizations working in communities of greatest need.<sup>11</sup>

The diocese followed suit. When convention gathered in early February of 1968, the Rev. Thomas Smyth, serving in Greensboro, offered this resolution:

Whereas: The crisis in our society has been recognized as the urgent priority for the mission of the Church, and

Whereas: The General Convention has called upon the Diocese to become involved in this crisis in American life, and

Whereas: The Diocesan Council set before us a position paper which generated widespread interest and focused our attention for action on this matter in this Convention, and

Whereas: The urban population of the State of North Carolina is chiefly our pastoral responsibility

Therefore be it resolved:

That the 152<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of North Carolina direct the Diocesan Council to adopt this crisis as their *chief priority during 1968* [emphasis mine] by designating an appropriate structure to explore the needs within our own Diocese: to determine available resources; and to develop on the local, area and diocesan levels programs, such as:

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<sup>11</sup> Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *Episcopalians & Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington, Ky.: 2000), 177-181. A lengthy article explaining the GCSP ran in the *North Carolina Churchman* (December, 1967): 5-7; 10, 11.

1. Providing scholarships for the poor to attend existing parish nurseries and kindergartens.
2. Establishing pre-school educational opportunities for the poor.
3. Encouraging churchmen to provide leadership and support for the disadvantaged to be heard in city councils, by housing authorities, and other decision-making groups.
4. Supporting efforts on the part of industry and education to enable the unemployed and under-employed to improve themselves through advanced training and to find better opportunities to improve their economic status.
5. Sponsoring low-cost housing for the poor.
6. Increasing the opportunities for the young to benefit from Diocesan camping and educational facilities.

This motion passed and was adopted.<sup>12</sup>

“Breathing space” was over. The time for engagement was here and now. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in early April served to underscore the urgency. Bishop Fraser was called upon to preach at a Raleigh memorial service for King on Sunday, April 7. His words were printed in the May edition of *The North Carolina Churchman* which bore the cover, “‘Urban Crisis’ Comes to North Carolina.” Fraser noted:

The assassination of this leader of social justice must mark the beginning of action *now* to eradicate the injustices he has so often struggled to bring to our attention. If this is not the case, this day of national mourning will be transformed into a day of national failure to take advantage of another opportunity to correct the evils and wrongs of our society. . . We must continue to dream of a great America for all people, but we must *Act* to

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<sup>12</sup> *NCDJ* 152<sup>nd</sup> (1968): 56, 57.

make that dream a reality. People so often say that it is a matter of proper timing, but Dr. King's death says, "that time is now!"<sup>13</sup>

But what would it take to mobilize the diocese to realize such lofty goals? And who would spearhead such efforts?

Among the champions for this urban crisis initiative was one pivotal figure: George Esser, an Episcopal layman then serving as Executive Director of the North Carolina Fund, America's premier anti-poverty program.<sup>14</sup> Back in 1962, while still at the Institute of Government in Chapel Hill, Esser had overseen the wholesale reorganization of the diocese. Now Esser's wisdom and guidance were being sought in the church on the issue of how best to address problems of poverty and race. In August 1967, as preparations were being made for the General Convention Special Program which would be unveiled in September, Esser was called to New York for consultation.<sup>15</sup> By this time, Esser had become a convert to confrontation as the best strategy for social change. Of great significance is the fact that the man responsible for Esser's shift from accommodation [working within the system] to confrontation [protesting the system] was his own staff person, Howard Fuller. In an oral history, this is what Esser had to say: "In the Fund I gradually became a supporter of the idea that there needs to be real confrontation for change to take place. . . . The major contribution the Fund made was to provide a statewide voice for poor people to both define their needs, in terms of services, and to select their own representatives. That came from Howard Fuller, the one person at the Fund who was consistent in both talking about the

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas A. Fraser, "Whither Now, America?" *North Carolina Churchman* (May, 1968): 2.

<sup>14</sup> See Robert R. Korstad & James L. Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to end Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: 2010).

<sup>15</sup> George Esser with Rah Bickley, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund: 1963-1970. An Oral History* (Privately published through Booksurge/Amazon: 2007), 283.

need for poor people to express themselves, and whose work really gave the poor an opportunity to do that.”<sup>16</sup>

Here in North Carolina, Fraser also turned to Esser for insight into the problems of poverty and race. In September, he invited Esser to address clergy conference on the subject of “Urban Problems in North Carolina.” Esser was now in the latter stages of wrapping up his five-year term as Executive Director of the North Carolina Fund. Looking back on his recent work and looking ahead to what American society might look like in the year 2000, he did not picture utopia. Rather, he warned: “we can expect society, as it approaches the year 2000, to be ‘more fragile, more susceptible to hostilities and to polarization along many different lines.’” In Esser’s analysis, the problems were rooted in our racial history which produced and perpetuated extreme disparities in opportunities for blacks and whites. But most troubling, he said, was the gap between white and black attitudes and perceptions. He explained:

Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all persons polled in North Carolina in a special survey this spring thought that poor people were poor primarily because of lack of education. Negroes rated lack of job training, racial discrimination, and the unavailability of jobs as the next most important reasons. But almost 70% of the whites believed that laziness was a major cause of poverty. Whites agreed that job training was important but discounted racial discrimination as a cause of poverty.

The same disagreement extended to the causes of unemployment and reasons why people were on welfare. An astonishing 72% of all whites felt that laziness was the major reason behind unemployment . . . Negroes on the other hand emphasized lack of education, lack of job training and race. . . .

It is not surprising then, in view of the persistent myths, that whites and Negroes disagree so violently about the existence of opportunity in North

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<sup>16</sup> Esser, *My Years at the North Carolina Fund*, 235.



Carolina. 60% of all whites in this state believe that Negroes have access to equal opportunity for jobs and education and housing. Only 6% of Negroes agree. But most whites go even further. They believe that the Negro is an inferior person, that he should not receive equality until he proves that he deserves it . . . . The Negro, understandably, vehemently disagrees.

And so we reap the harvest of more than two centuries of slavery and discrimination.

No one deplores the current trend to polarization of attitudes more than I, but in my judgement it is the white man, the white political leader, the white business man, the white teacher and welfare worker, who must first re-examine his attitude and prepare to sit down with the black man and begin to solve problems. We cannot hope to change attitudes as a pre-requisite to action; we must hope they will change as a result of action.

Today's cry for 'law and order' is an effort to escape back into a simpler world. It takes no account of two centuries of discrimination and injustice. It takes no account of the principles on which this nation was built. It takes no account of God's will. But it is there; it is real; and it is one of the basic issues in our coming election.

But even when we pass this November, the problem will still be there. Don't believe it can be dealt with paternalistically, for paternalism went out with Uncle Tom. More likely we will have to deal with hostility . . . and, yes, even more possibilities of riots until we begin to provide effectively and constructively for jobs and education and housing and for social justice.<sup>17</sup>

How the clergy heard this stinging rebuke to North Carolina white society is worth pondering, even today. But it reveals the existence within the diocese of a highly progressive, highly knowledgeable, and highly-placed advocate of what we today would call racial equity. Esser, a white man, understood and supported the aims of

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<sup>17</sup> George H. Esser, Jr. "Urban Problems in North Carolina, Clergy Conference, Diocese of North Carolina, September 8, 1968," 12. Unpublished ms. in Fraser Papers, Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina.

the Black Power movement as embodied by Howard Fuller and others. And Esser's was a voice that Fraser evidently wanted the clergy to hear.

Fraser was also eager to see the 1968 convention's urban crisis resolution effectively implemented. By the spring of 1968, parishes were being encouraged to undertake programs that aligned with the urban crisis initiative as Council sought the appropriate structure and staffing to engage this work.

What the Council began to learn was sobering. At its May 1968 meeting, Council heard from Herbert Callender of the GCSP field evaluation unit. Mr. Callender proceeded to question the sincerity of Council members and their ability to design an effective means of speaking to the present crisis. This is what ensued as reported in the Council minutes: "Some discussion of the 'problem' took place. It was pointed out by Mr. Callender and the other black persons in the room that white people and white racism are the problem. Mr. Callender indicated that the approach of some white people in the room was unrealistic." In Callender's judgment, the approach Council was prepared to take "might be satisfactory to salve white guilt, but it would not accomplish anything among poor people." In the end, Bishop Fraser stepped in to suggest that one black person be added to diocesan staff as soon as possible and that the \$20,000.00 earmarked for the 'Urban Crisis' be used to hire a team to look at the 39 counties comprising the diocese and develop a fact-based program.<sup>18</sup>

In any event, the Diocese proceeded to shape its urban crisis response by designating St. Titus' in Durham as an Urban Ministry Center and asking its Priest in Charge, the Rev. E. Nathaniel Porter, to serve as Director of the Urban Crisis Program. The idea behind the center was to use St. Titus' as a model and a

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<sup>18</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Diocesan Council, May 31, 1968. Fraser Papers. Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina.

training center from which other programs might grow. To guide and support this work, Council formed an Urban Crisis Advisory Committee, composed of 12 lay people: 4 white, 8 black, and headed by a colleague of Esser's from the Institute of Government, Mason Thomas. Thus, Council could announce to the 1969 diocesan convention that substantial strides were being made with respect to the urban crisis program.<sup>19</sup>

But the work envisioned for St. Titus' was soon eclipsed by another Durham-based program: The Malcolm X Liberation University. The Malcolm X Liberation University grew out of efforts by Howard Fuller to help African American students at Duke University pressure the administration and faculty into creating a robust program of African studies. When these efforts proved unsuccessful, Fuller thought they should start their own school—with a curriculum, faculty and student body that would center in and serve the black community exclusively. Hoping to get underway in the fall of 1969, Fuller applied for and received a \$15,000.00 emergency grant through the General Convention Special Program. Fr. Porter, as director of the diocesan urban crisis program gave his stamp of approval, as did Bishop Fraser (albeit Fraser said he wished the school had a different name). This was July 1969.<sup>20</sup>

At the national level, the Church was preoccupied with formulating a response to the Black Manifesto, a well-publicized call for white churches to invest \$500 million in black communities and businesses as reparation for slavery and institutionalized racism. Some in the leadership of the Episcopal Church were

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<sup>19</sup> Mason P. Thomas, Jr., "Diocese's Urban Crisis Committee Reports on Activities Since '68," *North Carolina Churchman* (June 1969): 7; 10-13.

<sup>20</sup> For a highly informative and detailed examination of the steps by which the grant to the Malcolm X Liberation University was made, and the subsequent controversy, see Judy Mathe Foley, "Diary of a Grant," *The Episcopalian* (July 1970). Additional information can be found in the Thomas A. Fraser Papers, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

sympathetic to the aims of the Manifesto, even if they objected to the notion of reparations. And the effort to walk the tightrope between awarding grants for black economic development while rejecting the demands of the Black Manifesto consumed much of the Special General Convention held in August of that year.<sup>21</sup>

While Presiding Bishop Hines, and here in North Carolina Bishop Fraser, were still preoccupied with the Black Manifesto controversy, Fraser received word from the GCSP office that they were processing a 2<sup>nd</sup> grant to the MXLU in the amount of \$30,000.00. Fraser quickly called on the Urban Crisis Advisory Committee to provide him with an evaluation, and after two days of meetings on September 20 and 21, including an extensive interview with Fuller himself, the committee told Fraser that in their view, the MXLU met the screening criteria for a GCSP grant. Fraser passed this finding along to the GCSP office in New York, and the grant was duly authorized on September 25.

But when the grant was publicly announced and word got out, both on WRAL-TV and in the local press, the firestorm of criticism was swift and severe. On October 20, in view of what he termed “an apparent division in the diocese over the grant,” Bishop Fraser sent a statement to clergy, senior wardens, and council members. He reviewed the steps by which Fr. Porter and the Urban Crisis Committee came to support the grant, and he announced that Council would be holding a special meeting on October 31. Should clergy, vestries, and congregations wish to express support of the decision or express their dissent, he invited them to let him or Council members know prior to October 31.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For the text of the “Manifesto of the National Black Economic Development Conference,” see August Meier, Elliott Rudwick, and Francis L. Broderick, eds. *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Indianapolis, 1971): 536-549. For the controversy in the Episcopal Church, see *North Carolina Churchman* (October 1969), 2-5.

<sup>22</sup> See the November 1969 issue of *North Carolina Churchman* and “Diary of a Grant” for accounts of the news coverage and Fraser’s October 20 memorandum.

The next ten days witnessed a veritable stampede by vestries, clergy, and lay people to go on record. This is the material that principally constitutes the files that Bishop Fraser had sealed when his papers were archived in the mid-80s. So, what do they reveal?

White laity fell into 3 camps:

1. Those who saw the MXLU grant as the “last straw”—clinching proof that the Church had gone off the rails. Many of these letters were accompanied with declarations that the diocese and national church would get no more of their money.
2. Those who upheld an integrationist vision for church and society; expressed loyalty to the church and applauded efforts to address racial matters, but who objected to this particular action on grounds that Fuller was a troublemaker and a black separatist; that the MXLU was not a well-planned project, and that there was no local support for it. Many Duke-affiliated Episcopalians referenced Fuller’s efforts to mobilize on campus as proof of his unfitness. These letters often came with declarations of continuing loyalty to the church.
3. A small number of white respondents, such as Dr. David Smith of Durham, endorsed the grant, citing respect for the Bishop and the Urban Crisis Advisory Committee and a desire to see the church taking risks on behalf of the black community. In their letters, they referenced the fact that their vestries had taken a stand against the grant and they wanted another voice to be heard.

George Esser, not surprisingly, was among those who strongly supported the grant. He had commended it to Bishop Fraser on September 22, when Fraser was still reviewing the recommendation of the Urban Crisis Advisory

Committee. On November 10, Esser and his wife Mary went before a called session of the vestry of his own parish, the Chapel of the Cross, to plead for reconsideration of their resolution condemning the grant. The Essers' efforts resulted in a general statement of support for diocesan institutions and the "philosophy behind the General Convention Special Program," but the vestry let stand its original resolution disapproving of the grant itself. Undaunted, the Essers took the further step of writing Presiding Bishop Hines, making a personal contribution to the GCSP, and noting their distress "at the failure of churchmen in our diocese . . . to understand the very real problems we face in our society and the efforts which the Church is making to deal with those problems;" then adding, "but at the same time we are most grateful for your courageous leadership under most difficult circumstances."<sup>23</sup>

By contrast, Blacks expressed solidarity with the grant and unqualified support for the Bishop and the Urban Crisis Committee (though some voiced reservations about Fuller and the viability of MXLU). Blacks noted with bitterness and bemusement the new-found white antipathy to separatism and embrace of integration. The North Carolina chapter of the Union of Black Clergy and Laity wrote:

Having been born and nurtured by a separatist policy for 300 years in the Episcopal Church – never withdrawing or threatening to withdraw from our beloved Church "throughout all the chaotic eras of emancipation from slavery," we now find ourselves in a position of deep concern for our brethren, who, despite the pass of the centuries, cling doggedly to the "rhetoric" of other ages. Throughout the history of the Church the financial

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<sup>23</sup> George Esser to Bishop Fraser. Telegram. September 23, 1969; Mary and George Esser to The Rev. Thomas R. Thrasher, et al. November 10, 1969. Fraser Papers, UNC-Chapel Hill. Vestry minutes of the Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill, for November 6 and November 10, 1969. Parish archives, Chapel Hill; Esser to John Hines, January 29, 1970, quoted in "Diary of a Grant," *The Episcopalian* (July, 1970) 25, 26.

contributions of blacks have never been refused, nor have we refused to contribute to a Diocese which supported institutions which we could not attend or facilities to which we could not gain access. It is ironic at this time that the majority group finds itself frustrated by “discussion of separatism,” when in fact throughout the ages the minority group has not only supported white separatism but found it necessary, even though galling, to tolerate it while being loyal to the Church.<sup>24</sup>

Cecil Patterson, a St. Titus’ layman and a member of the Urban Crisis Advisory Committee, put it this way to Bishop Fraser:

The Committee interpreted the Malcolm X proposal the same way you did—i.e., that it was for blacks but that whites would not be excluded. We assumed further, that no white person in his right mind would want to go there, and that, hence, the “for black” label would be meaningless. I might suggest since so many of the white Episcopalians have suddenly discovered such a burning zeal for integration, that some of them do what blacks have always had to do—apply for Malcolm X, get themselves turned down, prove that the turn-down was on the basis of race, and then give that information to the National Church.<sup>25</sup>

It should be noted here that this was the point in time when ESCRU dissolved and the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) was formed. Simply put, the white leadership of ESCRU was wedded to integration, whereas black leaders saw the value in black-led efforts at self-reliance. Hence the demise of ESCRU and the rise of the UBE.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> [Statement from the North Carolina Chapter of the Union of Black Clergy and Laity] titled “For Immediate Release.” October 30, 1969. Fraser Papers, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill. See also a subsequent position paper from black Episcopalians on support for the GCSP, ND. Fraser Papers, UNC.

<sup>25</sup> C.L. Patterson to Bishop Fraser. 27 November 1969. Fraser Papers, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

<sup>26</sup> Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 182-186; 204.205

White clergy took to pulpit and parish newsletters. To a man, they emphasized loyalty to church, respect for orderly process, and care for one another. A number, such as the Revs. Jim Abbott and Jim Prevatt, wrote the bishop to offer support.

With few exceptions, white parishes and vestries rose up in protest against the grant. One of the exceptions was Holy Family, Chapel Hill; another was St. Anne's, Winston-Salem.<sup>27</sup>

So, what happened on Halloween 1969? Diocesan Council met for 7 hours! In the end, they issued a statement expressing confidence in the Bishop and the Urban Crisis Advisory Committee, and reaffirming their commitment to the diocesan Urban Crisis Program, but they called on Executive Council to revise the GCSP grant process to insure appropriate time for consultation at diocesan level and to make provision for Diocesan Council to express their concern and advise to the Bishop. Clearly, Council didn't want to be put in a reactive position again, scrambling to explain something they didn't fully understand or endorse.<sup>28</sup>

This request for procedural changes met with resistance from the GCSP staff, who didn't want to cede control of timing and grant selection to southern bishops or dioceses. The predictable result was three years of back-and-forth wrangling. But Fraser was able to establish a local committee review process for subsequent grants.<sup>29</sup>

When the diocese gathered on January 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> for the 1970 convention, delegates faced a \$165,000.00 budget shortfall, the cumulative impact of

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<sup>27</sup> "Resolution of the Vestry of the Church of the Holy Family, Chapel Hill," November 3, 1969. Fraser Papers, UNC-CH. St. Anne's, Winston-Salem, introduced a resolution at the 1970 convention supporting the grant. See *NCDJ 154<sup>th</sup>* (1970) 184.

<sup>28</sup> For the complete text of the Diocesan Council Resolution, see Thomas A. Fraser to Leon Modeste, November 3, 1969. Fraser Papers, UNC-CH.

<sup>29</sup> See Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 199, 200; see also the extensive correspondence preserved in the Fraser Papers, UNC-CH. On the revised procedures for local committee review of GCSP grants, see "Bishop Projects Grant Procedure," *North Carolina Churchman* (January 1971) 13, 14.



congregations and individuals who made good on their threat to withheld funds in protest of the MXLU grant. The ensuing debates and discussions were contentious, but the diocese did not pull apart. The delegates passed resolutions calling on the national church to reform its GCSP grant procedures, but this had the effect of putting enough distance between diocese and national church to keep the diocesan urban crisis program intact. (That is, people who felt a need to protest the grant could focus their unhappiness on the national church and not direct their criticisms at Fraser or the diocesan urban crisis program). The Convention also embraced black leaders and black institutions within the church. 1970 saw blacks elected to Diocesan Council (Dr. Arthur Jackson of Greensboro), the Thompson Home Board of Directors (Cecil Patterson of Durham), and the Standing Committee (Prezell Robinson of St. Augustine's, Raleigh); indeed, St. Augustine's received funding at an unprecedented level. Fr. Porter and members of the diocesan Urban Crisis Advisory Committee personally addressed the convention and detailed from their own experience what it feels like to be black in a white society. Following the convention, Fraser could write a pastoral letter to the Diocese, touting these and other achievements.<sup>30</sup>

1970 saw Fr. Porter and the Racial and Urban Affairs Program facilitating leadership training and interracial dialogues. Bishop Fraser renewed his attack against restrictive pledging. 1971 saw parishes that withheld funds the previous year returning to the fold.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *NCDJ 154<sup>th</sup>* (1970); the text of the Pastoral Letter to be read on Sunday, February 15 was included in *North Carolina Churchman* (March 1970), 2. An intriguing analysis of how the Convention managed to avert a liberal-conservative split was offered by Dr. Sarah Lemmon in the April 1970 issue of the *Churchman*, 12, 13.

<sup>31</sup> For a report of the 1970 activities of the Urban Crisis Program, see *North Carolina Churchman* (February 1971), 4; for Bishop Fraser's attack on restrictive pledging, see (April, 1970), 2; for the acceptance of program quotas, compare (January 1971), 2,3 and (September 1972), 4,5.

Thus, the diocese continued its work in the areas of poverty and race into the early 1970s, but the progressive voice of George Esser and black power advocates was no longer ascendant. No longer was this work regarded, as it was in 1968, as the “chief priority” in the diocese. In 1972, a second grant to the MXLU, now headquartered in Greensboro, came up for consideration as part of a larger block grant request through the Diocese of Newark. This time a local committee of Greensboro clergy and wardens unanimously disapproved the application, and Howard Fuller withdrew from the block grant request. The same year, Fr. Porter resigned as Program Director for Racial and Urban Affairs to take a position at Howard University, and St. Titus’ Durham ceased to be the urban crisis center. Layman William F. Brock of Raleigh, one time director of student activities at Shaw University and a former employee of the North Carolina Fund, succeeded Porter. Brock promised continuity; he made local support and community involvement a point of emphasis, along with diversity training and leadership development.<sup>32</sup>

When the national church met in general convention in 1973, it brought the GCSP to a close. Presiding Bishop John Hines, the chief instigator of the GCSP, resigned, and John Allin, Bishop of Mississippi, was elected as his successor. In mid-1974, Bill Brock would resign as diocesan Director of Racial and Urban Affairs and would not be replaced. But before GCSP closed up for good, there was one last highly notable grant awarded in North Carolina, namely, to the Black Panther party in Winston-Salem for non-emergency medical transportation. A harbinger of things to come, in this instance the Black Panther Party worked closely and cooperatively with the local committee to structure the grant, which

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<sup>32</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grant to MXLU and Fuller’s response, see *The NC Churchman* (September 1972), 2. On the program plans for Racial and Urban Affairs, see *The NC Churchman* (June 1972), 5 and (October 1972), 5.

was endorsed by the Episcopalians of Winston-Salem and by Bishop Fraser, and which was funded by the GCSP.<sup>33</sup>

After 1973, at both diocesan and national levels, programs to address racism and aid black communities were subsumed in larger projects. Parish investment became the *sine qua non* of social ministry. But in 2006, the national church brought renewed attention to the legacy of slavery and race; and in 2015, racial justice and reconciliation once again became a mission priority for our church. The recent unrest in Ferguson, Baltimore, and even here in Charlotte, hearkens back to the summers of 1965-68; the Black Lives Matter campaign carries echoes of Black Power. So, the question becomes: what do we bring forward from the 1960s to help us set our course today?

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<sup>33</sup> On the 1973 General Convention and its aftermath, see Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 209-213. On the grant to the Black Panthers, see *The NC Churchman* (May-June 1973), 10; see also Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics 1965-1980* (Athens: 2009), 119-121.