

The Standing Commission on the Church in Metropolitan Areas

MEMBERSHIP

- The Rt. Rev. Frank K. Allan (resigned)
Diocese of Atlanta, 1994
- The Rt. Rev. Robert Denig (replaced Bishop Allan)
Diocese of Western Massachusetts, 1994
- The Rt. Rev. Franklin D. Turner
Diocese of Pennsylvania, 1994
- The Rt. Rev. R. Stewart Wood
Diocese of Michigan, 1997
- The Ven. Enrique R. Brown
Diocese of New York, 1994
- The Very Rev. James Earl Cavanaugh
Diocese of West Missouri, 1997
- The Rev. Patricia L. Merchant
Diocese of Atlanta, 1997
- Ms. Mary Beaulieu
Diocese of Minnesota, 1997
- Mr. Max S. Bell, Jr.
Diocese of Delaware, 1997
- Mr. Donald Benjamin
Diocese of Southeast Florida, 1997
- Mrs. Marion Cedarblade
Diocese of California, 1997
- Mrs. Virginia Norman
Diocese of the Dominican Republic, 1997
- Mrs. Gladys C. Rodman
Diocese of Massachusetts, 1997

GOD'S JUSTICE

Signs of Hope, Challenges Evident, Change Required

God calls the world to the justice of the sovereign rule of heaven. The Church's mission and God's call are the same. As Christians, our goal in life is to work unceasingly by the power of the Holy Spirit to establish the Reign of God and God's justice in our personal lives, churches, community, nation and the world.

God's call is given to every child, youth, woman, and man at baptism, when we covenant with God "to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ; to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves; to strive for justice

and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being" (BCP pg. 305). After receiving the call and making the covenant, our Catechism further instructs us that the mission of the Church, "as it prays and worships," is "to promote justice, peace and love...and to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world" (BCP, pg. 855).

If we are to respond faithfully to God's call to justice, priorities of individuals, congregations, and dioceses must constantly be re-examined and opened to creative vision and constructive change. The seven most deadly words of any congregation or diocese are, "We have *always* done it that way!" We are called to establish God's justice, not to perpetuate immobile structures, outdated practices, and narrow mind-sets. This Commission has seen signs of hope, but challenges are evident and change is required.

What does God's justice require?

During the triennium this Commission witnessed in four metropolitan centers dedicated Christians—lay and ordained—who continue to "bear the burden and heat of the day" in the service of God. *But*, we also heard of the monumental tasks yet to be realized. We have chosen to highlight three areas and to examine what God's call to justice requires in each. Those three areas are (1) worship, (2) outreach, and (3) styles of ministry.

Worship

We heard of newly merged parishes building upon the richness of their racial and cultural diversity, developing new, empowering communities of worship. We heard of new experiments in liturgy and community building. But in our survey, there were few such instances.

Justice requires that we encourage a broader effort to promote racial and cultural diversity in our worship. Promoting diversity is different from assimilation. The liturgy, music and habits of the Episcopal Church are essentially Euro-American. We cannot advertise that we are promoting diversity in the entire Church but then be unwilling to allow change in the liturgy. In the call to establish justice in our cities and metropolitan areas, we are required to model justice throughout the life of our Church.

Outreach

Modeling justice in our outreach work is the mission of the Church and the natural outgrowth of our worshipping communities. Dedicated congregations, dioceses and individuals are creating new opportunities to empower all people to fulfill their covenant with God. We saw this in programs that nurtured young minds, programs that embraced substance abusers, programs that reached toward and uplifted victims of AIDS, programs of housing rehabilitation for the homeless, programs of comfort for the dying, and programs establishing and developing credit unions, thereby allowing economic access for those previously denied.

But, while encouraged by these signs of hope, we are mindful that major concerns still confront our metropolitan and urban areas. The structural violence in society today results, to a large degree, from the structural injustices—in our political, economic, educational, social, cultural and religious institutions. This structural violence is manifested in

spousal/child abuse, teen pregnancy, the school drop-out rate, the isolation of the elderly, marginalization of our youth, homelessness and increasing victim-centered crime.

Justice requires the Church in our metropolitan areas to witness for justice and risk being the prophetic voice in our communities. Too often the Church has become a chaplain to "the Establishment" rather than a catalyst to society. In season and out of season we must critically support the efforts of the institutions in our society when they do justice, and prophetically condemn them whenever they deviate from the justice of God.

To that end, we believe that, at present, Jubilee Ministry is the model for outreach. *Our belief is that this model is the way in which ministry should take place everywhere.* We recognize and celebrate that there are many places which are carrying out Jubilee Ministry, although they are not officially designated as such. We are convinced that the vision, goals, and objectives of this concept should be at the core of every congregation. One of the strongest features of the 151 designated Jubilee Centers is that they encourage active involvement between congregations and the persons whom they serve. True Christian stewardship involves not only money, but time and talents.

Styles of Ministry

If we intend to promote diversity in our worship and to focus on support and empowerment of all people in our outreach, then we should recognize that we are calling for the role of the ordained clergy to be changed. We were witnesses to the effect fast-dwindling economic resources have had on congregations' ability to pay their clergy and to maintain their buildings. We viewed this as a sign of hope, for we are challenged to reorder the way we go about ministry.

Justice requires an ever-increasing partnership between clergy and laity. New roles will have to be defined; there must be training and support for these roles, as well as an overall system for retraining. A concerted effort is necessary in the recruitment, training, and deployment of clergy; promoting leadership training and religious education for the laity; and assisting the Church to interpret and articulate the vital issues of the day from the perspective of racial and cultural diversity.

Mission Statements

While we are encouraged by the signs of hope we have experienced and the challenges which we have identified, we are aware that we must re-examine the mission statements of our congregations and of our dioceses to ensure that we are being accountable to our covenant. And, if we are not, to reaffirm our commitment to God's justice through a transformation of ourselves, our society and our Church.

The justice of God requires us to "launch out into the deep" in our worship, outreach, and styles of ministry. The values of the Reign of God should take precedence over the values of society that result in white flight, economic flight, fear, and silence.

Conclusion

As Christians, we live in the hope of the Resurrection and Ascension. We are people of hope and we have the capacity to be beacons of that hope in a changing world. Change

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requires a change in priorities. The peace that is sought and the reconciliation yearned for can only be secured if justice is secured first—and justice always concerns the poor, marginalized, and the oppressed.

We can never say that we have completely established the Reign of God. We can only continue to struggle and establish conditions that best approximate God's Reign. As long as the Reign of God has not fully come, we must be willing to look for new ways of being the Body of Christ. It is our responsibility to hold before the eyes of all people the vision of society as ordained by God and the possibility of its realization. In solidarity with Abraham, we look "for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

FINANCIAL REPORT

	<i>1992</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1994</i>
Income			
Appropriated by Convention	\$16,750.00	\$18,350.00	\$20,360.00
Expenses			
Meetings	\$7,750.00	\$9,192.00	*
Consultants	-0-	-0-	\$3,000.00
Other (subcommittees)	<u>600.00</u>	<u>191.00</u>	<u> </u> *
Totals	\$8,350.00	\$9,383.00	*

* 1994 figure not available at publication date

RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION (based on the foregoing Report)

Resolution #A081

Worship: Liturgical Resources

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That the Standing Commissions on Liturgy**
- 2 **and Music identify/develop, promulgate and distribute liturgical resources which raise**
- 3 **up our racial and cultural diversity and reflect the concepts embodied in the goals of**
- 4 **Jubilee Ministry, and encourage their use in all congregations; and be it further**

- 5 *Resolved*, **That liturgical committees be established and utilized in all congregations;**
- 6 **and be it further**

- 7 *Resolved*, **That the use of Prayer Book Studies 30 (G.C. 1988), Supplemental**
- 8 **Liturgical Texts, and Supplemental Music (G.C. 1991) be encouraged by diocesan and**
- 9 **congregational liturgical committees; and be it further**

- 10 *Resolved*, **That the use of present optional forms of services provided in the Book of**
- 11 **Common Prayer be encouraged.**

Resolution #A082

Outreach: Jubilee Ministry, Violence

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That Jubilee Ministry be reaffirmed as the**
2 **model for ministry and outreach;** and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, **That dioceses and congregations initiate a re-examination of their mission**
4 **statements vis-à-vis their outreach activity;** and be it further
- 5 *Resolved*, **That dioceses and congregations intentionally develop Jubilee training**
6 **centers;** and be it further
- 7 *Resolved*, **That dioceses and congregations address the issues of violence, its causes and**
8 **the Church's response in convention workshops.**

Resolution #A083

Styles of Ministry: CDO, BTE, ECC

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That the Church Deployment Office**
2 **identify/develop guidelines for congregations and dioceses to assist them in utilizing**
3 **our racial and cultural diversity creatively;** and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, **That the Board for Theological Education convene a conference among all**
5 **Episcopal Church seminaries on training for urban ministry, focusing on racial and**
6 **cultural diversity;** and be it further
- 7 *Resolved*, **That the National Church Headquarters establish a resource center which**
8 **will coordinate information on worship, outreach, styles of ministry, communication,**
9 **networking, etc., to be available for congregational and diocesan use.**

EXPLANATION

As good stewards we need to see these resolutions initiated at grassroots levels simultaneously with the larger Church. Some of the resources, time and talent are present; commitment is all that is required.

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PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE TRIENNIUM

<i>Income</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
General Convention Assessment Budget	\$16,500.00	\$17,550.00	\$18,640.00
<i>Expenses</i>			
Meetings	\$16,000.00	\$16,800.00	\$17,640.00
Consultants	<u>\$500.00</u>	<u>\$750.00</u>	<u>\$1,000.00</u>
Totals	\$16,500.00	\$17,550.00	\$18,640.00

PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR BUDGET APPROPRIATION

Resolution #A084

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, **That there be appropriated from the**
2 **Assessment Budget of General Convention the sum of \$52,690.00 for the triennium for**
3 **the expenses of the Standing Commission on the Church in Metropolitan Areas.**