

The Standing Commission on Evangelism

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The Rev. Duc X. Nguyen, Fountain Valley, California

Mrs. Celia Vasco, Sugar Land, Texas

The Rt. Rev. Stewart C. Zabriskie, Las Vegas, Nevada, *Chair*

The Rev. Wayne Schwab, Evangelism Ministries Office, New York, New York
(retired, November 1, 1993)

SUMMARY

Meeting five times in this last triennium, the Standing Commission on Evangelism has remained faithful to its original task description "to hold up before the Church the needs and opportunities for the exercise of the Church's ministry of evangelism" (GC 1988, A059s). We have met in different locations around the Church for exposure to the varying expressions of evangelism which this Church enjoys. Our visits around the country have included meeting with provincial evangelism network personnel and local ministry representatives, who testified further to the commitment and imagination that characterize the sharing of the good news at the local and diocesan levels.

At the same time we have monitored the response to and implementation of the appropriate resolutions from the Phoenix General Convention in 1991, giving special attention to the goals and objectives set by our predecessors on this Commission. Details of that follow through are available in the Commission's meetings minutes.

Evangelism is as much deed as word, giving body to the Good News of God in Christ. It is our happy duty to affirm that substantial evangelism *is* happening at the local and diocesan levels, though it is not often given the wider attention claimed by other activities and foci in the Church. A simple request from the Commission for diocesan mission statements pertinent to evangelism brought a better than 80 percent response, frequently with specific program descriptions and goals for evangelistic endeavors. We have also noted the growing use and local adaptations of the catechumenal process as one significant way in which teaching the faith becomes a tool for training evangelists.

It has been our special privilege to work with the Rev. A. Wayne Schwab, the Church's Evangelism Ministries Coordinator since 1975, who retired on November 1, 1993.

His firm grasp of the truth that evangelism is the vocation of all the baptized has characterized the training materials that he and his evangelism network have prepared and taught throughout the provinces of the Church. We are committed to working with his successor in the new configuration at the Episcopal Church Center once that successor has been appointed, building on the strong foundation and structure which Wayne has developed over these past eighteen years.

The Commission also needs to acknowledge the reality of the many and considerable obstacles to evangelism, not the least of which is a spirit of contention in the Church, characterized by a lack of generosity among the members of this Body, which relies so heavily on the generosity of God in Jesus Christ. We distort both the public face of the Church and the face of Christ by pursuing a divisive agenda and condemning those who may indeed be listening to the Holy Spirit. We are always called to be kind to one another, even while acknowledging our differences. The need for repentance and changing the ways we treat one another in the public forum is still a serious need, even while we recognize with some pastoral sensitivity the trauma and risk of change.

Our main task as evangelists is to proclaim the Good News of God, who embraces our differences and uniquenesses in Christ, rather than to headline our divisions. We would reaffirm our common grounding in the Baptismal Covenant and find in that our call to unity and celebration of God's saving work in Christ.

It is our conviction that neither the particulars of affirmation nor the substance of repentance is well served by resolutions, for our commitment to evangelism is not a matter for legislation but of spirit and focus. We commend to this General Convention and to the Church the good news about what is already happening in our midst, united with the hope that our common strategy will grow to embrace all the more that focus where "true joys are to be found."

One resolution is in order in the context of this report. The Commission has been active in encouraging the coordination of work in secondary and higher education. Rather than recommend the formation of a separate Commission to support that work, we offer a resolution in the appropriate section of this report, having been in consultation with those active in Ministry in Higher Education.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMING TRIENNium

The Commission is committed to the following goals in the coming triennium:

- To encourage ways of renewing the public face of the Episcopal Church, centered in Good News.
- To continue to affirm, enjoy, and hold up for celebration the rich texture of our Christian community in its wide variety of ethnic constituencies, languages, idioms and cultural values as good news.
- To continue to explore, learn from, and share specific local efforts, experiences, and successes in this apostolic fellowship. — To work to expand the horizon beyond a "decade" for evangelism in order to acknowledge evangelism as normative in the Church's life, and to assist congregations and dioceses in owning and contributing to that momentum.
- To work to cultivate and honor a spirit of welcome and invitation as a proactive offering of the Church to the lapsed and unchurched, as a primary characteristic of the Good News of God in Christ.

THE BLUE BOOK

We acknowledge our context as a time of radical transformation, not only in the Church but in the political and social movements of the global community. For us it more than just another time of change, but truly a time of rediscovering our roots in Christ. In that spirit we recall two ready resources, one from the catechetical answers in *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the other from Scripture.

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ....The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love....The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members. (BCP, p.855)

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:14-15)

FINANCIAL REPORT

	1992	1993	1994
Appropriation	\$12,920	\$20,000	\$8,000
Expenditures	\$7,786	\$8,778	NA

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution #A034

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That the 71st General Convention expand the**
- 2 **membership of the Standing Commission on Evangelism to include a representative**
- 3 **from Ministry in Higher Education, to support the work of the national office of**
- 4 **Young Adult and Higher Education Ministry, to support and encourage ministry in**
- 5 **higher education throughout our Church, and to develop and share resources for**
- 6 **ministry in higher education.**

EXPLANATION

In all its forms, ministry in higher education seeks to convey the Gospel to universities and colleges. Our mission here is a response to our Lord's call to "go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15 NRSV) and is primarily evangelical.

PROPOSED BUDGET

	1995	1996	1997
Meetings	\$12,000	\$18,000	\$8,000
Conference	\$2,000	\$1,000	
Expenses	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u> </u>
	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$8,000

PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR BUDGET APPROPRIATION**Resolution #A035**

- ¹ *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring. **That there be appropriated from the**
² **Assessment Budget of General Convention the sum of \$43,000 for the 1995-97**
³ **triennium for the expenses of the Standing Commission on Evangelism.**