

House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church
February 15-16, 2001
Maritime Institute of Technology (Linthicum Heights, MD)

Minutes

THURSDAY – FEBRUARY 15

What this committee accomplished in the last triennium:

- ♦ Executive Comm. charged with conducting a census by year 2005
- ♦ Ray – in preparation for the census – every parish has been issued a UID number that will stay with them always – even should they ever close

Charles Fulton –Director of the Episcopal Church Building Fund (do lots of research) - can't make it here because of the fog – wants to make a presentation at our next meeting. Foundation works closely with staff at 815. Works a lot with churches in crisis. Ray will get us info about Charles and his organization.

Connectedness, or lack of it, is something that should concern us, as it is an indicator of the state of the church.

We would like to see a copy of the Diocesan report form.

Suggestion made that Ray report to us on the status of Dioceses that have failed to file their reports. Suggestion made that, as members of this committee, we be assigned the responsibility of contacting delinquent dioceses. Paul volunteered for this task.

Perhaps we need to address avenues to assist parish administrators in filing their parochial reports. Ray reported that, in actuality, the parishes are much more diligent in filing their parochial reports for the Diocese (who are more heavy handed) than the Dioceses are in reporting to the National Church. *Canon only requires that our committee approve the form used in the parochial report – not that we monitor the filing of the reports. If we want to become the watchdog, we need to look at changing Canon.

Felt that there is no need for our committee to rework the form, having in mind that the last form had been refined during the last triennium. Not an immediate concern at this time – the report form currently being used was approved last year by Executive Council – we will only become involved if we feel that the form needs to be changed for another year.

The resolutions, generated by the State of the Church Comm. for the 2000 GC, that were adopted have been assigned to committees for execution – should we be tracking the progress? Up to those committees to report to GC – they information would come to us from the GC office. Comment that if deputies become frustrated that follow-up on resolutions is never completed and reported it does become a concern of the State of the Church – it is a disconnect. Also a disconnect with our communications – things happen, but we never hear of them.

Concern about accuracy of census/parochial reports – inflation of numbers of communicants & deflation of income. This has been addressed by past committees – parish and diocesan CEO’s – Ray said there is a system of checks and balances in place.

Active members: people who are not inactive – an unfortunate and misleading category. The Christmas and Easter people. Remain forever on the baptized member register – unless ask to be transferred. Can be on the rolls as active members at several parishes. CGS – faithful in worship, giving and praying.

***We still have a concern: Who are members? Who are we counting? What about friends who contribute, but are not official members – are not on the rolls, and perhaps are members of other communities of faith? – we need their numbers when applying for financial aid. We need a canonical change to allow for this. Perhaps the H of B committee on theology – when they define the issue of baptism vs. confirmation – may solve this problem for us. What role does confirmation play in our number counting?

Discussion of theology/pastoral care issues surrounding baptism and the receiving of communion. Our concern is with the unbaptized. However, we define Christians as those are baptized – we can’t water down our faith –instead should be working with these persons to baptize them. A part of the State of the Church committee to look at this issue:

- ♦ How we count people
- ♦ How we do ministry
- ♦ Power vs. authority

What we count, who we count, and how we count is important historically, it is important that we recognize ministries that are going on. Categories must make sense and how we are counting must matter. We must keep the dialogue open and make sure what we are calling categories are not really exclusionary tactics.

All this boils down to...

We have two issues:

1. How we count people – we do not know what membership is – we need to wait for the report from the Bishops
2. How we do ministry – we can talk about this. At the Last Supper – Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” And at the Ascension He sent them to be baptized – so we do know about the order Biblically.

Wish that the Bishops on the theology committee and the Standing Commission on Ministry Development be aware of our concerns – Reynolds will get with George Werner to make sure that our ideas are conveyed.

Suggested that there needs to be a study of the theology of marriage. Suggested that we leave marriage to secular world and instead have the church study relationships. Vermont – uses the term civil union rather than marriage. Stated that sacrament of marriage is a cultural sacrament. The problem is infidelity – that is a problem of the state of the church.

? invite someone from Cornerstone to tell us about the disconnects they have identified in the church.

G. Werner:

1. The need for Reynolds to be a member of this committee
2. Works as a colleague with PB on committee appointments
3. No direct responsibility of PB for our State of the Church committee
4. Open door policy – helpful to hear from us
5. I am because we are – community
6. Good working relationship with the PB-PB very spiritual, loves the whole family, do what he can to keep the family together

FUTURE LEADERSHIP

- ◆ Reynolds Cheney, elected Chair of our committee
- ◆ Cecily Broderick y Guerra, elected Vice-Chair
- ◆ Susan Hansell, elected Secretary
- ◆ Jerry, John, and Ann will be scribes
- ◆ Paul will arrange the schedule for the rotating chaplain

FUTURE MEETINGS

- ◆ Financially should be able to afford five total meetings – (four more)
- ◆ Discussed one more this year and three next – or two more this year and two next year.

- ◆ 9/28 at 9:00 a.m. to 9/30 at noon or 10/5 at 9:00 a.m. to 10/7 at noon
- ◆ 1/30/02 at 9:00 a.m. to 2/1 at noon 2002 – Florida or 2/20/02 to 2/22/02
- ◆ 4/26/02 at 9:00 a.m. to 4/28 at noon – or 5/3/02 to 5/5/2002
- ◆ 10/2/02 to 10/04/02 or 10/9/02 to 10/11/02

POSSIBLE PLACES

- ◆ New York City – October 2001
- ◆ South Carolina – Winter 2002
- ◆ Memphis – April 2002
- ◆ San Francisco or Santa Barbara Fall or LA – Fall 2002

The diversity of our church is really our essence and we need to draw upon it. There was a spirit at the convention. Discussed pain of D045.

Between now and our next meeting – reflect on some of the wonderful things that came out of convention.

***We need to begin focusing on things that are positive, proclaim the Gospel, be bringers of hope and proclaimers of joy.

NEXT STEP: Data gathering before next meeting:

- ◆ Zacchaeus report - Cornerstone
- ◆ Percept – Terry Parsons, Congregational Dev.

- ♦ Episcopal Building Fund – Charles Fulton
- ♦ 20/20 Evangelism
- ♦ Credo – for information only
- ♦ CDO & Church Pension Fund
- ♦ Congregational ministries-clergy demographics
- ♦ Parochial reports
- ♦ David Gibbs from Dallas

CENSUS – agreement on need for info, but disagreement on how to collect it. Want a profile of what the Epis. Church looks like – ethnicity, gender, age, income level, education level, marital status, senior citizens. Last done in the 50's – what does our church look like now?

We need to start thinking about what gift our committee can give Executive Council in the development of the form for the census. The plan must be in place by April of 2003. Check in the interim with our resources at home for expertise in this area.

Recommend that we set up a chat room for communication among our committee members. Ray will be in touch with us to get us all up and running in the chat room.

Concern about use of the word “census” – discussion of use of perhaps a better term. “Who are you?” Final report, a compilation, “Who we are!” We must be very clear about the purpose for compiling this data.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Recap of where we are

We can assist with the census – number counting – but does that really give an objective picture of the state of the church? The mind frame of the church? Both positives and negatives. In the past, the negatives have been deleted.

Look at historical data

A real need to have some humility – don't attack other people's perspectives – be compassionate and caring for one another. Proceed slowly. Be humble in doing our job.

Think about counting people versus doing ministry. We need to report on the state of the ministry. We are to see and hear what is going on and to report back to the church – don't let ourselves be sucked into just performing tasks. Get info from the other committees and attempt to pull it all together –

Important that we really listen to the people in the congregational development office in NY. They are the ones hearing the stories from across the church.

Listen out for the good news stories. Remember the salvation of the remnant.

Committee sense of excitement because we are planning to do something – we aren't just going to count people – we are going to talk about where we are as a church. We want people to tell their stories.

Censo – Spanish for census

- ♦ Cuántos somos, using C for how many are we?
- ♦ quiEnes somos, using E for who are we?
- ♦ dóNde estamos, using N for where are we?
- ♦ cómo Servimos a Dios, using S for how do we serve God?
- ♦ cuáles sOn nuestras necesidades. Using O for what are our needs?

The quality of ministry has nothing to do with numbers

Comment: In California there are over 25,000 illegal Canadians – they are more readily welcomed – because they look “American” and speak English – than the Latinos – who are legal, but look “different” and speak Spanish.

Went around the table and shared what gifts we feel we bring to this committee.

Susan Hansell