

House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church
February 20-22, 2002
Camp Christopher (South Carolina)

Minutes

The state of the Church committee met at Camp Christopher, South Carolina from 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 20th to 11:45 a.m. on Friday, February 22nd in the year 2002.

Present at the meeting were:

Wesley Baldwin
Cecily P. Broderick y Guerra
Anne C. Brown
Reynolds S. Cheney II
Lee Clark
Mark Dunnam
Susan W. Hansell
Verlyn Hinds
Paul E. Lambert
Antonio Munoz
Terry Roberts
Susan C. Skinner

Jerry Carroll submitted a letter of resignation, for purely personal reasons, from the committee.

We began with a recap of our past progress with an eye toward our end product, our committee focus. Because **Verlyn and Lee** are responsible for the parochial report, our initial discussion was of numbers. We need to look at the total picture - a picture of which numbers is only one facet. We need to be concerned with how we can make the parochial reports a useful tool for parishes.

Matthew Price, Director of Research at the Church Pension Fund, gave a presentation on the state of the clergy. Less than ten percent of our priests are under the age of 40. Our clergy ranks are dominated by clergy aged 45-65. Matthew suggests that the Pension Fund should consider funding sabbaticals for priests (who can't afford them) and then perhaps burn-out will decrease. The problem of burn-out is directly related to the problem of recruitment.

Matthew feels that our committee should be concerned with the state of the clergy, clergy numbers, and the possible clergy shortage. He suggests: recruitment, work flexibility, a look at the organizational structure in parishes, admit we have a problem, and make plans for the worst case scenario.

The Rev. William Sachs, Director of Research for the Church Foundation, also spent a good deal of time with our committee. In his **Zacchaeus Report** interviews, he found there was a disconnect between local churches and the national church structure. Local people feel that the national church is answering questions they aren't asking. Local people also felt that, when they had a need, the national church was utterly insensitive. Bill also reported that the face of our church is changing - there is an infusion of spiritual seekers - people with very little church background. The spirituality of people today is not tied to belonging to a religious institution - it is instead a spiritual journey. Eighty percent of our church growth comes from relationships. Bill suggests that our data should reflect: Who is in our pews? How long have they been there? Are they on the vestry? What is their spiritual hunger? In what sense are they participating in the life of the church? Will they be there tomorrow?

We brainstormed possible themes and ideas for our focus and final report to General Convention. Ultimately we decided to use the Baptismal Covenant as the overarching theme for our report. All of our ideas were put into four categories:

1. Past/future: data, Zacchaeus, future of this committee (SOTC)
2. Connections and coordination
3. World and Society
4. Ministries

Our committee divided into two sub-committees - one to focus on 1&2 above and the other on 3 & 4 for the duration of our meeting. We will all have resources to read and research to study in preparation for our next meeting - April, 2002 at Fogelman Center in Memphis.

Respectfully submitted

Susan W. Hansell
Secretary