

# Standing Commission on Domestic Mission and Evangelism

Wednesday, May 16 – Saturday, May 19, 2007

The Marriott Courtyard Seattle – Southcenter

Minutes

**Present:** Angelica Duque, Charles Fulton, Ora Houston, David Jones, LeeAnne Kosovich, Lallie Lloyd, Ted Mollegen, Kirsten Nielsen, Joanne O'Donnell, Beth Panilaitis, Silito Romero, Stephanie Spellers, Sandye Wilson

**Not present:** Colenzo Hubbard, Jim Mathes, Don McClain

## WEDNESDAY, MAY 16

Dinner together @ 6 p.m. Ad hoc review of agenda @ 8 p.m.

## THURSDAY, MAY 17

**OPENING:** Lallie Lloyd led Morning Prayer at 8:15 a.m. Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m. Group shared the “good news” of our contexts.

**REVIEW OF TRIENNIUM PRIORITIES:** David Jones reviewed priorities (*see attachment: SCDME\_TrienniumPriorities\_5.3.07; and see revision: SCDME\_TrienniumPriorities\_5.17.07*).

### **Discussion of Triennium Priorities**

- **CONTEXT:**
  - What does a Commission do? Make policy recommendations to the General Convention via legislation. Then work with staff to see what's working, what help they need, then make recommendations to next GC.
  - Can make a mid-term report to Executive Council, which is empowered to act on urgent matters between General Conventions. Blue Book Report would then say: “Sent this report to EC, they agreed and acted, and here's what's next.”
- **CLARIFY MISSION & EVANGELISM:**
  - Episcopal Church suffering brand assault. Time to tell the true story in a systematic way. Possible that a plan is afoot to replace Episcopal Church as the Anglican presence in America. Be a think-tank for church, considering creative ways to tell story.
  - Millennium Development Goals not secular. Make difference in how we grow, whether we are energized for local mission. Links and creates healing among conservatives, liberals, everybody in between.
  - Ted Mollegen emailed group with resource recommendations on the topic: *Hardball on HolyGround: The Religious Right v. the Mainline for the Church's Soul* by Steven Swecker; the video on the website [www.ird-info.com](http://www.ird-info.com). Both oriented toward the United Methodist Church (UMC) but recognize that the attack is also on the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

- CHURCH-PLANTING:
  - Survey of church planting initiatives been sent to diocesan bishops & diocesan congregational development staff. Developing the case for major fund-raising efforts. Charles updated on funding: Jim Lemler has hired Susan McCone, consultant, to help raise funds around five goals.
    1. Global Ministry/Reconciliation and poverty
    2. Frontline Evangelism/Church planting (rename – “Fund for New Church Plants”)
    3. Wider Welcome/Communications
    4. Future Leaders/Equipping new leaders
    5. Spiritual Enrichment/Formation of current leaders
  - Charles will meet with Susan next week to clarify our needs and goals. Good news: PB Katharine was part of the Church Planting Subgroup in the 2020 Working Group. Desperately need venture capital, not just endowment. May not be able to provide funding for start-ups, but perhaps fund land and building when new congregations have developed enough to justify investment. Asked dioceses: what callings for ministry are beyond your help? Most common: starting new congregations.
  - NOTE: what about churches that are currently in existence? Restarting and reenergizing?
  - Difficult for a monoculture to become a multiculture.
  
- SYSTEMIC DECLINE:
  - Denial and resistance to reality of decline. How do we present the information re: decline and an initial review of strategies to reverse it? Mid-triennium report = December 2007.
  - Charles: Five yrs of decline; it’s a pattern. 75% of parochial reports in, numbers-wise, we’ve essentially lost Diocese of New York, one of our larger dioceses. Current trend, by end of PB Katharine’s tenure, we’ll be half to 2/3 our current size.
  - A mid-triennium report could have MORE impact. Shape conversation during the lull before GC. State clear terms, our urgent concerns around decline, our sense of hope for what could turn it around, two or three alternatives. Charles has asked Kirk to produce a single doc, based on diocesan parochial reports, that sets out the six-year trend.
  - Silito: concerned that we submitted an urgent mid-triennium report to Executive Council last year, no impact. How can we be more radical? How share a tough message and get heard?
  - Ted: Getting to Executive Council takes more than a report. Bishops and Deputies listserve. Put Blue Book Report on website before publication – create some buzz.
  - Re-energizing declining churches. Small congregations can start a new service to reach a different group.
  
- BEST PRACTICES: How do we cooperate, conspire with Office for Congregational Development to create best practices gatherings?
- COLLABORATE: Esp. Standing Commission on Communications re: marketing and identity (*agreed to avoid language of “branding”*).

**AFTERNOON SESSION:** Group traveled to St. Mark’s Cathedral for worship and continuation of commission business.

## **Charles Fulton shared insights from Office of Mission and the Congregational Development Program:**

1. Gallup conducting ecumenical study to assess clergy who have turned around declining congregations. Sometimes churches are declining b/c community is declining. But sometimes it's happening b/c the congregation is scared, ill-equipped.
2. Congregational Development Website makes incredibly specific, helpful info available: "Studying Your Congregation and Community"
  - Enter zip code, get church info, parochial report data. On web for every congregation.
  - Growing, stable or declining? How big are you? Urban, suburban, rural? Will tell what your next steps are for growth. Resources and content. 27 templates for congregations, links to ever deepening set of resources, meets you where you are and suggests where your future might be, what to address to be a healthy, vital congregation.
  - Info is there for everyone, when they're ready.
  - How do we incorporate this info in deployment processes, church work? Bishops are apparently downloading it, parochial report data is part of visitation prep.
3. Church Center Organizational Effectiveness Group: Katharine doing an assessment. Congregational Development resources are the top resource congregations and bishops say they get from the Church Center.
4. Upward Bound/Leading Congregations Through Change, Conflict, etc. (next: Santa Fe, Nov. 12-15): One of the best programs, but probably will not continue after Charles retires down the road.
5. Start Up/Start Over (next: Orlando, Oct. 22-26): Doing well, translates to multiple contexts, will survive after Charles' retirement.
6. Team working well together. Suzanne Watson working with Charles Arn (great book: *Creating a New Service*) to create a strategy for starting new service at small congregations. Talking with Diocese of Virginia, re: Plant My Church conference.
7. Small Church Conference (next: Oct. 8-10)

### **Small groups met re: three priority areas:**

1. identity
2. evangelism/mission
3. decline

*(See attached notes: SCDME\_Seattle\_SmallGroups\_5.17.07)*

### **EVENING SESSION:**

#### **Visit with Church of the Apostles-Seattle**

- Group traveled to Church of the Apostles-Seattle, an emerging church plant founded via partnership between the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia and the Lutheran Synod in Washington. Led by Karen Ward, a Lutheran pastor with a deep heart for Anglican heritage. See [www.apostleschurch.org](http://www.apostleschurch.org) for more info.
- COTA leaders – mostly young adults – shared stories of their cutting edge ministry and led commission members on tour of the church's home, a combination arts center and worship space called the Fremont Abbey.
- Joined by leaders from Church of the Apostles, Bishop Suffragan Nedi Rivera and Carl Knirk, Deputy for Evangelism in the Diocese of Olympia.

## **FRIDAY MAY 18**

**OPENING:** Stephanie Spellers led Morning Prayer @ 8:10 a.m.

### **MORNING SESSION:**

**Small Groups:** The three small groups continued their work, including brainstorming session on Identity, Evangelism and Mission (*see attached notes: SCDME\_Seattle\_Brainstorm\_5.17.07*)

### **Conference Call w/ Jim Lemler, Director of Congregational Development**

- **Committee on the State of the Church:** Evangelism and compassion are the challenge of the church, incarnated in MDGs and gifts of restoration and reconciliation and renewal in the world. Victory: Directors of Episcopal Church Center using 2020 language.
- **What's happened to 2020?**
  - How reclaim energy for a church that's growing and alive? Could our group jumpstart that conversation?
  - (Lallie: Group tended away from 2020 label, but kept passion for evangelism and mission.)
  - (Joanne: 2020 is the measure of success of the mission goals we've set. If we do mission right, we'll achieve the goals of 2020.)
- **How could official church structures and Church Center help with Commission's work?**
  - Research and relationships in good shape. Program of the church is mission – that's loud and clear now.
  - Need to recruit, equip and support emerging leaders to plant churches and do the turnaround work. Finance issues for seminarians who want to do mission. Long-term systemic challenge. Funding for emerging generations to become leaders one of the fund initiatives.
- **Identity:**
  - Work done by Episcopal Schools. Articulation b/c wildly ecumenical institutions that are also in love with their Episcopal roots.
  - CREDO has been focusing on identity. In June, DFMS (Domestic and Foreign Mission Society – alias for The Episcopal Church) and CREDO held joint meeting. Communications Commission on that? We'll be in it.
  - Episcopal identity capped well in recent NY Times article (*see attachment: SCDME\_Seattle\_NYTimesArticle*). Summit on Domestic Poverty in next 18 months. Tell good news of the Episcopal Church, as well as gospel.
- **Evangelism/Church Planting:**
  - Work on evangelism and spirituality.
  - Working Group on Future Effectiveness.
  - Quick survey in House of Bishops & Deputies & Church Center & Executive Council. All show plenty of resources and work in evangelism and in diocesan capacity building. Already have great work on congregational development.
  - Mission funding: case statements for each. Seed money and major gifts in place. Capital development experts in place. Part-time consultant w/ money for other strategic efforts. Two major evangelism efforts: 1) how we communicate who we are and our message and the good news of the gospel, 2) church-planting. *Pass names of potential funders to Jim.*

- (David: \$900K in the budget for church-planting(?) office. Do we need to advocate for a continuation in the next triennium?) Reaffirm funding for 2009, get in synch with what the staff is requesting. Do groundwork, prospect list. Focus attention of 3 or 4 major donors, so have energy to take into next GC. Need a 10-year window.
  - “Truth and Hope” monograph out there. Need urgent response to 4<sup>th</sup> yr of gradual decline in avg. Sunday attendance. Congregations telling faith stories much better. Can also improve.
  - No more split b/t evangelism and mission. Relationship b/t ministries of social justice and restoration in the world and invitation into faith.
- **Reverse Decline**
    - (David: Passed B023. Do we need to stay engaged?)
    - Met with funders from Lily Endowment. Particularly interested in major mainline summit on growth and decline. Also big on church planting.
    - Should have, in this triennium, best practices gathering for the Episcopal Church as we draw together a broad group, with some foundation funding.
- **Items for commission to focus on in immediate future**
    - Identity conversation. Must know what we’re inviting people into.
    - Who do we see being at a table to talk best practices? This is a great small community of people who are clear on MDGs and on evangelism. Articulate that theologically, missionally, spiritually. Create a tool kit for servanthood and evangelism.
    - (David: Group in Virginia(?) working on best practices for deploying new leaders. Pay attention to their findings.) Matches with what’s up at national level. Bud Holland, Charles, others, assessing transitions and new leaders.
- **Anglican Communion and Mission**
    - (Ted: Anglican Communion troubles sometimes feel like a distraction, forced upon us.)
    - Anglican gathering, many telling stories of how powerful our mission is. I hear it at global and local levels. Name the good, do a quick, appreciative inquiry.
- **Executive Council**
    - (Ted: Lack of interest in evangelism or 2020. Say handed off to SCDME.
    - We don’t know how urgent this moment is to the Episcopal Church. Evangelism allied with ministries of servanthood, justice and compassion. Urgency of the gospel. Urgency of mainline decline. Please articulate.
- **Opportunities for us as a Standing Commission**
    - State urgency without being Chicken Little.
    - Capacity for evangelism and for capacity-building. How does evangelism become breath and life of the church @ national, diocesan and local levels?
- **How assist in articulating the case for new church plants and leadership development?**
    - Will get the case statement to the group so you can work on it. *Need a working group around each of the areas. Leaders interested?*
    - Not just looking for endowment funding. True for emerging leaders. But communications and new church planting, looking for large gifts that will finance program immediately.

- **Reconciliation training**
  - Believe mission of church is reconciliation and restoration. All kinds of manifestations of that: evangelism and service. Don't think we've made as much progress.
  - (Joanne: We're charged to report on participation at 76<sup>th</sup> GC. Currently in the House of Bishops planning group, but not sure where it's going.)
  - Also referred to Ministry Development. HofB also doing follow-up. Bud Holland says it's an on-the-ground thing, not a staff thing.
  
- **General conversation in aftermath of talk with Jim Lemler**
  - Worried we send too many messages. Not on point. Evangelism needs to be right on top, instead of tucked away. Re-engage 2020 to address decline.
  - Many of the ones leaving the Episcopal Church are the ones most skilled at evangelism. That's part of the decline. When will we talk about it?
  - Time to get on our soapbox and say we're an inclusive church, this is who we are.
  - Ethnic communities in U.S. Needs to be discussed. Have ethnic desks present in Boston meeting. Conversation about the reality of what they're trying to do in ethnic congregational development. Beyond theoretical.
  - Have to be intentional, name the groups the Episcopal Church doesn't connect with. Cross-cultural. Becoming a majority minority nation. Urgency around finally developing strategies to connect, change and be changed. Part of the urgency for a 2020 update is faster-than-expected growth of communities of color and immigrants. Is the mid-triennium report part of our charge?
  - Need to stay with the language of urgency. Exec Council simply heard it and said thank you. No conversation. General Convention responses actually very negative. *Wait until we have a narrative, data, before we approach Exec Council. They'll get data in the fall. Craft mid-triennium report to arrive after that time. Present multiple times, through multiple channels, people will eventually start hearing the message.*
  - All our resolutions got passed. Still urgent. Get Jim and Charles back to House of Bishops. Say: you need to be doing a, b and c or this church will not exist in 50 years.

#### **MID-AFTERNOON SESSION:**

Small groups continued work, refining earlier work and reporting results (*see attached results: SCDME\_Seattle\_IdentityStatement\_5.18.07; SCDME\_MissionalDioceses\_5.18.07; SCDME\_DeclineStrategy\_5.18.07*).

- *Question for Charles: Which dioceses have assessment tools to measure missional activity and vitality? See Missional Dioceses doc for context.*

Silito, Kirsten and Beth led Evening Prayer.

Group adjourned at 4:30 p.m. for break and dinner in Seattle.

#### **SATURDAY, MAY 19**

Given small number present for final day, group opted to adjourn. Proposed scheduling conference call(s) in July to clean up/tighten work from Seattle meeting.