

House of Deputies
Committee on the State of the Church

February 13 - 16, 2008
Alexandria, Virginia

The House of Deputies' Committee on the State of the Church met at Christ Church in Alexandria, Virginia from Wednesday, February 13 through Saturday, February 16. Those members present were:

Al Price, <i>Chair</i>	Andrew Cooley
Debby Melnyk, <i>Vice-chair</i>	Kate Cullinane
Kathryn W McCormick, <i>Secretary</i>	Chip Davis
Cindi Bartol	Ann Fontaine
Arthur Bjontegard	John Goldsack
Ashton J. Brooks	Kirk Hadaway

Members absent: Maggie Tinsman and Hillary Raining

Mr. Al Price, chair, called the meeting to order and opened with Noonday Prayers. The SOTC began three days of meetings with various interviews with persons in the Alexandria and Washington area. Interviews included:

- The Rt. Rev. Peter Lee, *Diocese of Virginia*
- Mr. Bill Fetsch, *Falls Church Episcopal*
- Mr. John Johnson, *Domestic Policy Coordinator, Washington Office of the Episcopal Church*
- The Rev Frank Wade, *Diocese of Washington*
- The Rev. Dr. Ian Markham, Dean, *Virginia Theological Seminary*
- Dr. Kirk Hadaway, *Episcopal Church Center*
- Mrs. Bonnie Anderson, *president, House of Deputies*
- The Rev. Nicholas Lubelfeld

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

The Blue Book deadline is December 12 and themes for that report need to be identified and assigned to writers by the end of this meeting.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Morning Prayer was read in the chapel of Christ Church.

The Interim Report of the State of the Church Committee had three broad areas: Identity, Mission, and Organization. There was discussion on what was missing from that report. By the end of the meeting, SOTC will create an outline and set deadlines for the report.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

There are some voices missing from our discussions: youth, Hispanic, radical right, gays, lesbians and representatives from the emerging church and the internet church. We should address the situation in the Anglican Communion, those who have left the church and leadership and the structure of CCAB's. The SOTC should look at the new organization at the Church Center.

The SOTC needs to look at cultural trends which are affecting the church today. What does a vibrant church look like? What is our identity? mega churches talk about Jesus Christ, why don't we?

The committee came to the consensus that a major piece of our report was the identity of the Episcopal Church and was glad to know that was to be the theme of General Convention. Discussion followed with several points:

- Most Episcopalians are unable to articulate their identity
- We need to claim our Anglicanism
- We need to say who we are and not conform to the norms of other denominations (many of whom are now Episcopalians).
- We allow the media to define who we are and set our agenda
- Since we are an older denomination, TEC will naturally decline faster
- It is important for the Episcopal Church to look at perceptions: we were liturgical, now we are political; we were spiritual, now we are conflicted; we were progressive, now we are divisive. If these perceptions are correct, why would someone want to join TEC? People do not want to join a church which is in conflict. There is a decrease in the number of persons joining. It seems that we are still acting from a political mode, not a prayerful mode.
- We need to claim our Anglicanism
- Good leadership grows out of a clear identity of who we are as Episcopalians

Discussion followed on why we focus on the youth. The Episcopal church is a church for adults and the youth are not comfortable in today's church since adults are seeking different experiences than the youth. The Episcopal Church is a place for questioning and for transformation. The Episcopal Church must move to a mission mode.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Leadership / Structure

- Check in with Structure Committee
- Do we have too many layers between the decision makers and the pew
- The matrix organizational model doesn't work in today's times and that seems to be what we are creating
- CCAB's are expensive to run and cause confusion
 - Do we look at the skill sets when filling positions on CCAB's?
 - What is the value of the CCAB's?

Discussion followed. We are training people to lead a church which no longer exists. We should be training for start up or smaller congregations, not the large congregation.

The Presiding Bishop appointed a committee to look at interim ministries and the curriculum for training interim ministers. Discussion followed on the training of clergy and lay persons: Several points were made:

- Our seminaries have no accreditation process
- Some seminaries are too marginal to be effective
- Many priests are being trained in Anglican Studies
- How are we training lay persons? How are they prepared to be effective leaders?
- How can bishops be trained to look at total ministry?
- Do we consider the skills needed to fill a vestry?
- Mentoring for young priests is crucial; Fresh Start should be encouraged.

Identity

- Can't define identity
- Are we an inclusive church?
- Anglican covenant – too many boundaries

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Melyk led the SOTC on a discussion concerning the report in the Blue Book:

- People want to know how many people have left TEC
- How much money has left TEC
- The Easter survey will give us new data
- Who are we trying to reach? The pew or only General Convention deputies?
- People are interested in: 1) tension; 2) MDG; 3) Anglican Communion; 4) presiding bishop successes
- Graphs are a helpful way to tell the story
- Report should look forward and show signs of hope
- MDG's are successful and should be reported
- Will be finding a new middle
- Strong leaders are non-anxious
- What is the role of the church center and its staff
- Leave space to report on Lambeth Conference
- The report should not set an agenda

Outline of Blue Book report:

- I. Summary of work
- II. Questionnaire results: *Debby, Andrew*
- III. Identity: *Chip, Andrew, Kate*
 - a. What it means to be an Anglican
- IV. Structure / Leadership: *Art, Cindi, Ashton, John*
 - a. Anxiety of leadership
 - b. Finding a new center
 - c. Does the structure support the mission of the church

V. Successes: *Ann, Kathryn, Al*

- a. Presiding bishop
- b. MDG
- c. mission

Each section will work on a report to be completed and sent to Kathryn McCormick by May 1. Melnyk will contact the Structure Committee and Price will research the A006 which calls for a national survey.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Weathersby McCormick, *Secretary*