

HOUSE OF BISHOPS THEOLOGY COMMITTEE

Membership

The Rt. Rev. Joe G. Burnett, *Chair*
The Rt. Rev. John C. Bauerschmidt
The Rt. Rev. Larry Benfield
The Rt. Rev. Tom Breidenthal
The Rev. Dr. Sathianathan Clarke
Dr. Stephen E. Fowl
The Rev. Dr. A. Katherine Grieb
Dr. Charles T. Mathewes
Dr. Joy A. McDougall
The Rt. Rev. Wayne Smith
Dr. Kathryn Tanner
The Rt. Rev. G. Porter Taylor
The Rev. Dr. James Turrell
The Rt. Rev. Michael Vono
The Rt. Rev. Pierre Whalon
Ms. Jackie Winter, *Staff*

Representation at General Convention

Bishop Joe Burnett is authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report at General Convention.

Summary of Work

Mandate: To serve the House of Bishops as a theological resource, undertaking projects of theological inquiry as requested by the bishops. Occasional requests of the Committee are made by the General Convention and are addressed as it is possible for the Committee to do.

The Committee is composed of bishops and academic theologians who meet together once or twice a year, depending on available budgetary resources.

At the beginning of this triennium, the Committee was enriched by several new members appointed by the Presiding Bishop: Bishops Porter Taylor, Michael Vono, and Pierre Whalon, and consulting theologian James Turrell. We also gave thanks for the faithful service of retiring members, Bishops Robert Ihloff and Gayle Harris.

Meetings: During the triennium, the Committee met six times: Jan. 9-11, 2013 at the House of the Redeemer in New York City; Sept. 25-27, 2013 in Nashville, Tennessee; Jan. 29-31, 2014 at the Canterbury Center in Orlando, Florida; May 28-30, 2014 at the Bosque Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Feb. 9-11, 2015 at the Transfiguration Spirituality Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

At present the Committee is completing a major project that has engaged our attention and imagination throughout the triennium. The project emerged from a foundational conversation in January 2012 regarding a theology of discipleship and mission in the global economy.

As our Committee has explored these issues, we have examined recent literature on theology and economics, researched alternative economic practices of some intentional Christian communities, and reflected deeply on the missiological challenges of bridging cultural and economic divides.

As a result of these conversations, we have developed a three-part, in-depth study that is expected to be shared with the wider Church in the form of a digital interactive resource during Lent 2016. The major sections of the study, all of which will be available online, are as follows.

Section one will consist of a foundational theological essay on “The Economic Crisis and God’s Economy,” an analysis of some of the sources, causes, and consequences of our current economic situation. Section two will be an interactive, online, daily Lenten calendar highlighting the following themes in practical and theological perspective:

Ash Wednesday to Lent 1 — Abundance and Challenge

Lent 1 — Income Inequality and the Common Good

Lent 2 — Consumerism and Consumption

Lent 3 — Underemployment and a Living Wage

Lent 4 — Faithfulness in a Global Economy

Lent 5 — Environmental Degradation

Holy Week — Food and Shelter

Each of the days of Lent and Holy Week (Monday through Saturday) will offer easily accessible multi-media resources for reflection and prayer.

Section three will be an online library of print and video resources that highlight stories of Christian communities engaged in alternative economic practices or relationships. We see these as models that might inspire dioceses, parishes, and individuals to employ similar ministries in their missional contexts.

We are delighted to be receiving support and technical assistance in this effort from The Rev. Scott Gunn and Ms. Richelle Thompson of Forward Movement. Their expertise and experience have been vital in helping to shape the components of our work into a cohesive, digitally accessible format. As the season of Lent 2016 draws near, we expect to be publicizing and promoting this resource for use throughout The Episcopal Church and beyond.

One item for the Committee’s potential future work and study is a renewed engagement with the theology of the eucharist. We would expect, among other things, to explore what it means to understand eucharistic assembly and celebration as a quintessential activity of the people of God in mission and ministry.

The Committee continues to believe that the practice of theological study and reflection is essential to the life of the Body of Christ, and is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this endeavor.