

Task Force for the Episcopate – Meeting Minutes
Maritime Institute Linthicum Heights, MD
June 20-22, 2016

Monday and Tuesday, June 21-22, 2016

Attending: Ian Douglas, Chair, Lee Davis Thames, Katie Sherrod, Chuck Treadwell, Mike Milliken, Sean Rowe, Sasha Killewald, Sharon Alexander (representing the President of the House of Deputies), Don Johnson (representing the presiding Bishop), Lynn Schmissrauter, Gary Hall and Sally Johnson
Members not in Attendance: Sierra Wilkinson-Reyes, Tom Little

Group adopted norms for the meeting – as provided by Visions, Inc. work proceeding the meeting:

- Try on new ideas
- OK to disagree
- Not OK to shame, blame, attack self/others
- Practice self-focus
- Practice both/and thinking
- Notices process/content
- Be aware of intent and impact
- Confidentiality

Issues to discuss as defined in the last session of our meeting with Visions:

- How do we set up a process that encourages truth-telling and confronts lying?
- How to develop an effective screening process for letting go of people who are not effective
- How do we support those who are directing the process?
- Who will have oversight?
- Are we decentralized or “federal”?
- Need for changing demographics in the House of Bishops; in the pews
- How do we impact voters?
- Need for changing the culture of bishop as CEO of the diocese
- How do we select bishops?
- How do we select effective leaders?

It was suggested that we use Visions’ template for **Levels of Oppression and Change** in our further work:

Institutional: Policies, Practices, Rules, Procedures and Systems

Personal: Values, Reliefs, Feelings, Attitudes, and Opinions

Interpersonal: Treatment, Relationships, Behaviors, and Communications

Cultural: Worldview, Stories, Climate, Shared Values, Unwritten Rules, Media Public Opinion, Symbolic/Ritual, Group Dynamics, and Norms

What is it that you bring before this meeting that, if we do not accomplish, will be a negative:

**Polity Subcommittee Conversation
as reported by Gary Hall**

(See report notes on extranet post)

- Papers were prepared by members of the subcommittee; conference call held wherein issues from the papers were identified. The subcommittee prepared a Memorandum posted to the Extranet for their Subcommittee Work Plan. This plan encompasses a list of general polity issues are being raised by this subcommittee:
 - A. Episcopal elections
 - B. Role and authority of bishops
 - C. Types of bishops – canonical and extra-canonical
 - D. Role and authority of the House of Bishops
- Committee asks for help in prioritizing these issues.
- It is suggested that the following items be taken off the work plan list:
 - D. 2. The status of House of Bishops meetings when not a part of General Convention*
 - D.3. Expansion of the role of the presiding bishop and its effect on creeping expansion of role of bishops.*
 - a. Including role in Anglican Communion*

**Process Subcommittee Conversation
as reported by Lynn Schmissrauter**

(See Talking Point notes)

Each member was asked to answer this question:

In light of our time with Visions how does that affect our work in this Task Force?

- We have some important leverage points to effect.
- I don't want to lose the personal and interpersonal aspects but I will be checking myself on a personal level as we do our work.
- The church is heavily enmeshed in the dominant culture. How do we develop processes that are counter-cultural.
- Visions provided us with a framework and language for our discussions, and the personal exercises might help us build consensus later.
- We can hopefully get some results as a result of our time with the Visions consultants.
- Everything up until the last session was very supporting and in the last session we seemed to lose some of the sensitivity that we had developed.
- Various levels of analysis were helpful in thinking of different areas in addition to the institutional. The interpersonal and affective levels are important and I am glad this was reinforced.

- I come with my own biases and prejudices but this helped me see a bigger picture.
- The change in the tone of the last part of our meeting when we began to talk over each other is an indicator of how frustrated some of us are.
- In the last hour before lunch, it was frustrating because some people were not being heard.
- We must consider the perspective of those who are served by bishops and we must consider what can happen when things go wrong. Many people are impacted and we need to make sure we consider that.
- There are some institutional pressure points. We “worship our way into change” then we name that change and institutionalize it. We are making progress – slates are getting more diverse.

Members were invited to share what is in our personal experience, knowledge, theology that might be helpful for us all to hear:

- Appalled at personal questions that are asked of candidates.
- Institutions are hurt by a belief and myth that we are better than others.
- Strong commitment to evidence based processes that reduce bias
- From a hyper baptismal enthusiast I see ordination as being a variety of baptized persons.
- “I have been a candidate in an election”. In every single election in which I have participated, the early votes of the laity eventually ended in electing that “laity’s candidate”. This leads to women and those of color not being elected. There are some technical fixes that could happen at the electing conventions to allow lay voters to have the same time for dialogue like the clergy delegates. It is something we could consider in this task force.
- Some dioceses continue a historical, systemic pattern in their elections. (Samuel Seabury believed that the church was embodied in its bishop.)
- The alternate view is that the church as the Body of Christ orders deacons, priests and bishops to serve. Ordination does not change one’s ontology – this happens at baptism and not at ordination. This “low church” perspective is commonly shared.
- Some believe in direct ordination to these three orders – deacons, priests and bishops. As soon as you speak of baptism being an order, you have gone to clericalism.
- There are some good things that happen in elections and there are many elections that have ended in healthy leadership.
- The budget follows the vision – if this is important, it will be funded.
- Being a candidate in an election gives one a perspective. Some are good, some are bumpy. Who is casting votes impacts who gets elected. Search committees that are younger and diverse often don’t represent the electorate. The core of the diversity in the HoB and the process is driven by who is in the room – on the search/nominating committee and on the electing convention floor. If we are looking for racial diversity, we must help change the people in the pews. Congregations must be diversified.

- There are bishops who have engaged in misconduct. There is not much equity in the way that bishops engaged in misconduct and clergy engaged in misconduct. There are preventable circumstances that better psych testing and deeper background and reference checks could impact. TEC has lost five dioceses as a result of the abuse of power of bishops. Ignoring canons is not a good practice for dealing with abuses. Authority must be clear. We need to decide collectively and not unilaterally or without regard to the canons.
- Some see bishops as the “CEO of the diocese”. We need pastors, not princes.
- The mission of the church is clear. Our work should acknowledge that.
- Bad leadership has a long legacy.
- We can avoid some of the messy, pathological stuff.
- Authority issues will drive the important conversations and decisions.
- Canon law is not well taught in seminaries. Some clergy are ordained with no real knowledge of what the canons contain/require/mandate/direct.
- Many bishops move from rector to bishop and we don’t do a good job of socializing people about that authority. Rectors have more authority than any position in the existing polity of the church. This canonical reality has historically led to issues with authority in the church.

Overarching questions for our committee to consider involve 1) whether bishops should become bishops by election or some other means, and 2) whether the responsibility of election should remain with the diocese or in some other arena – the local or extra-local question.

The committee studied various the selection methods of election/appointment of bishops in provinces of the Anglican Communion wherein there is generally a smaller electorate that the more common large elections with broader representation from the parishes.

The committee considered options for electing bishops that might achieve more diversity among the electorate.

The committee agrees that the selection process for bishops should be by election.

It is important, however, for the committee to think broadly about how election processes might vary.

Many diocesan canons prescribe the methodology of electing a bishop and these models vary. For example, the general church canons do not require a vote by orders for bishop elections – though this method is often found in diocesan canons.

It was agreed that the long-standing polity by which the procedural decisions are left to the dioceses instead of to TEC should be retained – a reality which will inform

the continuing work of the task force, especially the subcommittee on process. The committee agreed to consider church-wide and local possibilities and new models of roles.

Imagining Exercise: What might a new electoral process look like?

- An election process with a combination of general church decisions and diocesan decisions.
- Voting by orders - bicameral
- No automatic votes for retired clergy

Brainstorming new models:

1. An electoral body with defined representations such as:
 - Regional determination
 - Demographic determination
2. Direct election by all members in all congregations
3. Broader, non-diocesan representatives – neighboring dioceses or provinces
4. Electing body chooses four then draw straws for the bishop
5. The current process is locally organized, diocese-defined elections

What can we identify, for the sake of the church, as extra-diocesan measures/technical fixes that should be looked into for possible canonical changes?

Standardized protocols for:

- Psychological and medical examinations – these are currently required. Important considerations are: 1) Who would perform exams?; 2) When would exams be performed? before the nominations/announcement of slate ; 3) Where would exams be performed? how would exams be performed?; 4) For what are we measuring?
- Questions that are asked of nominees – resources such as the Behavioral Screening Questionnaire
- Public Records Checks – Criminal, Civil, etc. – scope should be defined
- Episcopal Church Recorder checks
- Employment, Deployment, and Educational Verification
- Disciplinary record checks
- Reference checks – at varying times in the process
- References from Clergy files in Diocesan offices – often these are incomplete or missing
- Use of trained investigators be used by search/nominating committees
- Reporting of information gathered – who records? perhaps a checklist could be used; how would we associate this information with the consent process?

- Use of a resource manual for dioceses outlining things mandated by canon and best practices that includes the permeation of matters of diversity and commitment to diversity in the slate. This should be practical guidance.

Considerations to be made relative to these recommended extra-diocesan standardized protocols:

- the need to address the financial components of any extra-diocesan mandated protocols
- Should we have consultants?
- How would consultants be trained?
- Should there be a church-wide Commission on Ministry or Church-Wide office for Episcopal elections where the work for Episcopal Elections would land somewhere with sufficient resources and oversight?
- Might we recommend a diocesan Standing Committee for Election of the Episcopate?
- How could a diocese be assisted in getting good candidates to come up with the best leadership? Dioceses need help sourcing a wide and deep pool of candidates...
- Considering local variations, dioceses could use help understanding the job/role/function of the bishop and how the bishops spend their time
- Those with oversight of naming the nominees should be trained for a deep understanding of diversity, privilege and cultural realities.
- Statistics could be provided to dioceses regarding historical slates, election results, demographics of the House of Bishops, comparisons, etc. This information is not easily accessible.
- Could there be a system where appropriate candidates are identified for election processes

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Process Committee Report and Conversation (continued):

(See report “Talking Points for June 20 Task Force Meeting – Process Committee”)

Some Questions to Consider:

Where should the resource for choosing bishops reside?

Who will fund it?

To whom is it accountable?

Conversation was had re: Office for Pastoral Development and the role of Bishop Clay Matthews as the 1) pastoral care for Bishops and overseer for the College for Bishops, 2) intake office for Title IV, 3) overseer for Episcopal Elections

Resolution D004 calls on this Task Force to “...work with the Office of Pastoral Development to develop best practices and educational materials to be published electronically and made publicly available...”

Title I, Canon 2 does not give the Presiding Bishop a role in the search/selection of bishops until there is an election, nor does it mention the College for Bishops. The PB approves the psych and medical exams, but there is no canon authorizing that action. Some members of the Task Force expressed concern over what they see is an expansion of the PB’s role without canonical authority.

There are dioceses that need a level of assessment as to their future.

- Where does the question of discerning options and viability reside?
- Is there a resource for dioceses to access assistance for strategic planning in an episcopal vacancy?
- Should there be a clear distinction between the decision of when and how a resigning bishop departs and how the next steps (election, time for discerning a diocesan joining with another diocese, call for Bishop Provisional) are planned?
- There are incredible missional opportunities at the time when a Bishop ponders resignation. Who would be best for this task? Some options include: 1. the Presiding Bishop’s office; 2. General Convention as an entity; 3. some other entity; or 4. all of the above. We believe this task should be shared. The moment of a bishop’s departure is an important time for conversation but not always a moment for intervention. This is the first time this type of plan has been formulated – historically whenever this type of conversation happened, it was in a growth strategy rather than a post-Christendom model.
- The number of Episcopal elections each year is growing in the TEC.
- In today’s technological realities, whatever we recommend should:
 - have lots of options,
 - involve networks
 - use real data
 - be technologically based
 - live apart from discipline
 - be rooted with a view towards the Kingdom of God

Perhaps there are three components that need a place to “reside” in the transition process of the bishop and diocese:

1. Pastoral planning of the retirement
2. Diocesan mission strategy conversation – readiness assessment
3. Election process
4. Education/formation of bishops

Should General Convention have the authority to change diocesan boundaries? Even if that authority is never used, it must be provided.

The time of a bishop transition is not the best intervention point for strategic conversations in the diocese.

Polity Subcommittee Conversation (led by Gary Hall):
(see June 12 Memorandum for reference points)

Polity Issues as defined by the subcommittee report: *Items highlighted in yellow will be discussed at a later time and not at this gathering...*

A. Bishop Elections

1. Role of OPD in elections (see Process notes above)
2. Need for specificity or latitude in discernment/election options open to dioceses electing bishops
3. Consecration vs ordination of bishops – is clarification needed?

The committee will, barring any future considerations, recommend that the term be clarified as “ordination” and not “consecration”.

B. Role and Authority of Bishops

1. The role of the Bishop and staff in search processes/clergy transitions:
 - a. appointment of priests-in-charge under special circumstances as it relates to vestry role in calling a rector
 - b. control of rector search processes
2. Bishops who require canonically resident retired clergy to be licensed in order to function in the diocese
3. Bishop diocesan as chief liturgical officer
 - a. The range of liturgies a diocesan can authorize
4. Bishops exercising jurisdiction in more than one diocese
 - a. Bishops voting more than once in consents to bishop elections
5. Bishops **exercising jurisdiction** after age 72

Conversation had re: definition of “jurisdiction” and “ecclesiastical authority” followed. Some questions that arise:

- Is jurisdiction geographically defined?
- Is the crux of the matter is who votes?
- Should all bishops who serve must be consented for that particular office?
- Is one vote per bishop or per office?
- What does “exercise ecclesiastical authority” mean?
- Are ecclesiastical authority and jurisdiction the same?

Jurisdiction is exercising the office and relates to place. One bishop may serve multiple jurisdictions.

It is recommended that we need a paper that explicates:
jurisdiction
ecclesiastical authority
ordinary
cure

Lunch Break

A suggestion was made to dissolve the Diversity subcommittee so that its members can serve on other subcommittees. The Task Force agreed

Conversation on the present design and some history of the College for Bishops:

- Modeled on life/formation cycle
- 90 day shepherd to help navigate the HoB – nuts and bolts
- There is a two day gathering after election with the Pension Fund (two day meeting) spouses/partners with Church Pension Fund
- There is a meeting with bishops and spouses/partners re: life transition coaching and getting to know your annual classmates
- 3 year coaching arrangement with someone assigned – assignments made by Clay Matthews (this replaced an older mentoring model); coaching is monthly for three years
- Coaches are peer coaches and trained by a professional coach David Rynack
- Living Our Vows week-long presentations are organized by election class; Leadership Development, Case Study, and Practical Training. These occur in the first three years; spouses don't attend.
- The coach makes a visit to the diocese with the new bishop to get a sense of the diocese
- Graduate after the three years
- Continuing education offerings are made available at HoB meetings and other gatherings ad hoc (the latter usually paid for by the bishops individually) – these are topical i.e. practical issues like finances, media, etc. that go deeper than the Living Our Vows sessions
- “Orderly Transitions” sessions are available five years before bishops may retire – to prepare bishops to consider timelines for resignation and transition; attendance is confidential
- The College for Bishops was tasked with the curricular contributions of helping bishops meet canonical continuing education requirements but this never took off. (A separate planning committee was in charge of design). The most recent iteration is a more retreat-like event with mornings dedicated to retreat reflections and afternoons dedicated to more curricular activities. Evenings involve informal fireside chats with the PB, card games, sing-alongs, and class dinners.
- There is a five-year evaluation of the Living our Vows – Don Johnson will try to make this report available to our Task Force.

- The House of Bishops elects the board of the College for Bishops; there are ten bishops, four lay people (one of whom is a bishop spouse), and two priests on the board.
- The College for Bishops used to be a program of General Convention funded by General Convention and Clay Matthews was in charge of the program. When funding for the College for Bishops was decreased in 2009, the HoB voted to separately incorporate this program of the church with no authority and set up a 501C3 and the PB formed the corporation and moved intellectual property to the 501C3 (the programs) with no authority from Executive Council. They wanted to raise money and endow the program to take the burden off the General Convention budget and to maintain control of spending and financial management.
- Clay Matthews is the Director of the College for Bishops.
- Neil Alexander is the Chair of the Board of the College for Bishops.
- The board of the College for Bishops governs the College for Bishops.
- There is tension around the formation of this separate entity, the over-reach of authority in its formation, and the disparity in funding and funding methods around this issue. This resulted in a diminishment of trust and our Task Force conversation examined many of these issues.

Some members of the Task Force expressed concerns about how the House of Bishops operates. The points made include:

- HoB meetings are usually six day events (unless coaching time is added); in 1992 an additional HoB session was added to encourage community and relationship – meetings were held around tables and involved more intentional prayer and spiritual development. One meeting is held usually at a large conference center with standard locations, and the other is held in another ministry context to familiarize bishops with different ministry contexts. The latter is held in the spring.
- The last session at the HoB involves a business session re: perfunctory matters like resignations, etc.
- Voting in the HOB happens re: bishop elections, HOB resolutions
- Bishops issue pastoral letters and “Mind of the House” papers
- 95% of the cost of the HOB meetings comes from the dioceses.
- We might include more questions in a further interview with Clay Matthews.

Tasks To Be Accomplished Before our November, 2016 Face-to-Face Meeting:

- Prepare a synthesis and overview of the process as we have discussed

including: **Lee Davis, Lynn and Sasha**

- 1) mandated canonical changes
 - 2) recommended changes (such as best practices) esp. **Sasha**
 - 3) technical fixes (see above)
- Collection of 1) demographic and 2) historical outcome data. **Sean and Sasha**
 - Draft editorial canonical changes – canonical clean-up. **Sally, Sharon and Mike**
 - Consider and determine how we are going to liaise with the OPD consultants group. **Chuck and Lynn**
 - Prepare a paper on definitions. **Sharon and Ian**
 - Prepare a paper on types of bishops **Gary**
 - Follow up Conversation with Clay Matthews – **Process Subcommittee plus Gary**

In future meetings we will decide where the “Four Steps” will reside: Bishop’s retirement, strategic discussion, election process and education/formation of bishops

Current subcommittees will remain in place until the November meeting with the exception of Diversity. Chairs of Process and Polity subcommittees will review these minutes and take action as needed with subcommittee.

Katie will make administrative changes on Google groups. Ian will make administrative changes with Patrick Haizel re: extranet system.

Sean will call Tom and Sasha will call Sierra to help bring them up to date on this meeting.

Future Meetings/Deadlines Planned:

- Deadline for Synthesis and Overview Draft – **Wednesday, August 17**
- Go to Meeting Video Conference Date **Tuesday, September 13 11:30-1:00 EST**
- Go to Meeting Video Conference Date **Thursday, October 13 2:00-4:00 pm EST**
- Face to Face Meeting in Chicago begins at noon on **Sunday, November 6 and ends at 4:00 p.m. on November 8**

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm after planning future meetings, sharing regrets and appreciations, and prayer.