

STANDING COMMISSION ON COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Membership

The Rev. Canon Daniel Webster, *Chair*
Ms. Robyn Mauldin, *Vice Chair*, 2018
Ms. Melodie Woerman, *Secretary*, 2015
Mr. Benjamin (Bungee) Bynum
Mr. Miguel Escobar, 2018
The Rev. Edgar Giraldo, 2018
Mr. Bill Joseph, 2018
The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel
Canon Heidi Shott, 2015
The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith, 2015
The Rev. Richard (Dick) Snyder

Appointed as Executive Council liaison was Ms. Liza Anderson, Connecticut, I. Appointed as representative of the President of the House of Deputies was The Rev. Lester Mackenzie, Los Angeles, VIII. Serving as staff liaison was Mrs. Anne Rudig, Director of Communication for The Episcopal Church.

Changes in Membership

Bishop Rickel resigned in 2012 due to obligations with other commissions. Mr. Bynum resigned in 2012 due to his move outside the United States. Father Snyder and Father Webster resigned in 2013 due to other commitments. They were replaced by these members:

- Ms. Holly Behre, South Carolina, IV, 2015
- The Rev. Torey Lightcap, Iowa, VI, 2015
- The Rev. Lester Mackenzie, Los Angeles, VIII, 2015
- The Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray, Alabama, IV, 2018

Ms. Woerman was elected to serve as chair following Father Webster's resignation, and Ms. Behre was elected to serve as secretary in Ms. Woerman's place.

Representation at General Convention

Bishop Kirk Smith and Deputy Bill Joseph are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report during General Convention.

Summary of Work

Mandate: To identify, study, and recommend to General Convention communication strategies, policies, priorities, and technologies to strengthen the Church's communication of the Gospel and the mission of the Church to the world at large and to improve information management and exchange within The Episcopal Church.

Meetings: The Commission has met 11 times since it was formed in November 2012; one meeting was in-person, and 10 meetings were via telephone conference call or video web conference:

- November 12-15, 2012, in-person (joint meeting of all CCABs), St. Louis
- Feb. 24, 2013, telephone/web conference
- March 19, 2013, telephone/web conference
- July 16, 2013, telephone/web conference
- Aug. 13, 2013, telephone/web conference
- Sept. 17, 2013, telephone/web conference
- Dec. 17, 2013, telephone/web conference
- March 18, 2014, telephone/web conference
- June 17, 2014, telephone/web conference
- July 15, 2014, telephone/web conference
- Sept. 16, 2014, telephone/web conference

RESOLUTIONS

Referred resolutions: There were no resolutions referred to this Commission by the 77th General Convention.

Proposed resolutions: The Commission is proposing one resolution for consideration by the 78th General Convention.

A010: DISSOLVE THE STANDING COMMISSION ON COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church dissolve the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology or incorporate its charge with that of another standing body of The Episcopal Church.

EXPLANATION

Created by the 73rd General Convention in 2000, the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology was formed at a time of great changes in technology. It was also formed just as the first Director of Communication was hired at the Episcopal Church Center. For many years prior to 2000, Episcopal News Service, Episcopal Life, information-technology staff, and the Presiding Bishop’s communications and public affairs staff operated with a good deal of independence of one another.

With an evolving staff structure in the Office of Communication emerging just as SCCIT began to tackle its charge, the roles, expectations, and relationships between the two entities were never fully defined.

Over the past 14 years, the fields of communications and technology have experienced a period of exponential change and growth. The three-year cycle of General Convention renders any recommendation that SCCIT might make obsolete within months of passage. Despite the talent, enthusiasm, creativity, and faithfulness of the members of SCCIT, such a far-flung group of volunteers lacks the capacity to achieve recommendations without program support.

Therefore, SCCIT’s members recommend the dissolution of the Commission so that its members may be free to share their gifts and energy in immediate and local projects within existing Episcopal networks.

The Changing Nature of Communications in the Episcopal Church

Each member of the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology (SCCIT) is keenly aware of the variety of communication challenges facing The Episcopal Church. We need affordable and sustainable Church website development and support, mastery of social media best practices, and congregational development resources, including a rapidly growing need for Spanish-language resources. The need for such offerings is real and urgent. Indeed, the chance to assist in helping to provide them to the wider Church is, in fact, why many of the Commission members sought or agreed to serve on SCCIT.

What has become clear over the course of the triennium, however, is that SCCIT is not equipped or capable of addressing these challenges in any significant or meaningful way. Put simply, a standing commission is the wrong tool for this particular job.

The General Convention in 2012 reflected this in many respects in that, despite myriad communication challenges facing the Church, it did not send a single resolution to SCCIT to work on in this triennium. Those responsible for setting budgets also determined that the Commission required only the minimum amount of financial resources needed to meet in online sessions. While online meetings are effective and low-cost, occasional face-to-face meetings are also important to aid any group's cohesion and productivity.

Even without resolutions to work on, SCCIT has continued to meet quarterly and, over time, explored the relevance of our mandate. As a policy-focused commission, SCCIT's aim is to propose policy changes regarding communications, a mandate that makes less and less sense for several reasons:

- The field of communications is changing rapidly. Policy statements about current trends in communications today will be outmoded within a year or, likely, less.
- There is no church-wide office that would help dioceses and congregations realize policy recommendations that SCCIT might make. In the absence of such an office, the prior triennium's commission turned its attention from policy-making to the creation of a resource website to support its "Website Challenge." However, this website quickly became out-of-date without committed volunteers or program staff to support it.

Without exaggeration, the members of SCCIT find themselves without a clear sense of purpose, without adequate resources, and stymied by the very nature and scope of the work. As General Convention 2015 approaches, we face the unsettling prospect of another three years of meeting for the sake of having said we met. SCCIT sees a greater likelihood for innovation and support in the areas of communication as coming from the Episcopal Communicators network, in partnership with The Episcopal Church's Office of Communication; as well as from the work of innovative individuals and organizations that are pushing at the boundaries of The Episcopal Church's communication efforts in timely and innovative ways.

Indeed, the highly successful Social Media Sunday, held on June 29, 2014, was a grassroots effort started by web and social media volunteer Laura Leist Catalano of the Diocese of Missouri, who also created <http://www.episcopalshare.org>. Laura reported that *"there were 4,000+ posts on Twitter and Instagram and thousands more on Facebook. With monitoring tools, we estimated that we reached one million-plus on Twitter alone, and imagine there were millions more on Facebook! At approximately 10am EST we hit the top of the US Trends chart on Twitter."*

The Episcopal Church Foundation's Vital Practices blog, <http://www.ecfvp.org>, and social media presence offer many resources to support local efforts in Church communications and other areas of congregational development.

We commend the work of the Virginia Theological Seminary for its development of the e-Formation Conference in 2013 and 2014, which offered Christian educators across the Church the ability to participate from afar and still access excellent resources.

The Episcopal Church has many communication challenges that will require the creativity and coordination of individual communicators — paid staff at the local and diocesan level; Episcopalians willing to volunteer their time, expertise, and talents to improving communications efforts; and the staff of the Office of Communication. Does SCCIT have a role to play? After two years of meeting both in person and online — with no resolutions from 2012, no budget, and a mandate focused on policy-making (with no capacity to achieve the recommendations we might propose) — the members of SCCIT are convinced that a commission is not the best means by which to tackle challenges effectively, nor does it represent a good use of limited resources.

We therefore recommend that the General Convention dissolve this Commission or merge it with another standing body.

Budget

The Commission received a budget of \$5,000 from Executive Council for the triennium. Because the only requested expense was for one in-person meeting, and it was not possible to accomplish this on the amount allocated, the Commission had no expenses during this triennium.

Online meetings via WebEx were hosted at no charge by the Diocese of Maine.

Based on the Commission's recommendation in its proposed resolution, the Standing Commission on Communication and Information Technology will not exist during the next triennium and thus will require no budget.