Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology

Membership
Membership List

Canon Sean McConnell, *Chair*	California, VIII	2012
Canon Heidi Shott, *Vice-Chair*	Maine, I	2015
Ms. Melodie Woerman, *Secretary*	Kansas, VII	2015
The Rt. Rev. David Alvarez*	Puerto Rico, IX	2012
Mr. Benjamin Bynum	Lexington, IV	2015
The Rev. Clayton Crawley*	El Camino Real, VIII	2012
Mr. John Goodell*	Michigan, V	2012
The Rt. Rev. Michael Hanley*	Oregon, VIII	2012
The Rt. Rev. David Lai*	Taiwan, VIII	2012
The Rt. Rev. Neff Powell*	Southwestern Virginia, III	2012
The Rev. Louis Scheuddig	Atlanta, IV	2012
The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith	Arizona, VIII	2015
The Rev. Richard Snyder	Navajoland Area Mission, VIII	2015
Ms. Jocelyn Tichenor*	Washington, III	2012
The Rev. Canon Daniel Webster	Maryland, III	2015
Ms. Lauren Wilkes*	Mississippi, IV	2012
Ms. Katie Sherrod, *EC Liaison*	Fort Worth, VII	
Ms. Anne Rudig, *Staff*		

Changes in Membership
There were four changes in the membership of the Commission during the course of the triennium: Ms. Wilkes was determined to have resigned at the end of the previous triennium, replaced by Mr. Goodell; Ms. Tichenor resigned in 2011, replaced by the Rev. Crawley; and Bishops Lai and Powell were replaced in 2011 because of their inability to participate in online meetings, by Bishops Alvarez and Hanley.

Representation at General Convention
Bishop Kirk Smith and the Rev. Richard Snyder are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this Report at General Convention.

Summary of Work
Meetings
The Commission met ten times since it was formed in November 2009: two were in-person meetings, and eight were web/teleconference meetings:
- November 17–20, 2009, in-person, as part of the joint meeting of CCABs; Chicago, Illinois
- December 3, 2009, web/teleconference
- March 3, 2010, web/teleconference
- June 2, 2010, web/teleconference
- September 1, 2010, web/teleconference
- December 1, 2010, web/teleconference
- March 2, 2011, web/teleconference
- June 1, 2011, web/teleconference
- September 7, 2011, web/teleconference
- November 15-17, in-person meeting, Scottsdale, Arizona

Response to Resolutions Referred by the General Convention

The 76th General Convention referred three resolutions to the Commission. None of them were funded; however, the Commission considered the portion of each that it could undertake without funding. The Commission is also proposing four resolutions for consideration by the 77th General Convention.

Resolution 2009-D010

Resolution 2009-D010 called for the Commission, the Executive Council, and Episcopal Communicators to help eliminate the use of the term "National Church," in recognition of The Episcopal Church's international character.

Anne Rudig, the Director of Communication at the Episcopal Church Center, informed the Commission that it now is the policy of the denominational office of The Episcopal Church, and part of the new brand guidelines, that the only reference to The Episcopal Church is "The Episcopal Church." As of November 2011, the brand guidelines had been sent to the Executive Council; the House of Bishops; all Committees, Commissions, Agencies, and Boards; Episcopal media; religious media; secular media; interfaith leaders; and the 6,800 congregations of The Episcopal Church.

Resolution 2009-D058

Resolution 2009-D058 called for the Commission and the Executive Council to "organize an information technology cooperative network for dioceses, congregations, and other institutions of The Episcopal Church."

The Commission identified many challenges congregations and dioceses face in the area of information technology by conducting a Churchwide survey in early 2011. More than 370 Episcopalians from all orders participated. The survey indicated a great demand for sharing resources and best practices in the areas of social media, website hosting and design, parish databases, electronic archiving, web conferencing for lay leader training, electronic newsletters, and many others.

As a first step toward the creation of an effective and collaborative information technology and communications network, the Commission launched a website, ChurchTools.org. The site will offer a "toolkit" of resources to assist congregations of all sizes in building, maintaining and improving a church website. This site will invite collaboration and sharing of successes and challenges from all engaged in church communications. Over time, additional toolkits about other IT and communications topics identified in the survey will be added. The website toolkit is the initial one offered, because the Commission believes a website is the building block of congregational communications. This new site also supports a resolution proposed by the Commission, which encourages and aims to support each Episcopal congregation to develop a website by 2015.

Resolution 2009-D087

Resolution 2009-D087 called for the Commission to work with the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the General Convention Office, the Office of Communication, the Mission Information Services department, and The Archives of the Episcopal Church "to conduct a comprehensive, integrated examination of communications resources, policies and practices that support all modes of communication."

In response, the Commission is proposing a resolution to implement an information technology strategic plan for the denominational office of The Episcopal Church. In addition, the Office of Communication has adopted a strategic communications plan to maximize the use of all communication resources for the mission of the Church.

The Commission also expresses its position that, throughout the triennium, there has been collaboration and cooperation between the Office of Communication and the Commission in the advancement of each group's roles in support of the critical ministry of communications.

Embracing Communications as a Ministry for Evangelism and Mission

Communications is at the center of evangelism and mission of The Episcopal Church. It is the best way to share the Good News of God in Christ with the world and the stories of The Episcopal Church with those who are not yet aware of it. It includes not only the content of the message we have but also the means to disseminate it.

The landscape of this critical ministry continues to change at an astounding pace. In 2009, there were 175 million people using Facebook; today there are more than 500 million. Twitter has grown from 7 million to 200 million users

in that same period. Churches struggle with finding the right mix of print and electronic media with which to share information, weighing not only cost but also effectiveness of their message.

The question no longer is *whether* the Church participates in this information revolution but *how*. A website is a necessity for every congregation or church entity; if it cannot be found on Google, to the world it does not exist. A presence on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allows congregations to engage in conversation with members and those who have never entered its doors. Other places where the Church can engage the world haven't been invented yet, but certainly will play a role in the future.

Technology has expanded the range and scope of how the Church communicates and allows for connections that erase distances between people. These connections not only support but can also create community, and they can help people share resources with others.

Just as the telephone gave rise to church phone trees, and railroads empowered missionary bishops to share the Good News on the frontier, emerging technology is a wonderful tool to spread the Gospel today.

Jesus was very clear—and members of the Commission take such advice seriously—that all members of the Church are to be the light of the world. It is not because the Church is composed of technocrats of the sacred but because the Church's members are striving to be his disciples, to proclaim his good news so that people will give glory to our Father who is in Heaven (Matthew 5:14-15).

The Commission encourages all levels of the Church to become familiar with the various means of communications now available, to engage in ongoing training and to provide adequate funding for the work of communications to help fulfill the call to share the Gospel with the world.

Proposed Resolutions

Resolution A024   Recognize Communications as Ministry

> *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, that the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognizes that communications is an essential ministry of the Church that enables and empowers evangelism, congregational development, the building of community, and mission at the Churchwide, diocesan and congregational levels; that there should be a trained communications person in each diocese and ongoing training in communications for all congregations; that there should be sensitivity to multi-lingual and multi-cultural requirements that may exist; and that communications should be adequately funded to meet the needs of mission and ministry as defined by the diocese.

Explanation

At a time when communications channels are increasing almost exponentially, there has been a noticeable trend, both Churchwide and on a diocesan level, to curtail, cut back or eliminate trained communications personnel working on behalf of the church. Yet the new economies of scale are allowing ministers of communications to spread the Good News at very little or no cost.

According to a 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation Study of children 8 to 18 years of age, the average amount of time per day these young people engaged in digital media is more than seven and a half hours. How much of the gospel is available to them during all those hours? Reaching people where they are with a Gospel message as we have received it becomes more critical as the multi-channel, multi-voice communications world unfolds.

This is no time to be narrowing the Church's focus in communications. To the contrary, it is a time to be expanding it. In an age when parchment cost a premium, thank God no one told Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to put down their pens.

Resolution A025   Challenge Congregations to Develop Websites

> *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, that the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church challenges every congregation in The Episcopal Church to have an effective, dynamic and current website by 2015.

Explanation

This Website Challenge is simple: empower every congregation with the tools and knowledge to build an effective, dynamic and current website, no matter their size or budget.

To this end, the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology has created ChurchTools.org, to provide valuable resources, how-to videos, links, and an online community of helpful people to meet the goal of launching a website for each of the 6,800 congregations of The Episcopal Church around the world. To help make the point of accessibility and feasibility, ChurchTools.org was built in less than two hours for about $30 on the WordPress platform. If a church already has a website, additional online toolkits will feature ways to improve that site, provide helpful tips, offer strategies for tracking what's actually happening on the website (Do you know the top 10 most visited pages on your site and how long people stay on them?), and other ways to improve what congregations already are doing (embedded video, online polls, sermon libraries, and more).

It is the Commission's plan to offer additional challenges that reflect congregational needs identified through online polls and community discussion on ChurchTools.org.

Resolution A026   Develop a Strategic Plan for Information Technology

> *Resolved*, the House of ⎯⎯⎯⎯ concurring, that the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church directs the Chief Operating Officer to develop a strategic plan for technology that supports Churchwide mission in the 21st Century; and be it further
>
> *Resolved*, that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider funding of this resolution in the amount of $50,000 to implement its goals.

Explanation

Members of the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology believe that the staff of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, working at the Episcopal Church Center and other offices of The Episcopal Church, needs the technological tools to do their jobs well and faithfully. Obsolete computer hardware, out-of-date software, inadequate file storage capacity and the inability to manage projects in collaboration with colleagues hinder the ability of staff members in all departments to accomplish their work effectively. This resolution calls upon the Chief Operating Officer or his designee to make a comprehensive assessment of the technological needs of denominational office staff and to develop a multi-year plan to bring resources up to acceptable standards.

Budget Report

The Commission received a budget of $15,000 from the 76th General Convention. The only expenses incurred were in conjunction with the in-person meeting of November 15–17, 2011, in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology will meet approximately ten times during the next triennium. This will require $8,000 for 2013, $8,000 for 2014 and $4,000 for 2015, for a total of $20,000 for the triennium.

Resolution A027   Fund the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology

> *Resolved*, the House of ⎯⎯⎯⎯ concurring, that the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church requests the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider funding of the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology in the amount of $20,000 for the 2013-2015 triennium, for two face-to-face meetings and interim web conference meetings.