

Executive Council Committee on Science, Technology and Faith

Membership

The Rev. Alistair So, <i>Chair</i>	Maryland, III
Dr. Timothy Koponen, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Indianapolis, V
Ms. Alicia Graham, <i>Secretary</i>	New Jersey, II
The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus	California, VIII
The Rev. Sally Bingham	California, VIII
Deacon Josephine Borgeson	Northern California, VIII
The Rt. Rev. Herman Hollerith IV	Southern Virginia, III
The Rev. Thomas J. Hudson, O.P.A.	Maryland, III
The Rev. Gretchen M. Rehberg	Spokane, VIII
Dr. Richard Schori	Nevada, VIII
Dr. Edward B. Sisson	Mississippi, IV
Dr. Charles N. Stewart	Central New York, II
Ms. Angela Helt, <i>EC Liaison</i>	Oklahoma, VII
Mr. Michael Schut, <i>Staff</i>	

Summary of Work

The charge to the Committee on Science, Technology and Faith is to provide advice and education for the Executive Council and The Episcopal Church on issues relating to science and technology as they interact with ethics, theology, and the Christian faith.

Following the direction of the Executive Council, the Committee continues to focus on the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal #7, Ensure Environmental Sustainability, in producing materials on the theological, scientific and technological issues of four areas of focus: water systems, biodiversity, climate change and food systems. The Committee considers the underlying theology of scientific or technological issues in these four areas. We expect to finish producing resource materials for these four areas by the end of this triennium on our new website, at <http://www.episcopalscience.org/>.

Two triennia ago, the Committee completed a major teaching document, A Catechism of Creation: An Episcopal Understanding. Part III of Catechism, "Care of Creation," provides the theological justification for MDG #7. We have submitted a new resolution to affirm the compatibility of science and faith, and to encourage the study and use of Catechism of Creation. The Presbyterian Church USA asked for permission in using Catechism of Creation in their science and faith work in 2011. Just as Catechism of Creation is gaining some momentum in the ecumenical circle, we believe that The Episcopal Church should take a fresh look at it as well.

We provided active consultation to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music in their work on the formation of Creation Season Cycle in our liturgical calendar. Our focus was to make sure that the prayers and thematic explanations in this Creation Season Cycle are scientifically and theologically sound.

The Committee's focus on MDG #7 has caused it to participate in discussions on the Church's need for a coordinating responsibility regarding environmental issues. The Church has many resources devoted to the interactions between the Church and the environment. We hope that our new website will serve as a portal for these interactions and dialogues.

In this triennium, in accordance with direction from the Executive Council, the Committee responded to the following resolution:

Resolved, That The Executive Council of The Episcopal Church, meeting in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, June 15-17, 2010, directs the Standing Commission on Health and the Standing Commission on Anglican International Peace with Justice Concerns, and the Executive Council Committee on Science, Faith and Technology to work collaboratively to prepare a report for submission to the Executive Council Standing Committee on Advocacy and Networking for Mission for the June 15-17,

2011, meeting, on the economic, health, ethical, and social justice concerns presented by the use of genetically modified plants as a major component of our food supply and by the patenting of seeds for those plants.

The Committee provided a detailed report to the Executive Council on the issue of genetically modified plants in our food supply.

Pursuant to General Convention Resolution 2006–A051, the Committee routinely conducts its business via electronic communication. Pursuant to Resolution 2006–A159, the Committee maintains professional relationships throughout the Anglican Communion; and, pursuant to Resolution 2006–D031, has focused its work on the science, technology, ethics and theology issues attendant to the Millennium Development Goals.

Proposed Resolution

Resolution A136 Affirming the Compatibility of Science and the Christian Faith

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 77th General Convention affirms that there is no inherent contradiction between holding and practicing the Christian faith and practicing or utilizing the outcomes of modern science and medicine; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention affirms that certain characteristics of faith, most explicitly the tenet that reason and tradition are essential to extending our understanding of God’s Creation, are mirrored in science; and be it further

Resolved, That in God’s physical universe, the proper practice of science cannot and does not automatically lead its practitioners or others to lose faith in God, or to be led into beliefs that contradict the existence of God; and be it further

Resolved, That the methods of modern science, when applied to a search for truth, contribute to our understanding of God’s Creation such that we should use scientific information, after diligence as to its acceptance among scientific peers in relevant disciplines, to inform and augment our understanding of God’s Creation, and to aid the Church in developing Christian programs and policies consistent with our faith and our understanding of God’s Creation and our stewardship of it; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention encourages the dioceses and the parishes of The Episcopal Church to establish Christian education programs pertinent to this complementary relationship between science and faith, using the Catechism of Creation compiled by the Executive Council Committee on Science, Technology and Faith.

Explanation

In recent years, a number of clergy and Christian educators have been seeking guidance on the relationship between science and faith in the Episcopal Church. This resolution clearly spells out the Episcopal Church believes that there is no contradiction between being a person of faith and a person of science. The passing of this resolution will become a useful tool for Christian education and formation programs in the Episcopal Church

In matters of faith, Episcopalians appeal to Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, sometimes called the “three-legged stool” of Anglicanism. This is parallel to the basic process of scientific tradition (See Kuhn 1962; LaTour 1988; and Callon 2004). In science, reason is the careful and thorough use of theory and data collection to offer up the best possible explanation for corporeal and related phenomena in God’s Creation. The traditions of science are incorporated into its body through training at colleges, universities, research institutions and laboratories through the use of techniques, practices and beliefs consistent with those methods that have produced the best science in the past. Although there is no “scripture” in science, we may observe that the “text” of science is the phenomena to which it applies itself to understand, that part of the universe which exists in physical form as an extant body of God’s glory.

The scientist makes his or her explanation of the universe in much the same way as St. Paul does when he asserts that “we see through a glass darkly”. Science is an on-going process of observations of the natural world, formation of hypotheses, and testing of hypotheses through empirical evidence to form theories. Similarly, in Christian doctrinal development, our doctrines must be able to stand the test of time and the information we obtain through appeal to Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Sound Christian doctrines must be able to demonstrate “chronic vigor” (John Henry Newman, *Essays on the Development of Christian Doctrines*).

Both faith in God’s creation and a scientifically based understanding of the cosmos are needed for the Church to discern and develop doctrines, liturgy and advice surrounding creation and science. Therefore, we encourage the study of the Catechism of Creation to enrich our Church in this aspect of our faith development.

Budget Report

The Committee is comprised of 12 members. The Committee plans to meet as a whole once a year in April to coincide with the Ecumenical Roundtable on Science, Technology and the Church. Additional small working group meetings are desirable. The Committee will also require funds for the preparation and distribution of resource materials. In sum, the Committee requires \$50,500 for the 2013–2015 triennium.