

TASK FORCE ON THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CUBA

Members

The Rev. Dr. Luis León, <i>Chair</i>	Washington, D.C., III	2018
Ms. Martha B. Alexander	North Carolina, IV	2018
The Rev. Canon Lucinda Ashby	Idaho, VIII	2018
Ms. Grecia Christian Reynoso	Dominican Republic, IX	2018
Mr. Yorki Encalada Egúsqüiza, <i>Secretary</i>	Ohio, V	2018
The Rt. Rev. Leopold Frade	Southeast Florida, IV	2018
Mr. Romualdo “Romi” Gonzalez, Esq.	Louisiana, IV	2018
The Rev. Mark B. Pendleton	New Hampshire, I	2018
The Honorable Byron Rushing	Massachusetts, I	2018
Ms. Linda E. Watt, <i>Member</i>	Utah, VIII	2018
The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	2018
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Ohio, V	2018

INVITED GUESTS

The Episcopal Church in Cuba [ECC]: Bishop Griselda Delgado, Dean José Angel Gutierrez, The Rev. Halbert Santana and Treasurer José Raúl Ortiz
The Anglican Church in Canada [ACC]: The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson and Dr. Andrea Mann
The Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe, Secretary of General Convention
The Church Center Staff: The Rev. Glenda McQueen
Church Pension Group [CPG]: Mr. Frank Armstrong and Ms. Anna Molin
Executive Council Liaisons: Ms. Zena Link and Ms. Becky Snow

Mandate

Resolution 2015-B003 of the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church gave the following mandates:

- 1) That the Episcopal Church acknowledge and affirm the Episcopal Church in Cuba’s [ECC] synodical decision from Spring, 2015, to request membership as a Diocese of the Episcopal Church
- 2) That The Episcopal Church [TEC] identify and address canonical issues (including those around pension)
- 3) That the relationship between TEC and ECC be strengthened, promoting both greater understanding and fellowship

- 4) That both churches seek to promote mutual ministry and understanding
- 5) That TEC support our national leaders in moving to lift the embargo
- 6) That TEC establish a benevolent fund which provides retiring clergy of ECC with an annuity upon retirement
- 7) That TEC establish a team representative of a wide cross-section of the Church to facilitate our collaboration around these endeavors.

Summary of Work

The Taskforce on Cuba met four (4) times during the triennium: February, 2016; October, 2016; March 2017, and September 2017. Two (2) of the meetings occurred in Miami, Florida, and were attended by representatives from the Episcopal Church in Cuba [ECC]. Each of the meetings was attended by additional guests who provided valuable information on the various areas required by the mandate given by General Convention.

During this time, relationships were built and strengthened with members of the ECC; the respect and mutuality of these relationships have formed a solid basis for ongoing ministry together. This process promoted the building of trust which allowed for the exchange of history, story, and information that helped us to gain understanding. This holds great promise for the future development of relationships of respect and mutuality among the two (2) bodies.

Additionally, some members of the Task force visited Cuba during the triennium, individually and of their own accord, on People-to-People or Religious Visas to learn about the Church, meet its people and gain a realistic perspective on the challenges and successes of ministry and mission in the ECC.

Throughout our work, there was a wealth of experience, revealed history and current information about Cuba and the ECC to help focus and shape the resolutions this body brings forth.

BRIEF HISTORY

In 1966, with the effects of the Cuban Revolution, the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church voted to disengage with the Diocese of Cuba. Prior to that time, in 1961, Episcopal Schools in Cuba had been closed and appropriated, and many clergy and their families were displaced. Some remained in Cuba; some either returned or immigrated to the United States. Some clergy who remained in Cuba were imprisoned, executed, or disappeared. Church buildings were closed and left to deteriorate. The Church was polarized politically, and its clergy and lay leaders suffered.

But the Church continued, in the living rooms of the grandmothers, who held prayer services and Bible Studies in their homes. Through them is transmitted a story of pain, and of faith.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CUBA TODAY

Under the leadership of more recent Cuban Bishops, including Bishop Griselda Delgado, the people have devoted themselves to the vision of a missional church. Innovative projects are evolving that benefit the need of the local communities: creating day care centers, inventing irrigation systems that help with sustainable farming, developing animal husbandry to raise and tend to animals to help feed communities.

Some recent missional efforts are being supported through “Friends of Cuba,” and other groups and dioceses that are able to fund and help start projects. In some rural places, these efforts have been instrumental in bringing needed portable water to towns and villages.

Yet, it has been the close and consistent relationship between the Diocese of Florida, and the Diocese of Cuba that has supported the ministry of the Church and pointed to a hopeful future during difficult times. Additionally, the work of the ECC is garnering success due to carefully tended relationships between the ECC leaders and governmental agencies. This allows for land use, building use, and the entrusting of animals to the care of the people on these projects.

Church buildings are being rebuilt due to these careful relationships. The buildings are multi-purpose-flexible spaces that are intended to be shared with the community for cultural events. The Cuban Church is rich in mission and ministry, strong in developing lay leadership, innovative, generous, faithful and resilient.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ECC AND THE ACC

Members of the Anglican Church in Canada aided with our increased understanding of the relationship between the Episcopal Church in Cuba [ECC] and partnerships with nearby Dioceses and the Church of Canada [ACC]. With the disengagement of TEC from the ECC in 1966, the Anglican Church of Canada has over these years provided significant resources to the ECC, and we extend grateful thanks for their faithfulness to The Episcopal Church in Cuba.

INFORMATION FROM CPG

At every meeting of this Taskforce, a representative from CPG provided new information about the impact the pension requirements would have on The Episcopal Church in Cuba. The information provided is similar to the pension requirements for many of our diocese in Province IX. However, it also revealed a past liability for clergy in Cuba, for approximately \$801,000. These are clergy who have served for many years, yet have been unable to pay into the pension fund due to the political situation. Clergy have been unable to participate in the state pension plan because they are clergy. Regardless of the years of service, the minimum annual benefit is \$2,400 per clergy.

CONSTITUTION AND CANONS

The Episcopal Diocese of Cuba worked with a subcommittee of this Task force to produce a simple revision of the Constitution and Canons [C and Cs] of the Episcopal Church in Cuba. The revision would bring the C and Cs in alignment with the TEC Constitution and Canons, including the clause acceding to the C and C of the TEC. With review from the Anglican Church of Canada, the revision of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church in Cuba is to be passed by ECC at a special Synod before the resolution comes before the General Convention.

PROVINCIAL ASSIGNMENT

We consulted with the Taskforce to Study Provinces in order to gain understanding of the future direction of provinces.

ECC BUDGET

Bishop Griselda and José Raúl Ortiz provided a funding request for the ECC. A subcommittee of the Task Force reviewed the request and modifications. The request was realigned taking into account expected contributions from the ECC, potential funding from external sources, possible funding from TEC, declining funding from ACC and cost of living expenses for clergy.

Proposed Resolution

RESOLUTION A052: THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CUBA

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention welcomes with joy the request of the sisters and brothers of the Episcopal Church in Cuba to reunite with the Episcopal Church;

Resolved, That the General Convention underscore its hope that the various dioceses of The Episcopal Church work in harmony and companionship with the Church in Cuba for evangelism, mutual understanding, and the full expression of God's mission;

Resolved, That the General Convention call upon the congregations and members of The Episcopal Church to acquaint themselves with the ministries of the Church in Cuba;

Resolved, That the General Convention call upon the dioceses and congregations of The Episcopal Church to consider ways in which they can be in relationship and partnership with the Church in Cuba going forward;

Resolved, That the General Convention express its deep gratitude to the Anglican Church of Canada for its long and continuing support for the Church in Cuba;

Resolved, That the General Convention request that all congregations keep the Church of Cuba in heartfelt and loving prayer.

Resolved, That effective the conclusion of the 79th General Convention, the clergy of the Diocese of Cuba shall be eligible to participate in The Church Pension Fund International Clergy Pension Plan (ICPP), consistent with the terms of the ICPP, applicable law and subject to receipt of any necessary licenses from the Office of Foreign Assets Control [O.F.A.C.] or any other applicable governmental authority;

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention requests that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance allocate for payment to The Church Pension Fund an amount equal to the actuarial liability associated with providing active clergy in the Diocese of Cuba with retroactive credited service under the ICPP for services performed for the Diocese of Cuba, subject to compliance with applicable laws and the receipt of any necessary licenses from O.F.A.C. or any other applicable governmental authority; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention support the formation of a 3-year interim body to accompany the Diocese of Cuba as it fully integrates into the Episcopal Church.

Continuance Recommendation

The Taskforce on Cuba recommends a continuing opportunity to learn about and support the mutual relationship as it evolves in the next Triennium. To that end, individuals from both the current taskforce and a taskforce from the Episcopal Church in Cuba will need to form an interim body to meet over the next three (3) years to discuss arising issues and share and respond to new information as the relationship develops.

The body would consist of eight (8) members, four (4) from Cuba and four from other dioceses of the Episcopal Church to facilitate full integration into the life, ministry, and mission of the Episcopal Church. Budget request: \$ 50,000.