

Suicide Prevention and Youth: Saving Lives

Bill Number:

Hearing Date: March 2, 2004, 10:00 am

Location: SD-430

Witness:

The Reverend Doctor Paul D. Tunkle

The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer

Rector

Testimony

Paul Dennis Tunkle is a native of New York City. Born on February 6, 1950, he was raised as a secular Jew. He graduated from high school in New York, and attended City College of New York for two years, majoring in theoretical mathematics. From New York he moved to Colorado, where he met and married his wife, Judy. They then moved to Massachusetts for a brief time and settled in mid coast Maine. At age 24 he was baptized in the Episcopal Church. He continued his education at the University of Maine, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, cum laude, in 1981. From Maine his family moved back to New York City where he attended the General Theological Seminary in Manhattan, earning a Master of Divinity, cum laude, in 1984. After seminary he served as Assistant Rector at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Salisbury, North Carolina, Rector of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in South River, New Jersey and Rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Louisiana. In November 2001 he became Rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Baltimore. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from the School of Theology at Drew University in 1993. Paul has three children. Sam, age 30, is a third year surgery resident at the University of Florida Medical Center. Lea died in 1997 at age 22. Elizabeth, age 26, lives in San Francisco and studies music and social work. Involvement with the suicide postvention and prevention community began in 1998. He has attended the national conferences of the American Association of Suicidology, and he and his wife have begun and facilitated support groups for survivors of suicide in Louisiana and Maryland. He and Judy have conducted workshops in youth suicide prevention for clergy and lay youth workers in the Diocese of Maryland. In August of 2002 he and his family participated in a 26 mile walk for suicide awareness and prevention in Washington, DC. It was at this walk that he began working with the production team on a documentary for the Discovery Channel. That project was completed in the Fall of 2003, and is now in line for broadcast some time during 2004. It's title is, "Surviving Suicide: Those Left Behind". The film is by Connie Rinehart and Tom Donohue with Partisan Pictures. This documentary features three characters. Paul's family is one character, and describes the work of the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center and its work on prevention and postvention work with families and individuals affected by suicide