



EPISCOPAL PEACE FELLOWSHIP

Affiliated With the Fellowship of Reconciliation
300 NINTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10001

Code 212 - 675 - 2141

FRJ
Chairman
THE REV. THOMAS F. PIKE
73 Morris Avenue
Yonkers, N.Y. 10705

Co-Directors
NATHANIEL W. PIERCE
ROBERT FINCH HASKELL

HOW TO ORGANIZE A CHAPTER OF THE EPISCOPAL PEACE FELLOWSHIP

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship performs two roles which are unduplicated in the peace movement. It struggles to free the Episcopal Church from complicity with the military establishment in America, and to make the Episcopal Church live up to its statements on Christian peacemaking. The EPF also has a unique opportunity to educate and radicalize Episcopalians to the militarization of society and to lead them into the peacemaking community. The success of these programs on the national level depends on their success at the local level.

The greatest problem in forming an EPF chapter is to keep it going. An EPF chapter will survive and grow only as long as it is making progress toward changing the community. Imaginative design of goal-oriented programs thus deserves more thought on the part of those interested in setting up an EPF chapter than any other area.

PROGRAM

Programs which are oriented toward either demilitarizing the Church, or forcing the Church to take a stand on a issue, or radicalizing and educating other Episcopalians other than members of the chapter, will make a chapter grow and keep it highly effective. A good group program, for example, would be a campaign to end the custom of the blessing of the national colors in the Cathedral on Armed Forces Day. Such a campaign could involve sending a delegation to see the Bishop, organizing a letter-writing campaign, sending chapter members out to speak at Church coffee hours on the topic, and, if finally unsuccessful, organizing a sit-in in front of the Cathedral doors on Armed Forces Day. This is a good action because, (1) It seeks to achieve a specific goal, (2) It involves all the members of the chapter, (3) It educates Episcopalians in the area by forcing them to take a stand on the subject and (4) It provides an opportunity for getting previously uncommitted Episcopalians involved. Conversely, the worst program a chapter can embark on is one that serves the self-interest of its members. For example, making the main program of the chapter a great-pacifist-books discussion group would kill a chapter off quite quickly.

In all actions, try not only to involve the whole membership of the chapter in the action but also, try to get other Episcopalians involved in the project.

Actions can be divided up into three types. There are educational actions, goal-oriented actions and prophetic actions. Educational actions are aimed at changing the general attitudes of Episcopalians and the general public on a certain issue. Educational actions may include leafletting high schools on the draft, setting up a speaker's bureau, or setting up conferences on a certain topic. Again, it is usually better to make educational actions issue-oriented, rather than philosophy-oriented.

If you are designing a conference, try to design it around a controversial topic, such as violence on campus, the Anti-Ballistic Missile or chemical and biological warfare. Invitations to attend the conference should go out to as many people as possible, especially to other Episcopalians. The conclusion of any issue-oriented conference should be a number of workshops to design an action in your own community to solve or protest the issue. The people attending the conference are thereby brought into commitment against the military society.

Organizing speaker's groups is an excellent way to both spread an educational message and to involve the members of the chapter. Church coffee hours, church youth groups, Kiwanis Clubs and Rotary Clubs are frequently desperate for speakers on any topic.

The second type of action is that meant to achieve a particular objective. For example, getting RPTC abolished from a local high school; convincing local stores not to carry war toys or getting the diocesan office to fund a draft counseling center. These actions may or may not involve civil disobedience as a last resort, but they are all aimed at achieving a goal that can be achieved.

When trying to achieve goals in the secular society, it is frequently desirable to form a coalition with other peace groups in the community to gain greater political power than the chapter has alone. Form a community council with other movement groups such as the FOR, WRL, CALCAV, the Resistance, WSP or WILPF. Even when amalgamated with other peace groups, the EPF still has a unique opportunity to get other previously uncommitted Episcopalians involved in the peace movement.

In picking an action, it is important not to over-extend the resources of the chapter, or of the coalition of peace groups. Choose the projects in which you will engage carefully with a view to the resources you have to invest.

The third type of action is prophetic action. The archetype of prophetic action is the Old Testament prophet who comes into the city, shakes the dust off his feet and tells the inhabitants that they are doing the wrong things and are headed straight to hell if they don't change. The prophetic action is aimed at dramatizing the existence of immoral institutions in the society, but the prophetic action, unlike the goal oriented action, is usually used when there is no hope of specific reform or change in the situation. Examples of prophetic actions are draft card burning and the Milwaukee-14 action. Neither one was aimed at actually stopping the draft, but both pointed out the immorality of the draft.

Many situations are open to both goal-oriented and prophetic actions. On the issue of the draft, for example, one could either start a program to educate people in the community on the evils of the draft, with a view toward convincing the Representative and Senators from the area to vote for repeal of the draft, or one could get people in the community together to burn their draft cards publicly.

All actions have both prophetic and goal-oriented content. Analyze the action and the goal you are trying to achieve, and decide which side to emphasize. Emphasizing the prophetic possibilities of the action, for example, will mean that design, organization, publicity and follow-up to the action will be different than if the goal-oriented possibilities were emphasized.

IDEAS FOR ACTIONS

The draft is an issue which can be dramatized in any community. Conscientious objectors and resisters can be encouraged and supported by establishing a draft information or draft counselling center. A draft information center does not offer individual draft counselling, but it stocks literature on the draft and can refer young men to draft counselors, ministers, and friendly anti-war doctors and psychiatrists. Try to get sponsorship, office space and funds for draft materials from the diocese. This will force the diocese to commit itself to the spirit of the resolution of the General Convention of 1967, which urged the dioceses to offer "counsel and advice to those members of our Church who have problems of conscience with regard to the prospect of the military draft."

A further step would be to try to get a diocesan draft counseling center established. Draw up a proposal for funding a full time salaried draft counselor. Include in such a proposal the need for a draft counseling center in your area, and the consequences to many young men in your community if they do not receive competent advice on the draft. Find out which diocesan committee has the authority to appropriate funds for such a center. Have "friendly" members of the committee introduce the proposal. Lobby for the proposal with other members of the committee by making appointments to see them and expressing your concern. The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church has funds available to match with diocesan funds for such centers. Write the Rev. Robert Martin, 815 Second Avenue, New York, New York 10017, to see what kind of matching funds he has available for your proposal. The national headquarters of the United Presbyterian Church and the United Churches of Christ also have funds available for draft counseling centers. It might be possible to get together with groups of these denominations in your community to fund an ecumenical draft counseling center.

If a member of the chapter is a draft counselor, try to get a "Draft Counselling On The Air" program, in which the counselor would answer telephone questions on the draft while on the air. Try various "liberal" radio stations in town and see if they would sponsor such a program one-half hour every week. This type of program would raise the consciousness of the community about the pervasive influence of the draft on American society.

Another good anti-draft action is to try to set up draft forums in high schools. It may be necessary to get a military official to be with you on the panel to convince the local high school principal of the "fairness" of the forum.

Other actions which might be tried include picketing and boycotting stores that sell war toys at Christmas; dramatizing the exploitation of non-white or poor people in your community, or setting up a group to visit prisons and stockades in your community.

The best actions, however, revolve around the manifestations of the militarization of society in your own community. The members of a chapter are the best judge of the proper issue to pick to dramatize with an action in their community.

The easiest way to move against the Church's complicity with the military is to examine the statements of the national Church and the diocese on war and the military and to confront the diocese with the gap between what the Church says and what the diocese is doing. Overt examples of Church support for the military are good targets for actions. The blessing of local military units in the Cathedral each year, the existence of an Episcopal military prep school in your community, the existence of ROTC at Episcopal colleges all fall into this category.

PUBLICITY

The goal of any action is its political effect on the Church or on society. And the political effect of any action can be increased by effective use of the news media. One person in the chapter should be in charge of press relations for each action. He should acquire a list of contacts on the local newspaper staffs, television stations, and radio stations, in addition to a list of those reporters in the nearest large city who cover religious and social protest news for network television and radio and the wire services. Before each action, these contacts should be called and notified of the time and place of the action. If any special "personalities" are planning on participating in the action, the press should be notified of their names at this time. Before the action, a press release should be prepared describing the action in the past tense, as if it had been written right after the action. (Press releases have their own special style, format, and ways of including opinion. If you are not familiar with press releases, ask a local newspaper man to explain them to you.) At the action itself, the person in charge of press relations should stand apart from the action, explain it to the reporters present, hand out the press releases, and make available to the newsmen biographical information on the participants. After the action, copies of the press release should be mailed, special delivery, to all news media that would be likely to print the story, and who did not have representatives at the action. Include on your press release mailing list your diocesan paper and sympathetic national Episcopal and general religious magazines. Of course, if anything unexpected happens during the action, a new press release must be prepared before mailing it out.

GETTING A CHAPTER STARTED

A group can be started by first recruiting some like-minded people by word of mouth and by calling other EPF members in your area. The EPF national office would be happy to send you a list of EPF members in your area. Have a meeting and design a visible public action against some manifestation of the military in your community. Then send a letter to all the clergy in your community asking them to announce the action during their Sunday service. Follow up with a telephone call to these clergy. The action should draw a number of previously uncommitted Episcopalians. At the conclusion of the action, announce the time and place of the next meeting of your chapter and ask all participants to attend. Write up a press release on your action and on the formation of an EPF chapter in the diocese and send it to the diocesan newspaper. Include in the press release the name and telephone number of a member of your chapter and ask all participants to attend. Write up a press release on your action and on the formation of an EPF chapter in the diocese and send it to the diocesan newspaper. Include in the press release the name and telephone number of a member of your chapter for interested persons to contact. A brochure should also be made up announcing the purposes and activities of the chapter and copies should be mailed to all parishes in the area for their tract racks. After this initial publicity, further growth of the chapter will depend on the visibility and relevance of the actions that the chapter chooses.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

A successful chapter needs at least one dedicated person who will devote a lot of time to coordinating chapter activities and keeping communication between members open. After chapter members get to know each other, however, responsibility and work load should be spread around among the membership.

It is good if a chapter has some clergy members. However, clergy are reluctant to join any organization which has a layman as its leader. Some chapters have found it desirable to elect co-chairmen, one laymen and one clergyman.

Every chapter should have a "telephone tree" set up in case it is necessary to contact members quickly. If the chapter becomes large, a mimeographed newsletter is helpful in communicating among the membership.

MONEY

There are several ways to raise money for chapter activities. One can have monthly membership dues, assess the membership for money for specific projects, put on fund raising parties and activities, or get specific projects funded by large donors and institutions. Most chapters pursue a combination of these methods.

Membership dues of a dollar or two a month are usually needed to pay for the costs of the on-going organizational work of the chapter. Printing costs, mimeographing costs, and postage costs will occur regularly and the best way to cover them is with regular dues.

A small chapter will sometimes have a specific project, such as an exhibit at the diocesan convention, which costs \$100 or so. The best way to cover this expense is by assessing the membership of the chapter for the money.

Fund raising parties and activities are probably the easiest way to raise healthy amounts of money. The foremost principle in putting on a fund raising activity is to make sure that the event is publicized to the whole community and that large numbers of people come from outside the chapter membership. If only the membership shows up at a fundraising event, it will just be a disguised form of assessing the membership.

A monthly cocktail party at the home of one of the members may raise \$100 to \$200 every time it is held if the event is publicized properly. Charge one or two dollars at the door and ask 50¢ to \$1 donation a drink. Frequently it is possible to persuade a wealthy member or sympathizer to donate the liquor. Liquor stores may donate the liquor or give a discount on the price if you point out to the owner that it is supporting a church group.

A variation on this is to show a controversial movie (such as one on life in North Vietnam) during the cocktail party.

If you can persuade leading artistic talent (musicians, poets) in the community to contribute their services free for an evening, a restaurant or bar in the community may let you put on a benefit, in which the chapter charges five dollars admission at the door of the restaurant, and the restaurant gets to sell drinks to those who come. In a small town, where there is no opportunity to go out dancing, a rock group or dance band may draw more people than a number of performing artists.

Controversial and well know peace personalities may pass through your town on a speaking tour. If they can be persuaded to speak at your community's high school auditorium or other large meeting place, the chapter can publicize the event and sell the tickets. Sometimes the speaker will donate his time to help raise money for your chapter. Or, he may want to split the ticket receipts with you.

The final method of raising funds is to write proposals for funding specific projects, and to personally solicit the funds for the projects from large individual donors and institutions. Projects which might be funded this way include a draft-mobile with a full-time salaried staff person, a draft counselling center with a full-time salaried draft counselor, a coffee house for GI's from a nearby base, or a prison conditions newsletter. A proposal for starting any of these projects should stress the necessity of this project in the community and the consequences to your community if the project is not funded. It should include the rationale and philosophy behind the project, and include a detailed breakdown of necessary expenses. The Bishop of the diocese and the Canons at the Cathedral frequently know and might be willing to introduce you to potential large donors who will not give money to a radical Episcopal organization. If the chairman of the chapter to give money to a radical Episcopal organization. If the chairman of the chapter has enough breakfasts and lunches with potential large donors, he is bound to walk out with a check for several thousand dollars sooner or later. Community institutions, mens' clubs and Church organizations are also frequently willing to fund projects.

RELATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL OFFICE

The national office of the EPF functions as a coordinator of national actions, and as a communications center for passing news of imaginative actions initiated by one chapter on to other chapters. The national office would appreciate being placed on the mailing list of any chapter and would like to get reports and pictures of any chapter action for printing in the EPF Newsletter. Chapters should also send to the national office periodically a list of all people on the national list living in that chapter's area. All funds raised locally should be kept by each chapter for its own use, although contributions to the national office are always appreciated.

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