

## A Memorial on the number of Standing Commissions

Adopted by the Synod of Province III on April 28, 2015

Forwarded to the General Convention Office on May 6, 2015

To the Deputies & Bishops of the Episcopal Church assembled at the 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention:

The Task Force to Reimagine the Church has recommended a reduction in the number of Standing Commissions from 14 (fourteen) to 2 (two). TREC's rationale is attached to its proposed amendment to Title I, Canon 1, Section 2, and reads as follows:

"This proposal eliminates several Standing Commissions, and instead retains only a Standing Commission on Theology, Liturgy, and Music; and a Standing Commission on Governance and Structure. It charges the presiding officers of a unicameral convention, in consultation with Executive Council, to appoint any other interim committees and task forces that may be necessary to carry out the work of the General Convention or address other important Church-wide priorities. This proposal will help the Church wide structures to develop a sharper focus on top priorities as identified by General Convention, reduce redundancy in the Church-wide structures, align human and financial resources most closely with stated priorities, and build in a higher degree of accountability for the work of interim bodies."

The 2014 TREC report has correctly diagnosed the problem: we now have too many Standing Commissions. Its proposed remedy is to reduce the number to two: Theology, Liturgy & Music, and Governance & Structure. To be sure, these two are essential, but for the spiritual health of the institution, a few more with an external commitment to mission and ministry would help to balance their exclusive, internal focus. **Therefore, in addition to the two Standing Commissions proposed by TREC, we urge the establishment of four others: Domestic Mission, World Mission, Ecumenical Relations and Inter-religious Affairs, and Peace, Justice & Reconciliation.**

We take some guidance on this issue from the official name of our church: The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (see Title I, Canon 3). If that name still means anything at all to anybody, would it not make sense to have a Standing Commission on Domestic Mission and another one on World Mission?

In addition, we note that the peace movement in the Episcopal Church was born here in Salt Lake City in 1917 in the crucible of Bishop Paul Jones' prophetic statement on the eve of World War I. He dared to say "war is unchristian." A committee of the House of Bishops subsequently demanded his resignation as the Bishop of the Missionary District of Utah in 1918. In 1997 he was added to *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* by General Convention. Need we point out that it would be a shame if now, here is this very place, 98 years later, the Episcopal Church were to abandon its institutional commitment to the pressing issues of peace, justice and reconciliation?