

**NATIONAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE
PORTLAND, OREGON
MARCH 2-4, 2007**

Members present: Tim Anderson, Kim Byham, John Vanderstar, Hisako Beasley, Stacy Sauls, Winnie Varghese, Angela Helt, Bruce Garner, Sherry Denton

Staff or liaisons present during all or part of the meetings: Lori Ionntiu, Patrick Haizel, Brian Grieves, Richard Parkins, Suzanne Bailie, Gerry Blackburn, John Johnson, Bryan Prior, Kim Tucker, Chris Epting, Anthony Guillen

Visitors: Ralph Welsh (Institute on Religion and Democracy), Chris Christiansen (Diocese of Olympia), Mary Ellen Schjonberg (Episcopal Life). Nigel Tabor-Hamilton, Holly McAlpen, Karen Young

The meeting convened at 1:30 pm. Chairman Vanderstar outlined the agenda for our work. Members gave a brief check-in. Richard Parkins reported that he had been re-elected the Chair of the Refugee Council, USA.

Committee members had been assigned uncompleted resolutions from General Convention 2006, to present to the committee. Each presenter would be responsible for leading discussion on the resolution and getting the final committee resolution to Marian Conboy for distribution to the whole Council. We discussed resolutions which we felt could be placed on the Consent Calendar, in order to consider them early in our deliberations.

Tim Anderson reported for B011 (creation and funding of the Special Missionary Initiative for dioceses affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita). No action on this resolution is needed as the resolution was concurred. National Concerns Committee will follow the work and provide oversight as needed.

We discussed B034 that was formerly a portion of D077. B034 concerned the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast, recognizing the toxic substances present at the site that posed hazards to residents and clean-up workers, urging rebuilding of the Gulf Coast in a manner which supports racial and economic justice, and urging all Christians to work for justice and peace for all of God's creation in our lifestyles and public witness. This resolution was numbered NAC 011 and placed on the Consent Calendar.

We then considered the remainder of D077 which called for continued prayers for the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, offered prayers and thanks for the Bishops, staffs, and congregations who are ministering to those affected, and urged the federal government to meet its commitments to rebuild the Gulf Coast. This resolution was numbered NAC 012 and placed on the Consent Calendar.

The Committee agreed that neither of Stacy's resolutions (C033 on torture or A094 on the Voting Rights Act) would be Consent Calendar items so we delayed discussion for later.

Hisako reported that B029 on indigenous peoples and the MDGs was not a consent calendar item. She will check with INC to see if they or NAC will carry the resolution.

We discussed Resolution D030 (Repentance of Institutional Prejudice and Injustice). The consensus of the committee was that the issue of repentance on behalf of the church should be discussed and voted upon by the General Convention. Action by Executive Council might be seen as diminishing its importance. John Vanderstar will ask the Standing Commission on National Concerns to work on presenting this resolution as part of their work this triennium.

Kim presented resolution A109 that designated the Executive Council Committee on Social Responsibility in Investments Committee a Committee of Executive Council and described the Committee's composition and mandate. This resolution was concurred so it required no further action.

Resolution D028 (calling for the closure of Guantanamo Prison) was considered. The resolution was numbered NAC 013 and placed on the Consent Calendar.

The Committee agreed that resolution C010 (discouraging holding General Conventions in states that prohibit domestic partnerships) was not a Consent Calendar item.

Sherry presented Resolution D023 (Affirming principles on end of life decisions). After discussion, the committee felt a fourth resolve directing the Standing Commission of Health to develop ways to further respond to the need for making prayerful end of life decisions should be added. The Resolution was numbered NAC 010 and was to be placed on the Consent Calendar.

The committee dropped Resolution C032 (Health Care for All Americans) from further consideration since the committee felt other bodies were already doing this work.

Bruce presented Resolution A168 ((Human Rights for Homosexual Persons). The committee felt an updated explanation was needed referencing actions in Nigeria and the statements by the United Nations. This is not a Consent Calendar item.

The committee deemed Resolution D073 (Asylum for Persecuted Lesbian and Gay People) not a Consent Calendar item.

Angela presented Resolution B027 (Support Prisoner Reentry Program) or the "Second Chance Act". The Resolution was renumbered NAC 008 and placed on the Consent Calendar.

The Committee considered Resolution D085 (Reaffirming Commitment to Eradicating Hunger) and decided not to consider it further.

Stacy presented Resolution C033 (Condemning the Use of Torture). The committee agreed it was not a consent calendar item.

The committee discussed Resolution A094 (Voting Rights). Since the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been renewed, the committee decided to drop further consideration. The only concern raised was the status of the felony voting prohibition. This could be considered with the Standing Commission on National Concerns if needed.

Winnie presented B022 (Kyoto Protocol). The committee decided not to consider it further since we already have a policy in place on global climate change.

The committee agreed that Resolution B010 (Endorse the Alliance for Fair Food) was not a Consent Calendar item.

John presented Resolution B021 (Voting Rights for Residents of the District of Columbia). The resolution was renumbered as NAC018 and placed on the Consent Calendar.

The committee considered Resolution D016 (Pre-Emptive Military Strike Against Islamic Republic of Iran) and felt the International Concerns Committee should consider it.

Following a break, the committee considered NAC006 (Jubilee Programs). The committee placed it on the Consent Calendar by consensus.

The Rev. Jerry Blackburn presented a report from the Office of the Bishop Suffragan for Chaplaincies. He conveyed Bishop Packard's regret at not being present.

Of the 119 military chaplains, 55 have served in harm's way. About half of those are Reserve or National Guard Chaplains. Another chaplain has recently been called to active duty. One chaplain has been physically injured; many are suffering from post-traumatic stress. Some chaplains have felt they have been hindered in their ability to find employment as rectors, etc., because of the uncertainty of their being called to active duty.

Episcopal Divinity School is offering chaplaincy training for Maritime, emergency responders, lay chaplains or priests who volunteer as chaplains. This training leads to certification.

There will be a feature in the April *Episcopal Life* on John Weatherly, a chaplain who has served two deployments in Iraq as well as in Bosnia.

Gerry also brought to the committee's attention a letter from the vestry of St. Peter's, Oxford, Mississippi, who objected to the resolve in General Convention Resolution D020 (End the War in Iraq) which called for Episcopalians to oppose and resist the war in Iraq and to encourage the President and Congress to end our participation. He distributed copies of the letter to the committee.

Lori Ionnitui, Patrick Haizel, Susanne Bailie, and Brian Grieves met with the committee to brief us regarding the efforts to comply with D047 (booking meetings in facilities that can guarantee they pay their employees a living wage).

Brian defined the problem by explaining that there are many non-union hotels. Many union hotels are in first tier cities. TEC typically goes to second tier cities. Most hotels and conference centers prefer not to disclose their wages. The range of \$12 per hour (plus \$2 per hour more if no healthcare is offered) is considered a living wage. Lori reported that they schedule meetings not only for Executive Council, but also for General Convention, and the House of Bishops. Many places have few if any non-union hotels, and sometimes the union hotels are not available at the meeting time. They were able to obtain a letter from the Anaheim Marriott, site of GC 2009, stating that they pay their workers fairly. They are now including a clause in the arrangements contracts that state that the facility has fair labor practices and health care, meets federal labor standards, and provides fair treatment including medical leave.

There is a group called Informed Meetings Exchange that is a 501c3 corporation, which was formed by unions to try to get bookings for union properties. They have not been a great help to TEC because of our meeting locations. There are about 140 cities that have laws requiring employers to pay a living wage. Here again, our meeting locations make this a minimal help.

Richard commented that the goal of the resolution was to ensure fair treatment for workers. Lori suggested that a tipping guide might help meeting attendees. Stacy and Winnie will work together to write a resolution for the June meeting commending the current efforts at compliance with the intent of D047 and suggesting additional measures.

The committee considered NAC007, recommendations from the SRI for shareholder action on proxies. It was moved, seconded, and carried to amend Attachment 26 (amending animal care and use policies) from vote “abstain” to vote “in favor”. The amended recommendations for voting on shareholder proxies were approved and the resolution was placed on the Consent Calendar. John Vanderstar declared a conflict of interest and did not participate in the discussion or voting on NAC007.

Kim reported that the Church Pension Group is now following the recommendations of the SRI Committee. Any Diocese or Episcopal institution can have their company proxies voted by the Church Pension Group free of charge by going to the website of the Church Pension Group and signing up.

Brian Grieves reported for Peace and Justice Ministries. Jackie Means and Carmen Guerrero have both retired. Their positions will remain open most of the year due to budget cuts. Jackie has been serving as a consultant on prison ministries and Carmen conducted a training session. There is a possibility that the prison ministry position might be recreated as a “domestic justice” officer.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

The committee reconvened at 9:00 am in a joint meeting with International Concerns. Sandi McPhee, Chair of International Concerns called the meeting to order. In addition to members of the National and International Concerns Committees, staff members John Johnson, Office of Governmental Relations, Richard Parkins, Episcopal Migration Ministries, and Anthony Guillen, Hispanic Missioner attended. Guests included Matt Kennedy, The Rev. Kendall Harmon, and Steve Waring.

John reported that Maureen Shea was absent because she is leaving today for South Africa for the Toward Effective Anglican Mission (TEAM) conference. John distributed the legislative report and confirmed that their office has been busy.

The OGR has been working on legislation for the reauthorization of the farm bill. A coalition called the Religious Working Group on the Farm Bill including the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Christ, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Oxfam, Bread for the World and the Church World Service are our partners. The farm bill covers many important policy areas including rural investment, nutrition programs for the needy, food stamps, conservation and renewable energy.

There is a new feature on the EPPN web page on the farm bill. OGR feels that there is a need for public education on this complicated bill. To address this need, EPPN will be doing a six-week letter series to educate subscribers in the complexities of farming and trade policies. The farm bill and trade policy is not a Democrat/Republican issue but a region vs. region issue.

John reported that the Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) has grown by 1444 new members since the first of the year. This growth is attributed to bulletin inserts on the MDGs and to EPPN members forwarding the policy alerts to non-members who then join.

Other areas of work included a letter to Congress asking for restoration of domestic social program budget cuts, but urging that international funding increases be preserved. This letter was a joint effort of the ELCA, Presbyterian, UCC, United Methodists, and TEC.

The minimum wage bill passed both houses, and is being reconciled in conference committee.

Discussion and questions on the farm bill followed. John explained that agricultural subsidies by the United States and European countries make those countries' agricultural products cheap on the world market. This hurts developing countries' farmers by making their crops non-competitive. This has implications for the attainment of the MDG on the eradication of poverty. In the short term, the United States can provide development aid and debt cancellation, but in the longer term, fair trade practices are required. Currently, U.S. farm subsidies are fifteen times the per capita income of Caribbean farmers. Imports with U.S. dollars will increase, devaluing the Caribbean countries' currency. This contributes to poverty and increases immigration to the U.S. with the resultant "brain drain" from Central and South America.

Another issue in the area of agriculture and renewable energy is the rising use of ethanol as a renewable fuel. Currently most ethanol is produced from corn. Increased demand for corn has driven up the price with the consequence that tortillas (a staple in the Mexican diet) are now very expensive.

John stated that he felt the current Episcopal Church policy for the MDG goals was sufficient to work on commodities and trade policies. At some later time there may be a need for an Executive Council resolution addressing specific trade agreements.

An issue on which the Episcopal Church has yet to speak is the issue of genetically engineered crops. Seed manufactures have created varieties of crops that grow for only one season but produce no or sterile seed, so new seed must be purchased every season. This is a major economic issue for subsistence farmers who have traditionally saved a portion of each year's yield to sow next year's crop.

Richard Parkins, Director of Episcopal Migration Ministries, addressed the joint committee meeting. He distributed the latest edition of the *Messenger*, a newsletter about Episcopal Migration Ministries that is published three to four times a year.

Richard reported that with the change in political control of Congress that there are new chairmen and sub-committee chairman on the judiciary committees. This presents another opportunity to press for comprehensive immigration reform. Richard reiterated the principles that TEC feels must be included in immigration legislation. 1) pathway to legal citizenship 2) permitted immigration for labor force deficits 3) removal of the family reunion backlog.

Anthony Guillen, Hispanic Missioner has information on a new Sanctuary Movement that he will present later in the meeting.

Richard reviewed the difficulties that immigrants and asylees face because of the "material support" bar in the Patriot Act. EMM and the members of the Refugee Council USA are working to get a legislative remedy for the current interpretation of the legislation. Groups such as the Burmese Karen and Chin, the Hmong and the Montanard, groups who have been the most friendly and helpful to the U.S., have been prevented from immigrating or seeking asylum, although they would seem to have the most compelling credentials. Although the administration is moving to exempt some groups, the advocates hope to include groups who gave support to terrorist groups under extreme duress. The legislation could be attached to the supplemental Iraqi appropriation bill. There is progress being made on this issue.

Richard also mentioned that there is pending legislation that would give temporary protected status (TPP) to Haitian nationals currently residing legally in the U.S. This status would prevent Haitians from being forced to return to the current violent and dangerous situation in Haiti. The administration could also grant TPS by administrative

regulation. Opposition to relief for Haitians appears to be based on racism and a fear of increased immigration.

Another area of concern is the number of Iraqi refugees who have fled to neighboring countries in the Middle East. These countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan) have received an estimated 30 to 40 thousand persons and will probably soon close their borders because of an inability to care for more persons. In all there are estimated to be two million displaced persons in the region both in and out of country. The Refugee Council USA has talked to the Department of State and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) about resettling some of these refugees and providing generous humanitarian assistance to them. Some of the refugees have family connections to the U.S. such as Chaldean Christians, and others who have assisted the U.S. could be admitted to the U.S.

Richard repeated that the message of TEC is that what is required is positive, comprehensive immigration legislation. There is bi-partisan and ecumenical support for this.

At this point, the joint meeting adjourned and NAC reconvened. Stacy Sauls was not present.

Chris Epting, Ecumenical and Inter-faith Relations Officer, requested the endorsement by Executive Council of Mrs. Alice Webley as the official delegate to the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. It was moved by Kim and seconded by Bruce to approve of her appointment. Adopted. This resolution was numbered NAC016 and placed on the Consent Calendar.

Chris also reported on his trip to Tanzania with the Presiding Bishop. He was able to report to the Primates Conference that the ecumenical partners of TEC as well as Jewish inter-faith partners are all struggling with the issue of homosexuality and same-sex blessing of relationships. These partners are concerned about the Anglican Communion splitting and are hopeful that the two “sides” can continue to be in dialogue, respecting each other as persons of faith.

Richard Parkins presented information on a volunteer Refugee Program Liaison who would be appointed in each Diocese in which EMM has a resettlement office. This person would be a resource to the Bishop of the diocese and would promote engagement of refugees by congregations in the diocese. Following discussion, this resolution was numbered NAC015 and was placed on the Consent Calendar.

The committee then reviewed the resolutions to be forwarded to the Council.

Winnie presented B010 (Endorse the Alliance for Fair Food). This was numbered NAC017 and approved.

Bruce presented A168 (Human Rights for Homosexual Persons). This was numbered NAC009 and approved.

Sherry confirmed that C032 was being dropped from further consideration.

Resolution D023 (End of Life Decisions) was numbered NAC010. It was moved by Kim to amend the wording of the final resolve to “Resolved, that the Standing Commission on Health develop ways to further respond to the need for making prayerful end of life decisions”. Adopted as corrected and placed on the Consent Calendar.

The Committee worked on wording for D073 and will reconsider after further work over lunch.

Hisako reported that B029 (Indigenous People and the Millennium Development Goals) would be deferred to the June meeting. She will try to meet with Janine Tinsley-Roe and Carol Joy Gallagher to write a new resolution for committee consideration.

Following lunch, Bruce presented the resolution D073 (Asylum for Persecuted Lesbian and Gay Persons). The resolution was numbered NAC 020 and was adopted as perfected.

Angela presented C033 (Condemning the Use of Torture). This was numbered NAC019 and was adopted as perfected.

Anthony Guillen, Missioner for Latino/Hispanic Affairs presented information on the New Sanctuary Movement. General Convention passed A017 based on the principles included in “The Alien Among You” addressing the plight of illegal immigrants. Anthony encouraged action by Executive Council which would extend and en flesh the goals of A017. This action would seek to support or affirm the work of those who are advocating for and helping illegals. Particularly, a resolution should emphasize that their work is valued and is the result of Biblical injunctions. Tim will work with Anthony and Richard to write a resolution for consideration at our June meeting.

John asked for a check-in on A123 (Benefits to the Church from Slavery). He reported that the Dioceses of New York and Washington have been researching the issue.

Tim reported that the Diocese of Nebraska had created a committee at their annual convention to study the issue in Nebraska. Province V has an anti-racism coordinator but the Dioceses of Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota are not working on this issue at present.

Hisako reported that the Diocese of California has passed an anti-racism resolution.

Bruce reported that there is an anti-racism program in the diocese and that Province IV probably has an anti-racism coordinator.

Winnie reported for Province II that there was a very powerful exhibit by the New York Historical Society on the impact of slavery in New York that is raising interest in the issue. The Governor of New York has spoken about possible reparations.

Angela reported no formal action in Oklahoma as yet.

Sherry will check on any action in other Province VII dioceses.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Denton, Secretary