

The Standing Commission on the Church in Small Communities

MEMBERSHIP

The Rt. Rev. Andrew F. Wissemann, Diocese of Western Massachusetts (1991)
The Rt. Rev. Charles F. Duvall, Diocese of Central Gulf Coast (1994)
The Rt. Rev. C.I. Jones, Diocese of Montana (1994)
The Ven. Ben E. Helmer, Diocese of Western Kansas (1991) *Vice-Chair*
The Rev. Anna Frank, Diocese of Alaska (1991)
The Rev. Canon Roger S. Smith, Diocese of Maine (1994)
Richard M. Graybill, Diocese of Northern Michigan (1991) *Chair*
Dr. Wallace Rehberg, Diocese of Spokane (1991)
Ms. Kathleen W. Bates, Diocese of Atlanta (1994)
Ms. Sandra Majors Elledge, Diocese of Southwestern Virginia (1994)
Ms. Veronica B. Flowers, Diocese of Honduras (1994)
Ms. Mary Hassell, Diocese of Minnesota (1994) Secretary

Executive Staff Officer:

The Rev. Allen Brown, Jr., New York, New York

The commission met four times during the triennium:

April 24-26, 1989 at St. Louis, Missouri

October 24-27, 1989 in the Diocese of Northern Michigan

March 22-25, 1990 at Kanuga, North Carolina

October 1-3, 1990 at Bangor, Maine

SUMMARY OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

St. Louis, Missouri: We reviewed the candidates for the staff officer position following the retirement of the Rev. Richard Gary. Recommendations were made by the commission to the Executive for the Advocacy, Witness and Justice unit at the Episcopal Church Center. The Presiding Bishop appointed the Rev. Allen W. Brown, Jr., as the staff officer for rural and small town ministries beginning October 15, 1989.

The commission also worked on refining the goals and objectives for the triennium at this meeting. We decided to meet in places that were appropriate to our common life and ministry, and that would allow us to visit unique ministries in rural communities addressing small church concerns.

Diocese of Northern Michigan: The commission went to this diocese for the purpose of observing an innovative program in small church training and development. The time included a day-long meeting with diocesan staff and people from various congregations engaged in the program. The commission also visited a large open pit iron mine at Palmer, Michigan, and learned about the economic impact of extractive industries in rural areas. (See resolution section of this report.)

In addition, the commission spent time following up on resolutions from the Detroit Convention, particularly D149, which asked the commission to develop a format for

evaluating congregations and a network for the exchange of information and strategies among dioceses and congregations. Our conclusions were: (1) that a single format for evaluation was not appropriate or helpful. However, several good instruments were identified, and a bibliography is being developed by the Rural and Small Town Ministries Office. (2) There are now several networks in place and in development. Among them are Coalition 14, New Directions Ministries, Inc., APSO, Sindicators, Rural Workers' Fellowship and Working Class Ministry and Synagogy—a newly developed group of persons who are interested in ministry development in rural and urban areas and small churches.

Kanuga, North Carolina: After receiving a report on dioceses working on evaluation and mission strategy development, the commission reviewed Resolution D150a, calling for discussion of interrelated issues contributing to our deteriorating environment, and to establish a network to implement a coordinated response and to provide an opportunity for the Church to voice its compassion and raise the level of awareness about environmental issues. We then expanded this concern by looking at the "rural crisis" which had prompted the drafting of this resolution in Detroit. One way of dealing with this and other issues affecting the Church in small communities was to assist in the funding of Synagogy, "a group of people brought together from both rural and urban situations to discuss the ministry of all baptized persons and to respond to the environment in which the Church is ministering."

The Synagogy meeting was held in Cincinnati in September of 1990. Attending were teams from rural, urban, Hispanic, African-American, Appalachian, Native American and Alaskan Indian communities, who shared the story of the problems and ministry within their local setting. The results from sharing these stories was an awareness that small communities can be defined culturally, in context and by self-perception. The crisis we face exists both in rural and urban communities, and the Church is developing responses which can be used interchangeably in urban or rural small communities. Participants in Synagogy expressed the awareness that coordinated efforts to address environmental issues and questions of ministry were not only possible but greatly desired. Members of Synagogy requested the commission to follow up on the conference with a number of recommendations.

One specific call was for the standing commission to make provision for development and funding of a network for seminarian internships designed as field training experiences for those who feel called to minister in rural areas and small communities. While the commission strongly supports the concept of seminarian internships in small communities, it is not the function of a standing commission to develop and fund specific programs. However, the commission intends to be an advocate for training experiences in rural and small communities through the Office of Rural and Small Town Ministries.

Bangor, Maine: Prior to the final meeting of the commission, members met with small church leaders from Province I in Portland, Maine. After participation in Sunday services at several small churches of the diocese, the final meeting of the commission was held at the Bangor Theological Seminary, long noted for its innovative work in rural ministry under the leadership of Douglas Walrath. The recommendations of the Synagogy conference were carefully considered. Several resolutions based on the recommendations were prepared for submission to the General Convention (see resolutions).

Additional time was spent considering resolutions on other subjects and recommending membership on the commission for the next triennium.

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FINANCIAL REPORT

	<i>1989</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Meetings	\$14,547	\$13,015	\$ 1,610	
Subcommittee		2,000		
Projects		5,000		
Telephone, Postage	300	300	300	
Reporting			1,700	
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	\$14,847	\$20,315	\$ 3,610	
				\$38,772

RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

Resolution #A172

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That this 70th General Convention**
- 2 **of the Episcopal Church support the continuing efforts of the Office for Rural and**
- 3 **Small Town Ministries to advocate appropriate economic development in non-**
- 4 **metropolitan areas while insuring that information and program models are shared**
- 5 **with those who need to know about them; and be it further**
- 6 *Resolved*, **That the Standing Commission on the Church in Small Communities con-**
- 7 **tinue to address issues of economic development, appropriate use of resources, the**
- 8 **disposal of waste, and matters arising from the continuing crisis in agriculture.**

EXPLANATION

The commission has become acutely aware of the great stresses placed on rural communities, interpersonal relationships among families and on individuals through exploitative development by industry, other businesses and government, and the failure to reach agreement on international trade and tariffs. It also recognizes the work done by the Presiding Bishop's Task Force on the Environment and Sustainable Development and its application to rural and small communities.

Resolution #A173

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That funding for a field officer for**
- 2 **Rural and Small Town Ministries be provided in this triennium, to expand the services**
- 3 **offered by the Church for rural and small congregations and small dioceses**

EXPLANATION

The commission continues to be concerned about the minimal funding for the Office of Rural and Small Town Ministries and the inability of one officer to provide the services demanded by various dioceses and programs for this ministry. We believe that the expansion of services is essential to the provision of support for the work of small dioceses and of our rural and small congregations.

Resolution #A174

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That 1994 be designated as a Year**
- 2 **of Celebration of the Small Church, a year in which the ministries of these churches**
- 3 **are lifted up and celebrated.**

EXPLANATION

The majority of churches within the Episcopal Church can be considered “small.” During the Decade of Evangelism we hope to join with similar celebrations planned by other denominations.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR NEXT TRIENNium

To identify and address those factors helpful or detrimental to the ministry and life of the Church in small communities and to create vehicles by which these can be shared.

Ongoing Objectives:

1. Work with the Council for the Development of Ministry and others involved with clergy training, deployment, education, and new models for lay and ordained ministry.
2. Work with Executive Council’s Mission Operations staff responsible for the Church’s ministry in small communities.
3. Acknowledge that ethnic and small congregations have special needs and issues.
4. Affirm our relationships with indigenous ministries, such as migrant ministries.
5. Work with Church Pension Fund personnel in a continuing effort to address the significant inequities in the salaries and benefits of clergy and lay workers who serve small communities.
6. Advocate for church policies which support and encourage clergy to remain in small communities.
7. Maintain relationships with and encourage the development of networks and ecumenical agencies concerned with small congregations.
8. Meet where we can observe and hear from the Church at work in rural communities.
9. Affirm and learn from ministries in small and rural congregations.
10. Support the Rural and Small Town Ministries Officer.
11. Provide advice to the Rural and Small Town Ministries Officer on the utilization of the Roanridge Trust, which provides “for the training of town and country ministry, and rural Christian workers.”

New Objectives and Goals:

1. Define small communities and small congregations culturally, in context and by self-perception.
2. Gather demographic data as a basis for better planning and support for ministry in small communities.
3. Expand our relationships with ecumenical and Episcopal Church bodies concerned with ministries in small communities, especially regarding rural, economic, ethnic, sociological, and environmental issues.

GOALS

1. We continue to seek funding for a field officer for the Rural and Small Town Ministries Office.
2. We seek to uphold the interrelatedness of urban and rural communities and the problems affecting them through the collecting and publishing of stories and data.
3. We seek to insure that clergy assigned to small congregations are appropriately and adequately trained and compensated for this ministry.

THE BLUE BOOK

4. We seek to insure that laity ministering in small congregations are well and competently trained for their ministry.

5. We seek to participate in the Decade of Evangelism through a focus on small congregations and small communities.

PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE TRIENNIUM

	1992	1993	1994	TOTAL
Meetings	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$ 9,000	
Office, telephone and publications	300	300	2,000	
Liaison	3,000	3,000	1,500	
Small Church study	11,125	13,450	-0-	
National Celebration of Small Church	6,660	17,960	-0-	
Networking Meetings	-0-	-0-	12,000	
	<u>\$39,085</u>	<u>\$52,710</u>	<u>\$24,500</u>	\$139,325

PROPOSED BUDGET RESOLUTION FOR THE TRIENNIUM

Resolution #A175

1992-1994 Budget Request of the Standing Commission on the Church in Small Communities

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, **That there be appropriated from the Assessment Budget of the General Convention the sum of \$139,325 for the triennium for the expenses of the Standing Commission on the Church in Small Communities.**