

STANDING COMMISSION ON NATIONAL CONCERNS

MEMBERSHIP

The Rev. Dr. Barbara T. Cheney, <i>Chair</i>	Connecticut, I, 2009
The Hon. James E. Bradberry, <i>Vice-chair</i>	Southern Virginia, III, 2009
Ms. Valarie H. Crosdale, <i>Secretary</i>	Long Island, II, 2012
The Rev. Richard J. Aguilar	West Texas, VII, 2009
The Rev. Billy J. Alford	Georgia, IV, 2012
Ms. Linda L. Anderson	Minnesota, VI, 2009
Thomas R. Bates, M.D.	Central Florida, IV, 2009
The Rt. Rev. Charles F. Bennison, <i>Term ended 2008</i>	Pennsylvania, III, 2012
Mr. D.C. “Woody” Bradford III	Nebraska, VI, 2012
The Rt. Rev. John Bryson Chane	Washington, III, 2009
The Rev. Jan Davey	Rio Grande, VII, 2009
Ms. Kelly N. Fayard	Central Gulf Coast, IV, 2012
Mr. Erin A. Ferguson	Southeast Florida, IV, 2009
The Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson	New Hampshire, I, 2012
The Re. Lynne E. Washington, <i>PHOD Representative</i>	Virginia, III, 2009
Rosalie S. Ballentine, Esq., <i>Executive Council Liaison</i>	Virgin Islands, II
Ms. Maureen Shea, <i>Staff Consultant</i>	Washington, III

COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES AT GENERAL CONVENTION: Bishop John Chane and Deputy Barbara Cheney are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report.

SUMMARY OF WORK

The mandate for the Standing Commission on National Concerns (SCNC) is “to identify, study and consider general policies, priorities and concerns about the theological, ethical and pastoral issues and strategies as to the ministries of this Church serving Christ, to strive for justice and peace among all peoples through the proclamation of the Gospel and to develop and recommend to General Convention comprehensive and coordinated policies and strategies applicable to the same.” [Canon 1.1.2(n)(8)] Our members interpreted this important mission in this way: “The SCNC identifies, studies and interprets theologically issues facing the nation and calls TEC and its people to action through a recommended range of responses.”

We reviewed the Commission’s work and recommendations from the past triennium, as well as the requests that came to us in this triennium from General Convention, Executive Council and other Committees, Commissions, Agencies and Boards (CCABs). The Executive Council Committee on National Concerns also asked that we look over the curriculum offered by the YES Institute for training in gender/heterosexism. While we did not go through the actual training ourselves, our research did lead us to a favorable recommendation of the YES Institute as a good resource in education and training in the area of anti-heterosexism.

In response to the recommendations and concerns brought to our attention, we spent a portion of our early triennium considering the general effects of globalization and immigration upon our nation. We took note of what we perceive to be a growing climate of fear and mistrust between people, even as we in the church would say we believe all people are part of one human family, deserving of love and respect. We hold deep concern over the ever-growing gap between socio-economic classes and the disparities between those who “have” and those who “have not”.

We have a strong desire to call TEC to action in a bold way, strengthening the public voice of the church within the various communities in which we live, move and have our being. As the Standing Commission on National Concerns, we believe the presence of the church should make a difference for the better in the health and well-being of its community. The question we held before ourselves is the following: “If the church does not stand up for the dignity of each and every person, who will?”

To that end, we chose to focus our specific work in three major areas: criminal justice, education and economics. Following the initial meeting of all CCABs in Chicago on November 15, 2006, our on site, face-to-face meeting locations were chosen to further our experiential learning of the issues and concerns in these three areas and of the responsive, life-giving ministry of the church at work. Between such meetings we continued our work electronically or by phone, seeking to honor the budgetary and efficiency concerns brought to the attention of all CCABs by General Convention. We met in Linthicum, MD; Atlanta, GA; New Orleans, LA; and Omaha, NB. We chose to give a .07% donation from our meeting budget to a ministry of the church in each location that reflected congruence with one of the millennium development goals. In other words, we honored the General Convention request to share our budget with the work of the MDGs several times over, because, frankly, we were so moved by both the incredible need and the equally incredible response of the local church.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The 75th General Convention, through Resolution A111, directed our Commission to investigate issues relating to criminal justice in the United States, as well as The Episcopal Church’s ministry within the criminal justice system. (The Executive Council Committee responsible for these matters ceased to exist following the adjournment of General Convention.) Our investigation led to the following Resolution.

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION A109 MODEL PRISONER MINISTRY

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention commit to the Biblical call to
- 2 “proclaim release to the captives” and to “set the prisoners free”; and be it further
- 3
- 4 *Resolved*, That justice must be done for victims and offenders alike; and be it further
- 5
- 6 *Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church be firmly committed to a system of justice that seeks to provide prisoners
- 7 with assistance both before and after their release, including alternatives to prison where appropriate, and
- 8 programs in prison that offer offenders the chance to learn job skills and complete education; and be it further
- 9
- 10 *Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church seek to address the concern of prisons built in remote areas resulting in
- 11 further separation of families thus making the situation for juvenile offenders particularly difficult; and be it
- 12 further
- 13
- 14 *Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church commit the sum of \$100,000 to develop and implement a model program
- 15 based on the above action called for in this Resolution, in partnership with interested others, at an appropriate
- 16 penal facility in the United States; and be it further
- 17
- 18 *Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church recognize and express its gratitude to the many ministries of the church,
- 19 including those of prison chaplains and volunteers, parishes and dioceses that work to support prisoners and their
- 20 families; and be it further
- 21
- 22 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to
- 23 consider a budget allocation of \$100,000 for the implementation of this Resolution.

EXPLANATION

The Standing Commission on National Concerns heard eloquent testimony concerning the need for rehabilitation programs for prisoners, so that they can successfully reintegrate into their communities. We noted that, according to Bureau of Justice reports, approximately 650,000 state and federal prisoners reenter society each year; but about half of all former prisoners are returned to prison for a new crime or parole violation within three years. While, what are called, “reentry” programs offer employment training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, behavior modification and family assistance classes, it is not clear what is offered while prisoners are incarcerated. While some state prison systems, certainly not all, try to begin rehabilitation, at the federal level there

is almost a total absence of help or concern. The Commission believes that to truly “set the prisoners free,” programs must be provided during the time prisoners are incarcerated to give them hope for a better future and the skills necessary to succeed before they are released. Programs such as “Amicus” in Minnesota and Kairos offer an example of such positive efforts.

The 74th General Convention concurred in Resolution 2003-A125 (“Ministry to Prisoners and their Families”), in which the Convention “urged dioceses and congregations to become familiar with the criminal justice system and form ministries which assist prisoners and their families during sentencing, while in prison and during their readjustment period; to support the establishment of and/or expansion of occupational, therapeutic treatment, and academic programs in prison where prisoners may be prepared for re-entry into society.” This worthy piece of legislation failed to provide funding for a pilot program of ministry to prisoners preparing for reentry into community. We commend Resolution 2003-A125, and recommend adoption of this proposed Resolution, which would provide a model for the church’s ministry to prisoners and their families.

EDUCATION

Meeting with people in communities across our church caused us to focus our attention on the increasing economic disparity that exists in our country. In our conversations, research and reading we came to understand the correlation between economic disparity and the widening education gap that exists between the rich and the poor.

The information we gathered through our research, and in the stories we heard regarding work being done to address this issue, caused us to look still more deeply into ways we could further that work. We offer the following Resolution and its accompanying explanation to help address that gap.

RESOLUTION A110 BRIDGING THE EDUCATION GAP

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention commend Resolution 2006-B018*
- 2 (Endorse the National Council of Churches Policy on Rights of Children) for bold and immediate action; and be
- 3 it further
- 4
- 5 *Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on National Concerns (SCNC) in its next triennium further study the
- 6 voucher system and its impact on reducing the educational achievement gap within poor communities; and be it
- 7 further
- 8
- 9 *Resolved*, That the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES) be commended for the initiatives it has
- 10 taken on justice and equity, its statement on Social, Economic and Racial Mix in Episcopal schools and its
- 11 Episcopal Schools Urban Alliance; and be it further
- 12
- 13 *Resolved*, That, in collaboration with the SCNC, further new and bold educational models be explored and
- 14 developed by Episcopal schools in cooperation with NAES with underserved and economically challenged
- 15 communities, focusing on systems, capacity and resources, and the story of those initiatives and efforts to be
- 16 included in the SCNC Blue Book report to the 77th General Convention in 2012; and be it further
- 17
- 18 *Resolved*, That the Episcopal Schools, working through the NAES collaboration with the SCNC, be encouraged to
- 19 further strengthen their leadership in addressing economic disparities, by finding new and bold ways to increase
- 20 the availability of scholarships and sliding fee scales for elementary schools, high schools and colleges and report
- 21 such findings to the SCNC for inclusion in the Blue Book report to the 77th General Convention in 2012; and be
- 22 it further
- 23
- 24 *Resolved*, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church endorse continued support of funding for
- 25 the historic black Episcopal colleges.

EXPLANATION

There exists an ever-widening educational achievement gap between the rich and poor in the United States. Our Episcopal Church has a role to play in helping to broaden access to quality education from among the best church school systems in the country. The Episcopal Church has a long history of embracing the value of education, as the very existence and good work of our Episcopal schools attests. Our schools and early childhood development programs number over 1,000 and serve over 160,000 children—with significant socio-economic, racial, cultural and religious diversity. Our Episcopal schools are clearly communities of intentional pluralism in which education and religious and spiritual formation take place. A descriptive statement from the web site of the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES), from which we cannot help but take heart, says, “Episcopal schools exist not merely to educate, but to demonstrate and proclaim the unique worth and beauty of all human beings as creations of a loving, empowering God.”

The Rev. Daniel Heischman, Executive Director of the NAES, pointed out five areas of the association’s work in his address during their Biennial Conference in 2008. Those five areas are interpretation, collaboration, justice and equity, the work of the web and the work of leadership. (The full text of his message can be read on their web site, www.episcopalschools.org) The common ground shared by the SCNC and NAES, and the Rev. Heischman’s clear call given within his address for deepening collaborative relationship within church structures to build a just and equitable society, gave our membership the courage to offer this Resolution.

*The following is the text of GC2006-BO18, referenced in the first resolve of “Bridging the Education Gap”:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention urge Episcopalians and The Episcopal Church at every level to work to ensure that governments provide adequate funding for programs that combat social and economic conditions that place children at risk or diminish children’s ability to achieve their full potential in the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention receive and endorse the National Council of Churches (NCC) comprehensive policy statement, entitled The Church and Children: Vision and Goals for the 21st Century Policy. The Episcopal Church is a member of the NCC whose governing body, the General Assembly, passed this statement on November 11, 2004 to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop and flourish.

THE CHURCH AND CHILDREN: VISION AND GOALS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY POLICY STATEMENT

As Christians, we are called to make a commitment to work together as families, congregations, denominations and as an ecumenical community of member communions, to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop and flourish. Therefore, we, the member communions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, working with others in communities of faith and concern, strive to achieve the following vision and goals for children.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

All children need to be part of nurturing communities, where they are included as full members and participants in the common life of worship, prayer, witness and service. Therefore, we commit to:

- Ensure through leader development and assignment of resources that faith communities are places of joy, nurture and safety for children;
- Nurture the spiritual life of children and teach them of the love, grace and fellowship of God;
- Receive, nurture and treasure each child as a gift from God;
- Give high priority to the quality of planning for children and the preparation and support of those who minister with them;
- Foster community beyond the family unit, in which children, youth and adults know each other by name, minister to each other and are partners together in serving Christ in the world; and
- Appreciate the ability and readiness for children to represent Christ and his church to bear witness to God’s grace—wherever that may be—and, according to gifts given them, to carry on the faithful work of

reconciliation in the world and to take their place in the life, worship and ministry of the community of faith and governance according to each communion's distinctive polity.

FAMILY

All children have a right to be a part of loving and safe families. All segments of society share responsibility for supporting families in raising their children and future generations. Therefore, we commit to:

- Protect the dignity and value the diversity of every family;
- Respect and preserve the child's bond and covenant with parents, family and community;
- Ensure that families have the skills, knowledge and resources to develop, support and sustain loving homes;
- Nurture families in recognizing and appreciating their child's abilities and gifts for ministry and in supporting their spiritual development;
- Provide families with resources and systems that enable them to balance the demands of parenting, work and education and make time for recreation;
- Encourage parents to be active in their communities, in the democratic process and in the promotion of the interests of children and families;
- Encourage adoption as a healthy and appropriate means of securing for children a permanent family structure;
- Be intentional in providing church and community support in those kinship care situations when children are being cared for by relatives other than their parents; and
- Encourage congregations to become caring partners with institutions and systems providing care for children, and engage in advocacy for children in those settings.

EDUCATION

All children have a right to quality public education that fosters their intellectual, social, emotional, physical, cultural and creative development. Therefore, we commit to:

- Respect and support family as the child's first teacher, recognizing that learning begins at birth;
- Value and invest in teachers as a key component of every child's development;
- Create an educational system that is a partnership of family, community and school;
- Respect and provide for each child's differences and capacities to learn, recognizing the needs of those children with disabilities and with special gifts;
- Ensure the availability of remedial education for children and their adult caregivers who need special help to be ready for further education and eventually to become employable;
- Support an equitable, fully-funded system that prepares every child for life-long learning;
- Ensure that every community provides safe, excellent, well-funded public schools for their children;
- Develop the use of schools as community resources during and beyond school hours; and
- Teach children to understand, respect and celebrate diversity, multiple cultures and languages and a global perspective.

SAFETY

Every child has a right to live in a physically and emotionally safe environment that cultivates acceptance and peace, and in which they are protected from the myriad of dangers confronting them. Therefore, we commit to:

- Provide child protection policies, safe church training and other resources that promote and ensure safe, non-violent family and community environments;
- Promote legislation that eliminates children's access to handguns;
- Teach and practice healthy conflict resolution in all segments of society;
- Promote social justice through the elimination of prejudice and discrimination;
- Promote non-violent, positive images and language that respect the dignity of every human being;
- Advocate for reducing violence on TV, in movies, video games and on the Internet; and
- Ensure equal protection and due process of law for all children and youth in a system, which recognizes their differing capacities and promotes rehabilitation and learning.

ARTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

All children have a right to express and celebrate their souls and spirits through arts, culture and recreation. Children need to have open time to dream, play and create. Therefore, we commit to:

- Advocate for the integration of arts, culture and recreation into the core curriculum of education;
- Provide access to a wide variety of affordable, quality arts and cultural and recreational programs for children of all ages;
- Promote an increase in safe indoor and outdoor neighborhood recreational activities;
- Create ongoing opportunities in congregations, schools and before- and after-school programs to discover, recover, preserve and celebrate traditions across cultures; and
- Ensure that museums, libraries, parks and diverse cultural resources are supported as vital parts of our communities.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

All children have a right to economic security and economic justice, which means that all families have access to food, clothing, transportation and safe, affordable housing, and that all families have equal opportunities to provide these basic economic needs. Therefore, we commit to:

- Continue to strengthen the commitment to overcome poverty;
- Promote family-friendly policies in the workplace;
- Actively pursue a just tax policy;
- Cultivate marketable job skills through providing congregational and community models of training and education;
- Provide accessible, affordable, high-quality child care;
- Promote corporate partnerships that strengthen communities;
- Provide economic security through government initiatives for the children whose parents cannot support them; and
- Enhance access to jobs through sound policies for housing and transportation.

HEALTH

Every child and family has a right to guaranteed quality, comprehensive health care. All children deserve to live in a healthy environment that allows them to thrive. Therefore, we commit to:

- Ensure that quality pre-natal care is available for all;
- Focus on prevention as a key to preserving the health and well-being of children;
- Ensure that no children go hungry;
- Implement an effective health and nutrition education curriculum;
- Work for publicly funded, integrated, accessible and high quality mental health care; and
- Develop partnerships for clean air, water, land and a healthy ecosystem.

ECONOMICS

Our collective imagination as members of the SCNC was particularly caught by the pressing nation-wide need for financial resources to address social problems at a root level. Issues of credit and low-interest loans predominate and are connected to the need for housing, employment, education and business efforts. We thought very seriously about what it might take to start a national Episcopal bank. We applaud the several Episcopal Church supported credit unions already in place in various dioceses, such as the ones in Los Angeles and New Orleans.

Building on some of the work from the last triennium and our interest in the re-building of healthy communities after economic devastation, we turned to the experience of New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. What we found in the work of The Episcopal Church is a model for us all in any of our church communities, especially those that may be facing particular hardship. As we learned, while New Orleans is its own unique entity, it is also every place. There we found a diocese that, because of the challenge it faced:

- Chose to stay the course both in faith and hope;
- Chose to listen to the people, their needs, desires and ideas;
- Chose to take on systemic work, re-developing and re-shaping societal structures to open the door for healthier, more holistic and holy living;
- Chose to be imaginative, using a variety of resources, such as community organizing, forming partnerships, working through micro/lending and daring to open new congregations to function also as community centers; and
- Chose to take bold action, such as the Jericho Road Housing Initiative.

Staying the course, listening to the people, forming partnerships, taking on systemic work with imagination, creativity and boldness, all for the sake of the health and wholeness of people’s lives, and all done in faith and hope, is a model for us all.

Our commission also worked collaboratively with the Episcopal Network on Economic Justice and the Church in Metropolitan Areas Conference. Two of our members (the Rev. Barbara Cheney and the Rev. Richard Aguilar) attended the Presiding Bishop’s Summit on Domestic Poverty in May 2008. Out of our collaborations and work we offer the following Resolutions.

RESOLUTION A111 ECONOMIC JUSTICE MINISTRY FOR AND WITH LOWER INCOME PEOPLE

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the General Convention affirm and adopt the seven (7) following
2 actions as the policy and program for Economic Justice of The Episcopal Church during the next six years:
- 3 ▪ Engage in the traditional acts of mercy in which many congregations and Jubilee Centers participate, such
4 as food pantries, clothing closets, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and other programs.
 - 5 ▪ Foster a “relational culture” in which each congregation develops relationships with the disenfranchised
6 in their community—knowing people by their names and forming local partnership with agencies that
7 work with people of little income or few financial resources.
 - 8 ▪ Deepen advocacy in concert with the Office of Government Relations for legislation that provides
9 adequate levels of support and opportunities for all people.
 - 10 ▪ Participate in faith-based community organizing whereby people of the local community exercise the
11 power of numbers and their conviction to bring their needs to the attention of elected officials and
12 governmental bodies, thereby encouraging effective policy and action.
 - 13 ▪ Support and participate in various models through which low-income people can take control of their
14 own lives and meet their own needs, such as community development corporations, housing
15 corporations and cooperatives and small business development.
 - 16 ▪ Encourage at every level of The Episcopal Church the making of loans and deposits at a level of one to
17 ten percent of financial assets to community development financial institutions (community loan funds,
18 community development banks and credit unions and micro-loan business funds) to support local
19 community development and, where helpful and necessary, for the creation of financial institutions
20 themselves.
 - 21 ▪ Encourage dioceses, congregations, organizations and members to make socially responsible investments
22 in the Episcopal Economic Loan Fund, with the goal of obtaining the \$24 million fund established by
23 GC Resolution 2000-B037* to support the “community controlled economic development programs of
24 the disadvantaged” (quoted from the Economic Justice Resolution of the 1988 General Convention); and
25 be it further
- 26
27 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the General Convention communicate this Resolution to all dioceses of The
28 Episcopal Church for implementation and follow-up.

EXPLANATION

The House of Bishops, in their paper “Economic Justice and the Christian Conscience,” published in October 1987, called for a fundamental reordering of human values “if we are to have any hope of challenging society’s

present enchantment with overweening individualism, human avarice and social irresponsibility.” They went on to state that, “The moral imperative for Christians is not so much to offer simple answers to the paradox of a prosperity that generates poverty but rather to seek understanding of how the growth and extent of such poverty constitutes both a moral contradiction and a systemic social flaw that serves to undermine the very prosperity which helped create it. The special challenge to Christians is to commit themselves to a process of informing the conscience of society at large about this paradox and to suggest a variety of ways by which individual Christians in their personal activity and their Church in its corporate life can witness.” On the basis of this statement, the House of Bishops voted to encourage dioceses to bring forward to the 1988 General Convention Resolutions for action on economic justice.

In response to the bishops’ call, the Diocese of Michigan brought the Resolution “Taking Action for Economic Justice” to the 1988 General Convention in Detroit, and its adoption significantly impacted the justice ministry of The Episcopal Church at that time. Some dioceses and parishes started community loan funds and credit unions or placed money in already existing investment vehicles. Others created housing development corporations to create low-income housing throughout the country. Still, others created business incubators and micro-enterprise funds for small business development. Church people involved in service ministries to the poor were often called to an advocacy ministry, to join their voices to those of the poor to demand increased and more effective government and agency services. The landscape of The Episcopal Church involvement in economic justice began to change.

Recently, a call was raised for a revised and strengthened economic justice Resolution to respond to the pervasive economic crisis, moral contradictions and systemic social flaws we are experiencing twenty years later. Our economy has not been kind to working people and lower income people. Changes in the world economy are literally changing the way we do business. Despite a rising productivity, the wages of working people have not risen for more than 20 years. Factories and business have moved overseas, contributing to an untenable unemployment rate here at home. The safety net that was designed to provide lower income people with basic necessities while they prepared to join or rejoin the workforce has been seriously weakened. The mortgage foreclosure crisis has deeply challenged the recent trend of irresponsible and unregulated lending. We find ourselves mired in a financial crisis that includes both decreases in income and increases in prices, putting the squeeze on many Americans.

Now, in this 20th year since the adoption of the Resolution “Taking Action for Economic Justice,” it is time again for the church to act with boldness, compassion and clarity.

*Following is the final text of Resolution GC2000-B037 referenced within the first resolve of “Economic Justice Ministry for and with Lower Income People”:

TITLE: CONSIDER EXPANSION OF FUNDS ADMINISTERED BY THE ECONOMIC JUSTICE LOAN COMMITTEE
Resolved, That the Executive Council consider the expansion of the \$7 million loan fund administered by its Economic Justice Loan Committee to at least \$24 million dollars; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council consider the following changes:

1. that the current assets of the Fund be placed in a separate loan fund vehicle as a program of ECUSA, including assets (funds not yet loaned), loans receivable, principal, and interest payments;
2. that investments be recruited for the Fund from dioceses, congregations, and other Episcopal organizations;
3. that these investments be matched dollar for dollar by new investments by the budget of the General Convention; and/or that it increase its own contribution to the Loan Fund to 5% of its investment portfolio;
4. that this Fund be commended to the Church Pension Fund and The Episcopal Church Foundation for consideration for staffing and funding; and
5. that sufficient staffing be engaged to administer the loan program from the General Convention budget as well as from income from the Loan Fund itself.

Citation: General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000 (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 652

RESOLUTION A112 EPISCOPAL NETWORK FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention fund the Episcopal Network for
2 Economic Justice (ENEJ) at a level of \$100,000 per year for the coming triennium, so that it can continue and
3 increase its mission of supporting and assisting economic justice work at every level of The Episcopal Church;
4 and be it further
5
6 *Resolved*, That ENEJ collaborate with and report to the Advocacy Center; and be it further
7
8 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to
9 consider a budget allocation of \$100,000 for the implementation of this Resolution.

EXPLANATION

The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice is a membership organization that arose out of the work that followed the church's implementation of GC Resolution 1988, "Taking Action for Economic Justice." The Network consists of individual, congregational and diocesan members. Members work both within the church and in interfaith coalitions to promote economic justice in their respective communities. The ENEJ, with some support from The Episcopal Church, has provided educational materials, technical assistance and ministry models to Episcopalians engaged in a broad array of economic justice activities. These activities include the formation of credit unions and other wealth-creating programs, organizing and advocating for economic justice and supporting local worker justice campaigns.

Such funding will provide much needed resources to help ENEJ assist the church in rising to the challenge of the current economic crisis, while at the same time providing a stronger partnership with this organization that has arisen from the grass roots of The Episcopal Church.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The SCNC budget for the 2006-2009 triennium was \$60,000. In 2007 we spent \$18,021; in 2008 we spent \$17,461; with \$24,518 remaining for 2009. At the time of the completion of this report, no meetings were planned for 2009. One reason for our lower expenses this triennium was the weather. Attendance at several of our meetings was unexpectedly light because several members were unable to travel due to severe weather in their home regions. For that reason, and because of our belief in the value of face-to-face meetings, we recommend that, in spite of our lack of spending, the same budget be allotted to us for the next triennium. Thus, during the 2009-2012 triennium, the Commission will meet approximately five times, with a requested budget of \$60,000 to be distributed as follows: \$20,000 in 2010; \$20,000 in 2011; and \$20,000 in 2012.

CONCLUSION

This past triennium fired the imagination of the members of the Standing Commission on National Concerns as to the ability of The Episcopal Church to act with boldness in systemic ways on behalf of the lives of the people. Even so, the continuing disparity and viability of financial resources continues to be a challenge. Recognizing there is risk involved, we ask that during the next triennium the Commission explore the formation of a national Episcopal Bank or credit union. Additionally, we recommend an exploration of the whole arena of micro-lending. We also ask that our successor body study the wide-ranging area of globalization and fair trade agreements. TEC does not have policies on trade and trade issues, so this will be a new area of exploration. Our concern is how TEC can best advocate for minimizing negative effects on people and our environment. We ask that the findings and recommendations in these areas be reported to the 77th General Convention in 2012.

Finally, we recommend that in the next triennium the SCNC research the history and explore the relationship of The Episcopal Church and the Native people of the United States. We recognize that there are painful aspects of that history—such as the Episcopal residential schools—that we are called to understand. We imagine such research and exploration leading us to deeper knowledge of our past and our relationship together as brothers and sisters in Christ and members of God’s household today.