

The Seabury Press

At the completion of the second triennium of the "new" Seabury Press, the Church's official publishing house can report very substantial program services and business accomplishments. Seabury's commitment to excellence has achieved a distinguished and influential publishing program, and today the Seabury Press is recognized as one of the leading religious publishers in the English speaking world. The Seabury Press, a growing and diversified publishing enterprise, provides a full range of professional communication and education programs, and contributes significantly to the life and mission of the people of the Church.

Through its publishing, distribution, and professional services, the Seabury Press annually issues 100 important new titles, produces and distributes more than five million books and other materials, and provides professional editorial, production, and distribution services for some 50 agencies and programs in the Episcopal Church.

Seabury's financial reports indicate well controlled progress in the company's business affairs: annual sales in 1978 totaled \$4,800,000 continuing a steady growth pattern every year since 1972 when sales totaled \$1,200,000. Seabury has required no capital advances since 1967, and no subsidies since 1972; since 1973, the company has operated in the black and has had a cumulative surplus of more than \$1 million.

Mission and Mandate

The Seabury Press was established in 1951 by the Presiding Bishop, Henry Knox Sherrill, and the National Council of the Episcopal Church as a not-for-profit membership association to serve as the Church's official publishing house. In accordance with its charter, Seabury is mandated "to assist the Protestant Episcopal Church in the propagation, dissemination and furtherance of the Christian religion . . . and to promote, carry out, maintain and perform the functions of a publishing business."

The General Convention and the Executive Council have recognized Seabury's publishing role and service capability "as a vibrant and healthy part of the total life of the Church, serving the Church with genuine competence" (25th Anniversary resolution) and have recommended Seabury's services to the Church:

Resolved (September 1973), That the General Convention request each Commission and instrumentality responsible to the General Convention to utilize the services and facilities of the Seabury Press, being the official publishing house of the Episcopal Church (and of The Church Hymnal Corporation, an affiliate of The Church Pension Fund.)

Resolved, (August 1976), That the Executive Council express to the people of The Seabury Press our gratitude for their contributions over the last quarter century and that we express to them our pride in their outstanding achievements.

Resolved (September 1978), That the Executive Council encourage the Seabury Press to continue and expand its publishing, distribution, and professional services, and to contribute significantly to the life and mission of the people of the Church.

Program Services

The publishing programs of The Seabury Press appear under three special imprints: *Crossroad Books* (religious books in theology, biblical studies, religious education, liturgy and prayer books, spiritual renewal and ministry, counseling and pastoral concerns); *Continuum Books* (general books of literary, educational, social and

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behavioral concerns); and *Clarion Books* (general books for young people from preschool to young adult). Seabury annually publishes some 100 new books focused on a wide area of concerns and written by a growing number of distinguished authors. The quality of Seabury's publications has been praised by some 5,000 critical reviews annually, and has won numerous national prizes and book awards.

The distribution programs of The Seabury Press are provided through 10,000 bookstores, and directly to more than 50,000 individual and institutional customers through *Seabury Book Service* (a mail order service featuring *The New Review of Books and Religion* and a new Book Club program) and *The Seabury Bookstores* (two retail stores in New York City providing religious and general books to all publishers). Seabury annually promotes and distributes some 1,000 important new books of all publishers.

The professional service programs of The Seabury Press are coordinated by *Seabury Professional Services* (special editorial, design, production, lettershop and distribution services for church agencies). Seabury annually provides professional services for some 300 different projects ranging from newsletters to workbooks and fund-raising material for some 50 national Church agencies and programs including *Venture in Mission*, *The Every Member Canvass*, *The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief*, *The Church School Missionary Offering*, *The Good Friday Offering*, and *The United Thank Offering*.

Seabury's substantial long-range editorial developments including the new Church's Teaching Series, major author contracts, expanding distribution facilities here and abroad, a professional publishing staff, and continuing cooperation with the Church's agencies and parishes provide an essential base for future program services of the Seabury Press.

Support Services

Through a newly established Service Center in Somers, Connecticut, Seabury handles computerized order processing, credit accounting, warehousing and shipping for some 1,400 Seabury publications, 400 Executive Council materials, and more than 1,000 books of other publishers including exclusive marketing services for Pilgrim Press (United Church of Christ), SPCK of London, and partial services for The Church Hymnal Corporation. Seabury's staff of 100 professionals (including 20 sales representatives) includes editors, designers, promoters and administrators with many years of publishing experience. The management and senior staff members also maintain active leadership positions in the publishing industry and in numerous Church education committees throughout the country.

The Seabury Press cooperates actively with the Church's official agencies and programs, and a 1978 survey of all Episcopal parishes with a "Seabury Score Card" covering Editorial Programs, Design and Production, Distribution and Customer Services shows very encouraging results. "Satisfactory" to "Excellent" ratings total 88.7% against a "Needs Improvement" rating of 11.3%. A considerable percentage of available services are still unknown in many parishes, but the survey also shows numerous requests for additional programs and services to which the Seabury Press plans to respond urgently and creatively.

Prospects for the Future

Continuing challenges remain ahead despite Seabury's major financial turnaround, and the fragmentation of the Church's publishing activities has a negative impact on Seabury's economic situation. Seabury's explorations to strengthen the Church's

publishing services and to avoid costly competition presently also include ongoing consolidation discussions with the Church Hymnal Corporation.

The Executive Council has encouraged such a consolidation, and has authorized the Seabury Press to amend its charter so that any assets and future profits could go to the Church Pension Fund, and has also

Resolved (February 1979), That the Society forgive the contingent receivable from (1951-67) advances to the Seabury Press totalling \$1,163,442, to be effective at the time of consolidation of the publishing services of the Seabury Press and the Church Hymnal Corporation in 1979.

The Boards of The Seabury Press and The Church Pension Fund have agreed to implement a consolidation of The Seabury Press and The Church Hymnal Corporation in 1979. The organization of the Church's consolidated publishing services calls for a reconstituted publishing company, which will continue "Seabury" and "Church Hymnal" as trade names after complete functional consolidation of the present operations. A Church-wide Publishing Council is advising on publishing policies and programs, and a new Board of Directors, knowledgeable about religious publishing, is to direct the consolidated Church publishing company.

Presently, Seabury's concerns, direction and control are vested in its Board of Trustees, which is elected by the Executive Council. The Board has reaffirmed the principles of independent quality publishing while exploring expansion and consolidation of future program services for the Church. Seabury continues its extraordinary service commitment and professional publishing work, and the Trustees share the staff's confidence in Seabury's future contributions to the life and mission of the people it serves.

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