

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Task of the Committee

The Committee on the Status of Women was appointed by the Presiding Bishop after the 1988 General Convention to report to the Executive Council. Its charges were: 1) to support and advise the Presiding Bishop on matters affecting the participation of women in the church, including assisting in the identification of women for appointment to various Church bodies; 2) to serve as an advisory body to the Office of Women in Mission and Ministry; 3) to advocate for women's ministries, and for the justice issues which particularly affect women; and 4) to monitor and analyze patterns of women's participation in the church. Its membership reflected the diversity of the worshipping community of the Episcopal Church including a bishop, priests, deacons, and laypersons, male and female, Anglo and non-Anglo (e.g. African American/Caribbean, Asian, Hispanic/Latino and Native American) who have interest in and concern for the full participation of women in the mission and ministry of the Church.

In this report, you will find information gathered in two surveys, the first one conducted in 1986-1987 and the second fifteen years later. There were three main areas of inquiry:

- 1) the extent of women's participation in the leadership of the Episcopal Church,
- 2) the values and perceptions of national and diocesan level leaders and of members of congregations concerning women's participation in the Church, and
- 3) other mission and ministry priorities as reported only in the second survey.

Trends and changes in attitudes toward women's participation in congregational leadership will be described as answers to questions asked in 1986-1987 (the first survey) and 2000-2002 (the second survey) are compared. It is the Committee's hope that this information will stimulate action at the national and diocesan levels, inform the Deputies and Bishops who consider resolutions offered by this Committee and others at the 2003 General Convention, and provide a context for, inform and encourage the conduct of similar studies (i.e. Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music – A066) now and in the future.

B. Purpose of Action Research Project

In part, this survey study was envisioned as a follow-up on a study conducted nearly fifteen years ago by the precursor to this Committee, i.e., the Committee on the Full Participation of Women in the Church. For this reason, many of the questions used in the earlier survey were repeated in the surveys distributed in 2000-2002. The study was also intended to gather information on new mission priorities and developments that may affect the status and ministry of women. This called for new questions that were not asked in the first survey. In brief, this study asked questions concerning leadership and mission and ministry priorities.

Leadership: How has the position of women in the leadership of Episcopal congregations, dioceses, and national church offices, agencies, commissions and committees changed over the last fifteen years? In this new century, what church characteristics, conditions and attitudes held by officials and members make it more likely that women and men will be equal in their opportunity to be leaders at all levels of the Episcopal Church? How important in facilitating women's participation and status in church structures are the presence of ordained women in the pastoral leadership, the size and location of the congregation, the value placed on the use of inclusive language in worship and emphasis on other priorities the church might be addressing other than women's participation?

Mission and Ministry Priorities: What do ordained and lay persons in dioceses think should be the mission priorities for the Episcopal Church? How do goals relating to women's full opportunity for participation and leadership in the church mesh with other mission areas viewed as important? What are the implications of these findings for women's participation in the Episcopal Church for the next generation?

C. Research Design

The Committee worked with Dr. Adair Lummis of Hartford Seminary to develop three versions of the survey. Each version included a core of identical questions: (1) the core questions for parishioners in each of the participating dioceses, (2) an expanded version for diocesan leaders in each diocese, and (3) the expanded version plus questions relating to national

policy and program for national church leaders and Church Center professional staff. The full text of the three survey instruments is available on www.episcopalchurch.org/women..

At the invitation of the Presiding Bishop eighteen dioceses, geographically representing the United States, agreed to be part of this study. These dioceses, in broad regional groupings, are: (1) **Northeast**: Bethlehem, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Washington; (2) **Northcentral**: Indianapolis, Iowa, Kentucky, Southern Ohio; (3) **South**: Central Gulf Coast, South Carolina, Virginia, Western Louisiana; (4) **West**: California, Los Angeles, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming. The dioceses of Quincy, San Joaquin and Pittsburgh were invited but declined to participate in this study.

The Committee recruited the dioceses and selected committee chairs in each participating diocese. These chairs took major responsibility for gathering historical and current factual data about women's leadership in their dioceses, and for distributing the surveys to approximately 300 regular parishioners (typically 200 women and 100 men randomly chosen from lists of churches that represent the diversity of their diocese) and 50 leaders of their diocese. Committee chairs mailed out surveys in the participating dioceses between October 2001 and February 2002.

The national level surveys were distributed to Church Center professional staff, Executive Council members, and chairs of national commissions and committees of the General Convention in the spring of 2000. 103 national level surveys were returned (52% women, 49% men); 58 were from the Church Center professional staff, and 45 from the Executive Council and its Committee chairs.

A postage-paid return envelope addressed to Hartford Seminary was included with all surveys to encourage respondents' honesty by ensuring their anonymity.

From the diocesan level distribution 2,842 surveys were returned (69% women, 31% men). 12% of the diocesan sample was ordained (or 128 clergywomen, and 154 clergymen). The racial/ethnic makeup of this sample is primarily *Anglo*; only 14% (or 340) is *Non-Anglo*. Of the *Non-Anglo diocesan sample*, 64% are women and 10% are ordained (with equal

proportion of female and male clergy). The total diocesan sample well represents the diocesan regional groupings: Northeast 27%, Northcentral 22%, South 20%, and West 30%.

D. Organization of the Report

Statistical analyses of returned surveys from national and diocesan respondents form the basis of this report. Reports prepared by the committees in most of the 18 dioceses follow the main report in the Appendices.