

STANDING COMMISSION ON EPISCOPAL CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

MEMBERSHIP

The Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, <i>Chair</i>	Bethlehem III, 2009
Canon Cynthia Wilson McFarland, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	New Jersey II, 2009
The Rev. Mary L. Allen	Olympia VIII, 2006
Mr. Douglas R. Briggs	Missouri V, 2006
The Rev. Jon Paul Davidson	Nevada VIII, 2006
The Rt. Rev. Paul V. Marshall	Bethlehem III, 2006
Mr. Sean Meade	Northern Indiana V, 2006
The Rev. Brenda Monroe	Atlanta IV, 2009
Dr. Brian K. Reid	California VIII, 2009
The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith	Arizona VIII, 2009
Mr. Ralph Spence Jr.	Montana VI, 2006
Ms. Richelle Thompson	Southern Ohio V, 2009
The Rt. Rev. Pierre Whalon	Churches in Europe II, 2009
The Rt. Rev. GERALYN WOLF	Rhode Island I, 2006
Ms. Dorothy J. Fuller, <i>Executive Council Liaison</i>	El Camino Real VIII, 2006
Mr. James R. McMahon, <i>Special Rep. for HD Pres.</i>	New Hampshire I, 2006
Mrs. Barbara C. Caum, <i>Staff Consultant</i>	Bethlehem III
The Rev. Mark Seitz, <i>Staff Consultant</i>	West Virginia III
Mr. Robert Williams, <i>Staff, Director of Communication</i>	Los Angeles VIII

Preface

Communications is inextricably linked with technology, whether the technology be that of printing, radio, television, Internet, wireless telephones, or skywriting. It is not helpful to discuss communication except in concert with a discussion of technology, because the communication is carried by technology.

Technology does not change anything. It changes the possibility or price of things, and people then make the changes. From time to time it is sensible for people to change what they do because technological change has made new ways better somehow than old ways.

Historically there has never been an issue of useful technology not being adopted. If it is genuinely good, and you don't adopt it, your children or your grandchildren will. The question for us, and the focus of this Commission, is whether or not we, the boundary generations, should work to adjust to new information technology or just wait for our children and grandchildren to do it.

Should you spend your money buying a computer and learning to use the Internet? Should our Church spend its money producing a web site or an e-mail list? Should religious education take something out of the curriculum to make time for education about the Internet?

Many think that the Internet is an unusually effective medium for spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is a few years too soon to be certain about this, but the early results are good. In fact, the early results are so good that this Standing Commission urges the Church to push harder on using the Internet. The Internet seems also to be a very affordable means of presenting The Episcopal Church to the world. We must continue to make sure that we are being presented well in the media that matter in our culture.

Although it is important to adapt to new technology, it is equally important to make competent use of existing technology. There is no substitute for training and experience in any discipline; the field of Communications is no exception.

Introduction

The Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communication (SCECC) was originally intended to function as a “virtual” body, meeting and working online with no actual physical meetings during the 2004–2006 triennium. We have managed for the most part to live into this mandate. As a result we have learned something of the advantages that working in this manner affords. We have also learned that there were several unforeseen complications that required us to slightly modify the way we did our work. There are a few conclusions that we can share with other bodies in the Church should they plan to make use of the new technologies emerging online in support of their work in the coming triennium.

First and foremost, the online format of our work as a Commission was profoundly cost effective. We have made use of freely available resources to do the largest part of our work. Our initial discussions began via an e-mail list to which all the SCECC belonged. We have since added a public list so that any person who is interested in following along with the work of the Commission will have access to our meeting notes and discussions. The Society of Archbishop Justus hosted both of these lists with no cost to the General Convention budget. Our actual meetings took place during text-chat sessions using the AOL client and service. The tools and the service were available to anyone with a computer and Internet connection. On a few occasions we had guest observers in the meetings, again with no cost to either the observer or to the Office of General Convention.

Second, we learned that the format we used for our work was convenient for members. The lack of travel required for meetings allowed some of us to participate in the work of the Commission who might otherwise not have been able to do so. The meetings of the Commission required a commitment of a couple of hours at most on the day of a meeting. Members of the Commission worked around the world and spanned seven different time zones. Yet because of the format of our meetings, all were able to participate regardless of location. The rest of the Commission’s work was done either by e-mail or by phone and videoconference.

Third, the format that we used was found to be democratic and empowering for all the members. The fact that our meetings required very little travel commitment meant that people were able to serve on the Commission who might not have been able to serve. It is expected that as other CCABs adopt these tools in part or in whole, we will find that members of the Church whose schedule or life situation might not have allowed them to participate previously in the work of a CCAB might now be able to contribute.

There were a few problems that we did encounter this triennium. As the Church starts to make the transition to using new technology, care will need to be taken to avoid or at least mitigate these issues.

The primary problem we encountered in our use of these tools was that not all Commission members were equally facile with the technology used to communicate. Tools such as e-mail, online chat sessions, shared calendars, require people to learn how to use a computer and its tools. While many of our members were comfortable with the technology, some felt limited in their ability to participate.

Another problem was that it was difficult at times to communicate with each other. We lacked sufficient relationships with each other to be able to properly interpret the context of remarks made during meetings and in the course of our work. This led to occasions where humor was misinterpreted and serious comments were ignored. Our solution to this issue was to have one face-to-face meeting early in the triennium where we all had a chance to get to know each other. Having this contact allowed us to more effectively communicate with each other when we worked online.

In terms of conclusions that we have drawn from our work, we offer the following three learnings:

1. The Office of the General Convention will need to provide some sort of infrastructure to support CCABs as they move to doing more work online. This may be as simple as hosting e-mail lists, shared calendars and chat rooms but could also include providing support for phone and video conferencing.
2. There was some cost involved in doing the work of this Commission. There will need to be money budgeted for each Commission to pay for the costs associated with using online tools. We were able to make use of freely available tools, but phone and videoconferencing are not at present free of cost. However if each CCAB

could commit to reducing by its physical meetings by half or a third in the coming triennium the savings would be significant.

3. CCAB members of interim bodies will need to spend the necessary time to learn how to use the emerging technology. Training in the use of e-mail and online chat is available in local community colleges, in books, and online. It will be needed to realize the cost-effective, inclusive and convenient aspects of online collaboration.

Communication Strategies for Community Building in the Episcopal Church

The purpose of the Church is not just to do God's work in the world, but also to engage the membership in the process of doing that work. When members are encouraged to participate in ministry, they are more likely to become part of the Church community because of the fulfillment that service provides. In order to build community, the Church should seek to nourish the spirit of individual members by helping them identify their gifts and then providing ways they can use those gifts to enhance the ministry of the Church. Those gifts include time, talent, and treasure and while it is easy to receive and allocate treasure, the Church needs to establish procedures for sharing information and receiving responses in order to utilize each member's time and talent.

To accomplish this part of the Church's purpose, we can build community on a church-wide as well as local level by supporting overlapping methods for sharing information, giving access to the discussion of ministry and soliciting evaluation and direction from the broader membership. The Internet offers exciting new opportunities for involving members in ministry through the building of networks for communication and the creation of online support communities for the various ministries of the Church. We believe the following proposals will allow greater participation from members who have limited vacation time, families they cannot leave, or other conditions that prevent their participation in meetings or conventions. These proposals also provide more cost effective procedures for enabling the discussion of ministry while allowing those discussions to be more inclusive.

1. Establish web pages, or let CCABs establish their own, where agendas and minutes of meetings can be posted for interested members to keep track of and participate in the discussion of ministry between meetings of General Convention. The timely posting of this information is called for in the Canons and giving the broader membership access will give ownership, broaden the resource base and help the Church avoid "reinventing the wheel" in responding to ministry challenges. Many of the resources of our membership are ignored if CCABs do not share their work between meetings of General Convention.
2. Establish an e-mail list that can be used by leadership and staff to post news and information about Church Center ministry, inform members of webpage updates, and post links to commission and committee agendas and minutes. This e-mail list should include a "bulletin board" feature that allows access to previous messages at a web address that is available to any interested party. This list would not be for dialogue, but should be used to share information that does not warrant a "press release" from Episcopal New Service (ENS) or an article in Episcopal Life. This would include notices that have previously been posted by leadership and staff to the "unofficial" e-mail list for bishops and deputies. This will help the Church avoid creating "insiders" and "outsiders" based on access to information.
3. Continue encouraging Standing Commissions to use Internet resources for meetings. This saves money, allows more people to participate in the development of ministry and enables a more collaborative relationship with Church Center staff. Regular use of e-mail lists and instant message meetings will allow ministry to develop at a faster pace than three or four in-person meetings a year. This could also allow committees and commissions to keep working right up to General Convention, and begin working and getting to know new members as soon as they are selected.
4. Continue developing ministry at the Province level in the Church. We need to establish web pages that give relevant information about leadership, meetings and ministry at the Province level. Provinces should be encouraged to create their own e-mail lists and web pages to share information and to complete the communication network in the Church. The goal should be to use the nine Provinces as a hub for the exchange of information both from the leadership down and the grassroots up. Example: A survey could be distributed to nine Province communicators who post it to their e-mail list of interested province members. Responses

could be received at the Province level, evaluated and results reported to the Church Center or Executive Council.

Most of these proposals are aimed at giving the broader membership greater ownership in the ministry of the Church. The Internet offers incredible opportunities to create and support new networks for communication that can broaden participation beyond members who can travel and attend meetings. Greater ownership leads to greater support and open information fosters greater trust. If our policies and procedures show that we value local members, they will have a stronger connection to the national Church, leadership might receive useful information and ideas, and the community of those who are spiritually nourished through participation in Church ministry could be enlarged.

On the effectiveness of the advertising campaign

Over the past three years the Episcopal Church has engaged in a number of elements that together make up a nationwide advertising campaign which was response to Resolution 2003–A081. Advertising has included both print media and television, and has been targeted to a number of different areas around the country. The main push of the campaign was a series of television advertisements aimed at those in the early 20's to early 40's age demographic which ran in the late summer and autumn of 2005.

The campaign was run through the Office of Communication and required the participation of dioceses in order to help fund and place the advertising in their markets. Some problems were noted in the procedures for allowing dioceses to sign-up for the campaign, and so the SCECC feels that this process should be streamlined and improved. However, in large part the Church Center and dioceses were able to work together in an cooperative and collaborative manner, and this may well be a model that could work well for other groups in the church in the future.

The stated goal of the advertising campaign has been to achieve name recognition for the Episcopal Church among viewers while also inviting each to consider visiting a local congregation. There have been reports from some local congregations in target areas of new members who had shown up in direct response to the advertising campaign. Despite this, the Commission feels it is vital that the continuance of such efforts should be on the understanding that there will, in the future, be a clear, quantitative process in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign against a set of stated outcomes. Part of the budget for the campaign needs to be set aside for this analysis, which should be conducted by an external professional agency, in order to be sure that the church's money is being spent in a way that is both effective and useful.

75TH GENERAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

Resolution A047 Amend Canon I.1.2(12)

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That Canon I.1.2(12) is hereby amended to read as follows: (12) A
- 2 Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communication consisting of ~~14~~ 12 members (4 3 Bishops, 4 3
- 3 Priests and/or Deacons, and 6 Lay Persons). It shall be the duty of the Commission to ~~guide the policies,~~
- 4 ~~participate in the strategic planning, and share in the oversight of implementing a comprehensive communication~~
- 5 ~~strategy for the Episcopal Church~~ *identify, study and consider communications strategies, policies, and priorities, as well as*
- 6 *new technologies, so as to strengthen communicating the Gospel and the mission of this Church to the world at large, as well as*
- 7 *improving communications among members of this Church, parishes, dioceses, and the various bodies of the General Convention.*
- 8 *It shall report its work and make recommendations to the General Convention.*

Resolution A048 Information Technology Working Group

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church direct
- 2 the Church Center and other church bodies to adopt industry appropriate "best-practices" when adopting
- 3 new technology and in making communication decisions. That a working group of five persons be named
- 4 from the members of The Episcopal Church to serve as consultants as needed to help the entities of the
- 5 church implement this guideline. The five persons shall be nominated by the Presiding Bishop, the Chief
- 6 Operating Officer of DFMS and the President of the House of Deputies. The Executive Council will confirm
- 7 the selection.

EXPLANATION

Our Church, like many other organizations that do not themselves specialize in information technology (IT) as their “product,” is often unprepared to purchase significant pieces of technology because it lacks a strategic understanding of how to select technology to achieve its goals. It is hard enough for technology-based organizations to make optimal technology selections. Very few non-technical organizations have the in-house expertise needed to do long-term planning for technology selection.

That is to say, most non-IT companies and organizations do conduct adequate IT planning on the strategic level, even though technology acquisition and deployment is a major expenditure. Limited resources and staff force these organizations into a situation in which strategic technology decisions are handled tactically. Staff who are not trained or paid to follow diligently the wide and often divergent industry trends often cannot adequately understand and predict how particular products or technologies impact their organizations. They are nonetheless required to select a vendor or product and often resort to making decisions that are comfortable or defensible rather than correct. In the best case, staffers choose products that are familiar to them. In the worst case, they fall victim to impressive salesmanship by vendors.

Organizations that cannot afford to retain and support a full-time strategic technology staff (and even those that do) routinely rely on the expertise of professional technology research firms and industry experts for input into technology selection for large-scale and significant acquisitions. Their advice has the benefit of being impartial and well informed, though often expensive. Nevertheless, poor strategic planning in technology acquisition has the tendency to be a “pay me now or pay me much more later” situation, and thousands of dollars of reliable, solid advice at the outset of a technology selection process can avoid tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars wasted with a poorly-informed purchase that must then be replaced by something else.

The Episcopal Church cannot afford a full-time staffer whose sole responsibility is to stay current in technology and guide technology decision-making. Moreover, such a position cannot be cost-justified in most cases, since the Episcopal Church Center’s sporadic need such a resource would hardly justify even one “full-time equivalent” resource when compared to the cost of *ad-hoc* retention of external professional assistance. Equally so, it cannot afford to make expensive mistakes by purchasing inadequate, unnecessary, or poorly-fitting pieces of technology, infrastructure, and services. The wise course is to develop a formal procedure of technology selection for acquisitions whose lifetime cost is over a certain monetary threshold (perhaps \$50,000). An essential component of this process would be early input from a variety of technology research and consulting resources as to:

- What technology component(s) are germane to the “business requirements;”
- Who constitute the relevant vendors in the field; and
- How to go about conducting a competitive vendor selection process, including a Request for Information (RFI), Request for Proposal (RFP), and Proof of Concept before selecting a finalist and negotiating a contract.

Resolution A049 Adopt Open Standards for Data

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church move
- 2 toward adopting recognized open standards for the data formats that are used in its electronic communications
- 3 and data storage. A recognized open standard is one that is documented by, and whose specification is controlled
- 4 by, a well-known national or international standards body.

EXPLANATION

Electronic document storage and retrieval technology is rapidly evolving. The ability to store information electronically allows it to be easily retrieved, searched, and shared with others. However because the formats that are used to store the information are being modified, there have been numerous instances where information has become inaccessible because the system used to retrieve that information has become obsolete and is no longer manufactured. A classic example of this is scientific and demographic data that was collected and stored on punch cards in the 1960’s. Much of this data is no longer able to be readily accessed without expensive techniques to

transfer it to modern storage formats. A more recent example is the difficulty that some have in getting access to files that were created in older programs like WordPerfect or Dbase.

By using open-standard document formats, the Church will be able to “future proof” its data and ensure that the files created will be able to be read by future users. In addition, there is a significant advantage in using fully documented file systems for people who may not have access to expensive technology or who may need assistive technology to communicate effectively. Proprietary formats can often be used only with expensive proprietary software.

Resolution A050 SECCC Budget Appropriation

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church request
- 2 that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$15,000
- 3 for the Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communication for meeting expenses during the 2007–2009
- 4 triennium.

EXPLANATION

The Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communication has been able to accomplish the majority of its work by using online tools and technology. This has allowed it to significantly reduce the cost incurred to the budget of the Office of General Convention.

It was our experience however that our work was greatly facilitated by holding a meeting in which we were able to spend time together working in the same place. This funding request would allow us to hold one meeting during the triennium and to pay for incidental travel costs to allow some members of the Commission to attend national and provincial meetings of persons engaged in communication ministries in the Episcopal Church.

Resolution A051 Electronic CCAB Meetings

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church direct
- 2 the Committees, Commissions, Agencies and Boards of the General Convention to begin a process to
- 3 accomplish an appropriate portion of their work more efficiently and economically by using online tools,
- 4 conference calls and video conferences.

EXPLANATION

The Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communications held exactly one in-person meeting during this triennium. All other work was done using e-mail, online conferencing, and telephone conference calls. We found great value in having one in-person meeting during the triennium, but believe that having more than one such meeting might have been wasteful. More information is contained in the “working online” narrative, above.

Resolution A052 Provincial Communication Specialists

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church endorse
- 2 a position of Provincial Communication Specialist for any of the nine provinces who want to have such a
- 3 position: and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That the Provincial Communication Specialist will assist in the implementation of the Communication
- 5 Strategy of the Church and to work directly with parishes and dioceses in the province to build connections
- 6 for regional communication, to design websites, to develop story creation skills and to institute methods of
- 7 distribution of news and information generated by each organization's mission work, educational offerings
- 8 and evangelical outreach; and be it further
- 9 *Resolved*, That this resource person will assist Attendees at workshops led by Church Center and Diocesan
- 10 program staff in designing stories that will communicate their learning experience as fully as possible to Church
- 11 members at the local level in order to maximize the effectiveness of such gatherings to the mission, education,
- 12 and evangelism work of their individual parishes and dioceses, assist in networking information with Standing
- 13 Commissions and Executive Council as needed and, when possible, offer training to local Church members,
- 14 both youth and adult; and be it further

- 1 *Resolved*, That persons selected for these positions will be capable communication professionals and will work
2 in coordination with the Episcopal Church Center Office of Communication to teach web design, coordinate
3 dissemination of grass roots stories, both regionally and nationally and create “best practice” networks for
4 continuation of that work throughout the Church, and be it further
5 *Resolved*, That the resources of the Church Center Office of Communication staff will be available to these
6 persons, who will be based geographically within the Province served, apply for funds up to \$3,000 for each
7 position each year, depending on the needs of the Province; and be it further
8 *Resolved*, That Provinces are encouraged to coordinate with the Episcopal Church’s Office of Communication
9 for the identification of such person, in consultation with the provincial leadership staff or a special Provincial
10 Communications Committee created for this purpose; and be it further
11 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and
12 Finance to consider a budget allocation of up to \$27,000 for each year for a total of \$81,000 for the
13 implementation of this resolution.

EXPLANATION

The explosive development of the Internet has created a unique new communication medium that the Church can use creatively both to conserve resources and increase its communication effectiveness. While the Internet is capable of providing all members of the Church equal access to plans, deliberations and educational opportunities; several of our Dioceses and many individual parishes and missions do not have access to the communication skills and technical knowledge needed to effectively use Internet technology to their benefit. While some of this work is already underway, this General Convention is being asked to adopt a general communication strategy which sets goals and expectations for every level of the Church and the positions created through this resolution will assist in providing a trainer and coordinator of regional communication.