

Executive Council Committee on Science, Technology, and Faith

Abiquiú, NM

April 9-11, 2008

Members present:

Jim Jordan (Chair), Sally Bingham, Phina Borgeson, Barbara Elliott, Tom Lindell, Sandra Michael, Stephen Stray, Alistair So.

Absent: David Bailey (resigned), Neill James, Richard Schori, Paul Shepherd

Due to difficult travel and botched arrivals, the meeting started late.

Thursday morning session: Catechism of Creation and other theological issues.

(NB: Bingham, Elliott and So were still not yet present. Elliott arrived during this session.)

Jordan convened and welcomed the group. He reviewed the purpose of the group, invited self-introductions, and noted that our most important role was in evaluating ethical and theological issues.

Borgeson has put together a summary of the main strands of Christian environmental theology in the form of "An Open Letter to a Christian Environmental Activist", inspired by E.O. Wilson's epistolary book, *Creation*. She would like input from the group. One suggestion was to publish in *Episcopal Life*, but a more likely strategy is to publish on line on the ST&F web site as a tri-fold download, and point to it with an opinion piece in *Episcopal Life Online*.

Borgeson introduced the conversation on the revision of part III of the Catechism of Creation. Lindell is also key in this effort. Bob Schneider, the original lead author, Elliott and Marian Grau (CDSP Faculty) are also involved in this. To facilitate it, Google Docs is being used to allow sharing without having to exchange email documents. So far this is working well, and circumvents the need for face-to-face meetings while still allowing participation of numerous people. Google Docs allows access to be restricted, rather than being a wikipedia-like free-for-all. When the current working group have reached a consensus, input will be invited from the rest of the committee. Noted that Bob Schneider has yet to make any comment, but may just be "lurking".

Currently, the working group is addressing issues such as anthropocentrism in the existing version. Section three is the "stodgiest" and most in need of refinement, even as it is the most critical to the current life of the church. Other sections could use revision as time permits.

Discussion:

Should the C of C "push the envelope" theologically, remain closer to current "consensus", or both? There are a huge variety of theological positions on creation and creation care within the church, and often within individual dioceses and parishes (as elaborated in Borgeson's epistle). There isn't necessarily consensus within this committee on all issues, particularly related to theology.

Terminology is important and needs to be addressed critically. "Creation" is often replaced by "earth"; is this too narrow in that it excludes other aspects of the cosmos?

"Responsibility" has acquired a very legalistic sense; a more general sense of living to the best of our ability within interlinked systems needs to be recovered.

We have been trying to remove obvious anthropocentrism, but is our view still too biocentric - do we need to acknowledge the non-biotic systems more?

Jordan introduced the concept of intrinsic "rights" of land and water from a recent book by Chamberlain. Although this is possibly overextended, better to think in terms of respect for the intrinsic "value" in both an economic and non-economic sense. Land and waters can be considered "actors" on their own, allowing a process-oriented approach where what is important

are the interchanges between the various players, both biotic and non-biotic.

Lindell asserted the need to discard the notion of God being “omnipotent”, rather than just another player (“humble participant”, see “Elephant in the Room” by him.)

This view allows invitation into the process of understanding the cosmos and God’s/our place in it. “God loved creation into existence, and continues to love it, warts and all.”

The idea of an omnipotent God of creation allows humans to duck their responsibilities by yielding their control to God - anything that goes wrong is God’s fault. Rather, sentient beings have a license to “go out and be”. Omnipotence also raises important questions regarding suffering and evil.

Borgeson asked if there are there good “omni” words- e.g. “omnibenevolent”?

Further items to be explored:

How do ecology and environmental activism challenge us theologically?

Do we need to go back to the Theology/Science debate? (probably not)

Potential Supplements/contributors:

“Elephant in the Room” (probably further “out there” than most people are at the moment)

“Open Letter”

Paul Nancarrow (presbyter and scientist in the Diocese of Minnesota): “How creation came to be”

Sallie McFague presentation at HOPE Conference

Role of Myth/legend/imagination (Lindell’s work on this.)

Borgeson offered something in the interesting idea department: the need to look at how metaphor is used in science - especially when scientists speak informally or address general audiences - and in theology.

What about adaptations/study guides to allow the C of C to be used more easily in parishes, etc. We originally talked about doing a version for children, not looking to “dumb it down” - but we do need to make it more accessible.

Lindell asked the group to reflect on what our individual motivations are for doing good/behaving morally and ethically. A long conversation ensued exploring a variety of motivations such as:

- don’t require belief in “God” *per se*
- need for “fire insurance” against wrathful deity
- therapeutic need “because it makes me feel good”
- out of feeling of joy and gratitude
- out of deep-seated rage at injustice
- “From whom much has been given, much is expected”

Other ideas were then suggested:

The metaphor of hospitality- we are both guest and host (recognizes responsibility with mutuality).

Idolatry- we create a view of God who is very much like us, then impute those motives to “him.”

We heed calls to love our neighbors because we have a sense of being surrounded by love.

God viewed as a loving, enfolding parent obviously doesn’t work for people with negative parent issues.

Every culture has myth and worship, and we need multiple metaphors to understand our relationship to God and with God.

Jordan reported that only 50 or so hard copies of the current version exist, apparently with no plans for producing any more. Mostly it has been downloaded; He will produce a more “user

friendly” PDF version that can be produced in booklet form for study and congregational use.

Thursday morning session II: Water

Jordan led the topic of water, on which he had been working.

Borgeson introduced a list of environment related resolutions from the General Conventions, 1979-present - 33 in all.

Jordan noted that our direction from Executive Council is to focus on MDG's. We are mainly interested in goal 7 which addresses sustainability.

Of the issues we chose to focus on, there have been no resolutions on oceans' health, a number on climate change since 1979, and two on water in 2003.

The resolutions passed in '03 regarding water resources were well written. One authorizes the Washington, D.C., office to advocate on water quality, distribution, availability etc. The other encourages dioceses to work on water stewardship, with four foci: low flow, native plantings, drainage systems, and paving with pervious materials.

Water must be considered systemically from source to disposal; in the US this tends to translate just to savings in capture, transportation, use etc, but many places do not have adequate means of either sourcing fresh water or disposing/cleaning/recycling wastewater. The '03 resolution doesn't address MDG's in that it has no international focus - both adequate sourcing and disposal are issues in the developing world, and our approach has to be nuanced to address all these issues. For example, if the emphasis is entirely on cutting down the volume of water used, are we introducing more disposal issues because we are not allowing for sufficient dilution of waste products, even human wastes such as pharmaceuticals etc. Both availability and sanitation need to be addressed.

Thursday pm session I

Further discussion of Water resolution:

The resolution should affirm the '03 resolution, then build. General Convention doesn't have much institutional memory, so it doesn't hurt to start with a reminder of previous actions

The resolution also needs to progress beyond issues addressed in '03, e.g., it needs an international focus, watershed issues, understanding of the complexities of the interrelationships of different aspects of water resources

How best to get the message across? Resolution should mandate the development of resources such as study guide, bulletin inserts, etc. It would need a variety of resources aimed at different audiences. It also needs to be informed by a better understanding of “yin and yang” of water symbolism, i.e., that water can be both creative and destructive.

It should also commend good things going in the church now, especially in Province IV and the Diocese of Alabama, then challenge others to adapt such resources and projects to their local conditions.

Is this one resolution or more than one? And we definitely need to have EpEN folks on board with this.

We need to check on what the Washington Office has done with water issues since the 2003 resolution addressed to them. Jordan will check with Maureen Shea.

Does it need a specific tie-in to MDGs? These are very development-oriented, and our resolution should take a more integrated approach

Other potential resources:

Genesis Covenant (50% reduction in CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses)

Interfaith Power and Light (helping states develop carbon caps)
Hope Conference (Steve Charleston)

Other considerations: How ready is the church to change? Elliott introduced a readiness for change theory". It describes the psychological stages:

1. No problem
1. recognition without readiness
2. "things need to be different"
3. planning for/effecting change
4. maintaining change

[http://www.cellinteractive.com/ucla/physician_ed/stages_change.html]

Jordan recommends Gary L. Chamberlain's "Troubled Waters: Religion, Ethics and the Global Water Crisis", which surveys religious traditions regarding water, also discusses inherent rights of water *per se*, rights of individuals to adequate water. Also states that local ownership of use of resources is critical, otherwise the system is unsustainable.

The Oceans issue was adopted by Richard Schori. He sent material for review, but because of its late arrival, the problems related to getting to Abiquiú and the fact that email access is limited, few members had a chance to review it.

We did, though, have a brief discussion of ocean issues:

25% of world's fish stocks are in West Coast waters.

The Oceans are showing stress in falling numbers of critical species.

The sustainability of local fisheries is critical to survival of many of the world's poor.

The change in ocean temperature will drastically affect ocean currents, which are critical sources of nutrients in many parts of the oceans.

We reviewed our work thus far as So and Bingham arrived.

Bingham led the **conversation on global warming**. She reported that the Executive Council on Socially Responsible Investing has acted on the 2006 General Convention resolution on long-term carbon neutral goals.

One proposal to the General Convention 2009 will be the Genesis Covenant, calling for denominations to reduce emissions by half.

The Episcopal role is prominent in Interfaith Power and Light; Katharine's testimony to Congress was important, and Bingham is working with John Johnson.

She feels we should include in our Blue Book Report that unless we make progress on MDG 7 all the others are moot.

There was some dialogue about the fact that natural selection is being driven by climate change and other human impacts on the environment.

Members share impressions of Northcott's A Moral Climate. While it has a biblical basis and a

review of ethics approaches, some of the science seems a bit dubious.

A point we need to make repeatedly, opined Bingham, is that those who are contributing the least to climate change will suffer the most.

Thursday evening

Report on meeting of Health Commission in Baltimore (Barbara Elliott)

This was only the second meeting (the first was at CCAB in Chicago); other work has been done by phone and on line. The meeting included people outside the commission to help move the agenda forward and to promote networking. Small group discussions were held on topics such as access to health insurance, end-of-life issues, wellness issues, ethics of doctor-patient relationships, recovery ministry, disaster planning and triage. Areas of specific interest to ST&F include genetics/genomics/stem cell research applications, care of creation, discussions of the health impact of global warming (especially as described in recent WHO publications). There may be interest in collaboration between ST&F and Health on a resolution addressing Health/Global warming issues. They have identified a need for ethical materials for decision making in the health care setting, e.g. addressing issues such as end-of-life choices in disaster situations: “What to do when FEMA help isn’t coming?”

Elliott agreed to look into Global-warming related health issues. (Stray to assist as needed.)

Food Ethics

Borgeson led this portion of the meeting.

Lack of sustainability of food resources arises from many factors, including drought, global warming, consumerism.

Need to return to local control of food resources; Agribusiness currently has too much control over global food production.

Acceptable ‘norms’ in this discussion need to be considered. ‘Democracy’ should be considered the minimum standard, should endeavor to approach mutuality.

More needs to be said about the importance of diversity of food - local crops/varieties adapted to local conditions are being discarded in favor of uniformity pushed by agribusiness concerns.

What is sufficiency? UN definition of “adequate” food would not be normative for most people: Quantity/variety of food sufficient to maintain health.

Many these days are “in denial” about food, not questioning industrial food and a lack of seasonality in food.

Nexus of consumerism, climate, food, and fuel

- food prices rising worldwide because of changeover to biofuel production

 - “food for people, not cars”

- increased demand for wheat due to adoption of bread as major starch in place of rice, etc because it fits a more westernized lifestyle

 - rise in harvesting of (non-sustainable) palm oil due to bans on trans fats

Borgeson recommends two general books from a faith perspective “Food for Life: the spirituality and ethics of eating” (Jung) and “Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread” (Schut). Other resources are aggregated on her blog. [<http://www.justgleanings.blogspot.com>].

Questions:

Do we want to revive the food resolution presented in ’06?

It was well received at HOB hearing. The ’03 resolution tanked because it was too wordy, successful resolution from MN was much simpler. ’03 resolutions were focused on US issues

only. Do we need something more international, tied in with the MDG's?
Can we expect a resolution on food/hunger from another source at GC? If the resolutions go to the same committee, they can be combined

Is there/should there be an "environmental commons"?

- Is it ethical to patent life forms?
- Genetic engineering often more about selling product than actually improving production
- "Food for community, not food as commodity"

Friday morning session I

Oceans: Schori's material finally arrived, and echoed our Thursday afternoon conversation on many points. The main issues are over fishing, pollution (including acidification) and other issues related to global warming and the CO₂ burden.

Plans for General Convention 2009:

The content of our report may include a resolution on global warming and the mdgs; a resolution on water - reaffirming existing work and extending it to global issues and oceans' health; global warming and health, which may be rolled into the resolution above; our work last year on evolution and sex; the health committee connection - the Chicago meeting and Barbara's liaising, our participation in anti-racism training; other notes on our participation in the roundtable and its programs underscoring the ecumenical justification for our existence; our participating in AAAS, too; plans for the next triennium with budget.

We have not developed our resource center plans. We need a budget for managing this, tech support and resource production.

We digressed. Jordan reminded everyone to send in their expense reimbursement promptly. It's required within 45 days, but he'd like us to do it sooner so he can get an accounting and see if we can have strategic smaller meetings if we need them between now and the General Convention. Folks should communicate with Patrick Haziell if there are exceptions or changes to their agreed travel arrangements.

Logistics for the General Convention. Deputy registration begins July 4. Convention ends July 17th. Hearings on resolutions might be any time from the 9th until the 16th.

We need to get a preliminary report to Ed Rodman soon before the Blue Book report.

Borgeson will check with Bernie Lucas about sales of Catechism of Creation. Stats might be useful for the Blue Book report. She will also ask again if there is any hope of reprinting.

Bingham posed the idea of a resource center on CD. We can have some on-line conversation as we go. Jordan and Borgeson agreed to develop a starter list and send it out for conversation. To begin with we might include our resolutions, notes on our organization, relevant environment resolutions, A Catechism of Creation, organization of network and committee charts from Barbara Smith-Moran, tri-folds in .pdf format.

We noted that we need to have people present at GC to advocate at hearings- need to be

thoroughly briefed, as hearings are unpredictable and allow little time for preparation. Committee assignments of legislation don't come out until the first day, and can get "hijacked" by controversial issues or if members have axes to grind. Resolutions need to have thorough background. But specific strategies for the General Convention can be left until our next face meeting in spring 2009.

Jordan reviewed the **budget**. Our annual meeting last year cost something like \$10-11,000. Jim did not get an accounting until March of this year, 11 months later. He thinks we need to budget to include sub-group meetings (how many?); ancillary meetings - representing us at other meetings within the Episcopal Church; external meetings such as DoSER at AAAS; web site support; coordination of environmental sustainability initiatives around the church; catechism of creation publication plus tri-fold publication costs - together let's call it resource production.

Perhaps we should take out the environmental sustainability item, and suggest it be included somewhere else. We have been frustrated in our work related to MDG 7 by there not being a staff person for such work. Could there be a staff person in the Seattle office related to our work?

Bingham reports that EpEN wants to have a staff person somewhere and is currently talking with Mark Andrus about having someone housed in DioCal.

Suggestions for additional members:

Barbara Clarke, Maine(I), developmental biology and theology, presbyter
Massachusetts chemist - was there someone whose name we were trying to recall here, or did this just seem like a desirable category?
Mary Hileman, Oklahoma (VII), petroleum geologist, presbyter
Paul Nancarrow, MN (VI), theology and science, presbyter
Catherine Baker, science writer, Washington or Maryland diocese?
Jim Burke, DC area, but Diocese of Virginia?
Someone in nanotech
Cynthia Cohen - is it time to get over it the genetic rift?
Nick Kniseley, Arizona (VIII), physics, cosmology, communication, presbyter (cathedral dean)
For the next triennium - Phina and Tom filled unexpired terms and could be carried forward
Bob Geppert, Western Michigan (V), biology, presbyter
Janice from Utah (VIII), soil scientist and CDSP student
Sheila Andrus, California (VIII), extinction, entomology

We adjourned for round table hikes, field trips and program

Saturday Morning

(Bingham excused)

Who's doing what?

Resolutions and Blue Book Report

We will propose a resolution on global warming and the mdgs. Jordan to research and initiate, Borgeson to review, and then to whole group.

Global warming and health. This might stand alone or be related to the above resolution. Elliott will track this issue after Jordan gets out his research (above).

Water resolution. Jordan will pull together and add additional info, may redraft the resolution he wrote before this meeting.

We don't really have a way to go with oceans' health issue, but maybe something in the Blue Book Report?

Jordan and Borgeson will draft the Blue Book report and circulate it. They will work via email, and meet during July when both are home in Sonoma County sans travel. Then it will be circulated to the whole group.

What might we include as part of a resource library, for the web and cd-rom?

Jordan's webliography on water.

Catechism of Creation

Tri-folds: The nature of science

Letter to an environmental activist

Human sexuality stuff - including Massachusetts interfaith group report

Capture relevant articles and bulletin inserts from ELO

All urls should be annotated.

All additional materials and suggestions should go to Stray who is the point person on this.

Elliott, Lindell, and Borgeson will continue to work on the revision/amplification of Part III of the Catechism of Creation. Borgeson will goad Professor Grau for her help.

Borgeson will send Jordan the latest Microsoft word version of the CofC, which he will craft into a booklet sized .pdf

Stray will continue to work on stem cell materials, and liaising on this with Commission on Health.

All members need to look for candidates for the committee and send names to Jordan.

Stray commented that looking at our work for the next five years, he feels we need to pro-active about constructing creation theology in greater depth. Should we propose a resolution to the General Convention to task us to get into deeper issues? It seems especially important that we study the role and impact of humans to construct a comprehensive theology of creation. Stray will circulate his proposed copy for a resolution among us for dialogue. We need to decide by July if we want to carry this forward.

Jordan suggested that the work on a framework for ethics is also particularly important, and might be included in this tasking resolution. Elliott's work on this will be significant.

Borgeson asked what we want to propose to Episcopal Life Media for bulletin inserts for 2009. We decided on two related to Darwin anniversaries. One for Darwin Day/Evolution weekend in February focusing on Darwin the man (200th birth anniversary). Another on the anniversary of the Origin later in the year focusing on the gift of natural selection/Darwin's theoretical framework to religion/theology. Lindell and Borgeson will work on these.

Jordan and So will work on a series of three on water, sourcing, use and disposal, for the Earth

Day/Easter season. So will work on collect and litany for these.