

Summary of actions of the Standing Committee: November 2010 - November 2011

The Committee held 13 regular meetings and five meetings with the Diocesan Council regarding the selection of the 13th Bishop of Rhode Island. Discussions are ongoing with Bishop Wolf and Canon Betsy Fornal regarding a number of issues, including State of congregations; mergers and merger policies; and oversight of the work of Search and Nomination and Transition committees. The Standing Committee gave consent to the election of 13 Bishops and addressed Title 4 cases involving clergy.

November 2010

- The Hon. Scott Avedisian was elected President of the Standing Committee for a one-year term and Mrs. Caryl Frink was elected Secretary of the Standing Committee for a one-year term.
- The Rev. Jennifer Pedrick was elected to represent the Standing Committee on the reconstituted Mission Task Force. Frances Gammell-Roach was elected to represent the Standing Committee on the 2015 Task Force for Strategic Needs and Planning.

January 2011

- The Standing Committee approved and endorsed their relationship with an ELCA Hispanic congregation, which will rent space from All Saints Church.

February 2011

- There was a discussion of a potential merger between St. John's Church, Ashton and St. Luke's, Pawtucket. The Standing Committee approved a formal conversation between St. John's and St. Luke's and authorized them to work together to prepare a formal plan of merger.
- The Rev. Pamela Mott described a proposal of the Aquidneck Land Trust to acquire from St. Mary's Church, Portsmouth approximately 24 acres of land known as the Young Parcel and from the Sarah Gibbs Trust a conservation easement for approximately 40 acres of open space land. This proposal would proceed in stages. A resolution was passed approving this in the manner described in a proposed Memorandum of Understanding, which had been circulated to all members.

March 2011

- A loan of \$35,000 to Trinity Church, North Scituate from the Revolving Loan Fund of the Diocese was approved.
- There was a lengthy discussion of a potential merger between St. Mark's Church, Riverside and St. Matthew's Church, Barrington. The Standing Committee approved a formal conversation between St. Mark's and St. Matthew's and authorized them to work together to prepare a formal plan of merger.
- The Standing Committee will meet on March 15th with the Diocesan Council and the Rt. Rev. Clay Matthews of the Office of Pastoral Support to begin the process that will eventually lead to the election of the next bishop of Rhode Island.

April 2011

Regarding St. Mary's Church, Portsmouth, the Committee took the following actions:

- a. Approved a construction loan of \$3 million at prime plus one (or less) secured by the Young land and the endowment of the parish.
- b. Gave permission for the signing of a binding agreement with the

Aquidneck Land Trust if it is not substantially different from the non-binding agreement approved at the February meeting of the Standing Committee.

- Consented to the proposed merger of St. Luke's Parish, Pawtucket, Diocese of Rhode Island and St. John's Church, Ashton, Diocese of Rhode Island in accordance with the Plan of Merger and the Memorandum of Understanding circulated to the members of the Standing Committee.

May 2011

- The Standing Committee voted to change the status of St. Mary's Church, East Providence, from parish to a mission of the Diocese of Rhode Island and the status of St. James Church, North Providence, from a parish to a mission.

- As required by the Canons, Mr. Patrick Campbell came to the Standing Committee for the required interview for Candidacy. It was voted to recommend Mr. Campbell to the Bishop as a Candidate for Ordination.

- The Standing Committee gave consent to the "Election Budget for the XIII Bishop of Rhode Island" approved by the Diocesan Council. A general discussion followed on where the Committee is with the process of preparing for the selection and transition to the next Bishop of Rhode Island.

June 2011

- Approved the Request of St. Paul's Church, North Kingstown, to revise the by-laws of the parish.

July 2011

- The following resolution was **passed** by a vote of all members present: *That the 2011 Annual Convention of the Diocese of Rhode Island shall take place on Friday, November 11, 2011 at 6 p.m. at St. Luke's Church, East Greenwich, Rhode Island and Saturday, November 12, 2011 at 9 a.m. at the Providence Marriott, Orms Street, Providence, Rhode Island.*

- The following resolution was **passed** by a vote of all members present: *That, in accordance with Canon III.2 of the Canons of the Episcopal Church, the Standing Committee hereby consents to the issuance of a call by the Bishop of Rhode Island for a Special Convention on June 2, 2012 to elect the XIII Bishop of Rhode Island.*

- At the request of the Commission on Congregational Development and after a brief discussion, it was passed by a vote of all members present to consent to the dissolution of Mision el Mesias. This congregation, which worshipped at the Cathedral, is now worshipping at the Church of the Ascension, Cranston, and all are working to create one parish. Note: the details of the dissolution will be worked out by the Hispanic Ministry Committee.

August 2011

- The testimonial for the Ordination to the Diaconate of Patrick Campbell was signed by all members.

- The general discussion about parish mergers was reopened with the request by two parishes for permission to engage in merger conversations.

The Standing Committee:

- a. would like to review the Merger Process and Policy of the Diocese of Rhode Island with Canon Betsy Fornal and also review the 2010 canonical changes involving mergers.

b. requests that the clergy and wardens of the four Episcopal parishes in Cranston meet with the Standing Committee in September to discuss the future of the Episcopal Church in that city.

September 2011

- The testimonial for the Ordination to the Priesthood of the Rev. Deacon John Higginbotham was signed by all members.
- Consented to the Agreement and Plan of Reorganization between St. Mark's Episcopal Church and St. Matthew's Church Corporation.
- The Standing Committee approved the following resolution:
The four churches in Cranston have permission from the Standing Committee to continue their conversations with the possibility of merger and report back to the Committee in January 2012.

2011 Annual Convention of the Diocese of Rhode Island Report of the Congregational Development Commission

Grants in support of parishes and missions

In 2011, CDC instituted a revised grant process that resulted in significantly stronger and better-developed proposals than in previous years. Grants were awarded to the following applicants:

- ❖ *Church of the Ascension, Cranston* – financial support for Hispanic ministries
- ❖ *Emmanuel Church, Cumberland* – funding for an Associate Priest to manage significant recent growth
- ❖ *St. Peter's by-the-Sea, Narragansett* – funding for a Coordinator for Children and Youth Ministries, who will assist in regional youth ministry collaboration

We also continued funding for two previous grantees:

- ❖ *St Luke's, Pawtucket* – second year of a three-year grant for a Choir Director and Organist
- ❖ *St. George's, Central Falls* – second year of a three-year grant for Hispanic ministry and music programming

The deadline for initial, brief proposals for CDC grants in 2012 is March 1. Details and applications are available on line by visiting the diocesan website (www.episcopalri.org) and linking to the CDC page through "What We Do."

Collaborative Ministry Gathering

CDC offered to convene gatherings of clergy and lay leaders in different geographic regions to explore potential areas of collaboration. To date the Central Deanery has met to discuss proposals for cooperation among congregations. We hope to convene similar gatherings in other deaneries.

Learn and Lead

In January, CDC held a successful day of workshops on the subject of stewardship. The keynote speaker, Terry Parsons, gave an inspiring talk entitled "Seven Secrets to Excellent Stewardship." Then in five separate workshops, over 100 participants had an opportunity to explore proven models for stewardship campaigns, complete with practical suggestions on how to hit the ground running. *The next Learn and Lead will be held in January 2012 on the topic of communication.*

Convocation

CDC continues to provide financial support for Convocation. This year are pleased to partner with the Mission Task Force in hosting this event. The plenary speaker will be Sara Miles, author of *Take This Bread* and *Jesus Freak*. She is Director of Ministry for St. Gregory of Nyssa Church in San Francisco.

Proposed Canon Change (removed from consideration at Convention)

CDC has grown increasingly concerned about the long-term viability of many churches in the diocese. A growing number of parishes are spending over 5% of their investment

accounts on operating expenses, and ASA's are in continuing decline. Churches in our diocese are never more than 10 miles apart, yet few have committed themselves to effective collaboration. Some have chosen to close rather than merge, or spent down precious resources (human and financial) before making a last-ditch merger.

Given these dire statistics, CDC engaged in discussions over the past year about how to encourage struggling parishes to collaborate, merge, or convert to mission status. The issue of conversion to mission status became a focus of discussion in part because CDC has considerable funds available specifically for missions in the diocese. It was the consensus of the group that the existing Canon 10.7 makes the process of conversion from parish to mission unpredictable and heavily reliant on the judgment of one person, the bishop. We also saw an inconsistency in the fact that missions currently need a full-time rector to become a parish, yet many parishes exist under the leadership of part-time rectors. Over the course of the year, we discussed the benefits of full-time versus part-time leadership, especially in relation to the growth, financial viability, and spiritual vitality of congregations. The outcome of our discussions was a proposed canon revision, which was enthusiastically supported by Council and Standing Committee.

In the months and weeks leading up to Convention, we spoke with lay and ordained church leaders, especially those who were likely to be affected by the proposal. Conversations were contentious and divisive, and we became concerned that the proposal, which was intended to help our churches in a time of crisis, might cause more division than unity in the diocese. We therefore decided to pull the proposal.

CDC hopes that the conversation about the financial viability and spiritual vitality of our parishes will continue. We welcome suggestions to address what we see as a crisis that affects us as an interdependent community of disciples striving to do God's work in the world.

The Rev. Casey Shobe, Chair
St. Peter's by-the-Sea, Narragansett

Joel Gardner
Emmanuel Church, Cumberland

Betsy Fornal
Canon for Congregations and Clergy

The Rev. Rev. Kevin Lloyd
St. Matthew's, Jamestown

Jim Burgess
All Saints', Providence

Jackie Kirby
St. Matthew's, Jamestown

The Rev. Susan Carpenter
St. Thomas', Greenville

The Rev. David Lucey
St. Michael's, Bristol

Carol Drought
St. Francis, Coventry

Catherine Thenault
St. James, Woonsocket

Clare Fischer-Davies
St. Martin's, Providence

**Diocese of Rhode Island
2015 Task Force for Strategic Needs and Planning**

**Report to Diocesan Convention
November 12, 2011**

Make no mistake about it; our Church, our country, and our world are experiencing significant change. For the sake of God's church, and the poor we serve, we are compelled to adapt intelligently. We need to slow down, and not seek easy answers. We need to rely on the Holy Spirit to be with us in our deliberations now.....

*Bonnie Anderson
President, The House of Deputies
September 30, 2011*

At the 2010 Diocesan Convention, the Mission Task Force proposed creating the 2015 Task Force for Strategic Needs and Planning, with the proposal being adopted by the Convention. This was a timely move with the changes and transitions taking place. This Report will outline our work during this first year.

It was recommended that the 2015 TF focus on opportunities and challenges identified by the MTF listening process such as revising the budgeting process and financial reporting, implementing a process for planning and evaluating diocesan structure and programs, and addressing the number and locations of parishes and missions. The 2015 Task Force is viewed as a five year project.

Goals recommended for the 2015 Task Force:

1. Revise the budgeting process and financial reporting. (2011)
2. Establish a process for planning, goal setting, and evaluating diocesan programs. (2011)
3. In concert with the Mission Task Force, establish a process for deciding which programs are funded in any given year, based on how they promote the diocesan mission focus and mission priorities. (2011)
4. Address the future diocesan structure and staff needs in order to best promote Diocesan administration and promote the mission focus and mission priorities.
5. Address the number and location of parishes and missions. Come up with a strategic plan suggesting how we might best use our resources to reach and serve the entire state of Rhode Island.

Task Force Members

The Resolution establishing the 2015 TF defined five (5) initial members and authorized additional members to be elected by the TF. Initial members and their sources, together with those elected, are as follows:

Dennis Burton, Church of the Epiphany, Rumford, (elected) East Bay Deanery.
Frances Gammell-Roach, St.Luke's, East Greenwich (Standing Committee) Narragansett Deanery.
The Rev. Dcn. Edwin F (Ted) Hallenbeck, St. Luke's, (Bishops Appointment) Narragansett Deanery, *Secretary*.
The Rev. Edmund Harris, Church of the Epiphany, Rumford, (elected) East Bay Deanery.
LuJean Johnson, Emmanuel Church, Cumberland, (elected) Blackstone Deanery
The Rev. John Pallard, St. Barnabas, Warwick (Commission on Finance) West Bay Deanery.
The Rev. R. Casey Shobe (Congregational Development Commission) Narragansett Deanery, *Chair*.
Dennis Stark, St. Martin's Church, Providence (Diocesan Council) Central Deanery.
The Rev. Peter Tierney, St. Andrews by the Sea, Little Compton, (elected) Acquadneck Deanery.

Task Force Meetings

The Task Force was initially convened by The Rev. Jim Bocchino, Vice President of Diocesan Council on January 22nd 2011. Early meetings were devoted to replacing two of the original members and recruiting others to fill out a working group. The TF has met monthly, and notes of all meetings are available on the Diocesan WebSite.

As work began, Bishop Wolf announced her retirement and the process of transition began for the election of a new Bishop. The TF has altered its action plan to gather as much information as possible about the Diocese and our Churches so a good information base will be available for the new Bishop. It is our hope that the new Bishop may then join with us in the forward planning beginning in the summer and fall of 2012.

Change in Plan

Early in our deliberations of structuring a work plan it became clear that two types of information about our churches are important in understanding where we are as a Diocese. First, is a financial review of our churches and the Diocese. Second is a look at the spiritual health of the churches that comprise our gathered community. It also became clear with the advent of the transition process and the coming call of a new Bishop that our wisest process would be to learn as much as possible about who we are and the condition of our churches in order to initiate conversation with the new Bishop in the summer of 2012. It was agreed we would not make any major recommendations for changes as directed in our mandate until after the new Bishop can be engaged in the process.

Financial Health. The 2015 TF decided to build on the work of the Committee on Program and Budget and the State of the Congregations special gathering on April 30, 2011. At the meeting the presentation by Chair the Rev. David Lucey outlined clearly the financial circumstances affecting many congregations, see Web site: [State of the Congregations Address](#). It was agreed by the 2015 TF following that meeting that our first task would be assessing the financial health of our churches. Two information resources would be utilized; first, the annual Parochial Reports and other information

submitted annually by all churches; second. The *Snapshot of Church Finances* designed by the Alban Institute, and used with their permission, as discussed at the April 30th meeting. To date 18 churches have responded and the TF is in the process of meeting with parish leadership to be sure the leaders are aware of implications and work needed at the church, and to answer any questions that arise. It is our plan that the financial Health review process can be completed by the end of 2011.

Spiritual Health. The 2015 TF is engaged in a review and study of how best to gather this information and what instruments might assist us in this study process. The Rev. John Pallard is heading a subcommittee to identify how we might best undertake this study. Once a process is identified and materials are available we hope to undertake this review study in the spring of 2012.

Current Mission Priorities. The Diocese has four Mission Priorities established over a decade ago: • Hispanic Ministry; • Congregational Development; • Christian Formation; • Episcopal Conference Center. With leadership by the Rev. Peter Tierney an assessment review is underway of each of the Mission Priority programs looking at its mission, objectives and strategies for implementation. Both 2015 TF members and others are participating in this review. It is anticipated to be completed by early 2012.

The two background studies on Financial and Spiritual Health will then be available for everyone, including the new Bishop, to have a clearer picture of where we are as we look forward to next steps. While not as fast as some may have hoped we believe this process will enable us to move forward with a better understanding of where we are. We are operating under the assumption that: *It is very hard to figure out where you are going if you are not sure where you are.*

Other Activities

Endowment Consolidation. The Diocese of Rhode Island is the beneficiary of funds received over many years, now held in over 130 separate accounts. Some are unrestricted, while many are restricted for designated uses, with some being quite small. Under recent Federal and State of RI legislation it is now permissible to consolidate and eliminate restrictions on small funds as long as the broad purpose is maintained. The legal basis is the Uniform Performance Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) and the parallel Rhode Island law. Approval authority rests in the Attorney General's office. The 2015 TF is initiating a process for the Diocese of RI to undertake which will take some time, and simplify our accounting structure. When accomplished it will also increase flexibility in our budget building and provide more effective use of available funds. It is not possible at this time to estimate a timetable for this project.

Additional Resources. As the 2015 TF moves forward we are on the alert for resources and recent studies that relate to our charge and help us to know what other folks are thinking and doing.

• *Diocese of Maine.* Initiated by Bishop Stephen Lane shortly following his arrival and Convention action in 2009, a Mission Priorities Study Group was initiated. Results have included:

- > The Mission Priorities Study Group White Paper and Recommendations, 2010.
- > The Mission Strategy Study Group Report and Recommendations, February 2011.

These thorough and careful studies have provided a basis for establishing Seven Criteria for Ministry; Re-Grouping the Diocesan Program Structure; Re-Allocation of the Diocesan Budget; and A Collaborative Model for Funding Ministry. The Diocese is now in the process of implementing these new commitments. We are looking at this process and the unfolding action with great interest. All are available on the Maine website.

• *Alban Institute and other Resources*. Several items of special interest:

> Dan Hotchkiss, Unitarian Universalist Minister and Senior Consultant for the Alban institute. Dan is the author of the *Snapshot of Church Finances* and authorized our use of that tool. He lives in nearby Massachusetts.

> Hotchkiss, Dan. *Governance and Ministry—Rethinking Board Leadership*, Alban Institute, 2009. Based on working with many churches across traditions Hotchkiss looks at new functional ways to structure church boards more effectively.

> Hotchkiss, Dan. *Life After Governance Change*, Alban Institute, Congregations magazine, 2011 Issue 2 (Vol 38, no2). A short version of *Governance and Ministry*.

> Zimmer, Donald E. *Reimagining Organization*, Alban Institute, Web Site.

> Stanke, Peter L. *A Door Set Open — Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*, Alban Institute, 2010. Working with churches in conflict, stubborn impasse, or seeking effective functioning, Stanke speaks effectively with depth and insight bringing hope to a postmodern church in a postmodern world. Lots of practical examples.

> Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence — How Christianity is Changing and Why*. Baker Books, 2008. We are in the midst of one of Christianity's massive transitions, a time of dizzying upheaval and hopeful promise during which various sectors of today's church swirl into a great confluence at the center.

Each of these resources has added to our understandings of the complicated circumstances we are living through. Everyone is encouraged to read any or all of them. In addition the worldwide economic uncertainties are also impacting our lives and our churches. We ask your patience as we seek to discover how our Diocese of Rhode Island and each of our churches may thrive and how we can find God's presence in our midst. In the coming months we will be seeking input from many of you. We look forward to your participation.

Being human means to be imperfect, to be limited, and thus to change and travel on a perpetual journey. Mature spirituality gives us the ability to live joyfully in an imperfect world. This is important because an imperfect world is the only one we have. And if God does not love imperfect humans, God has no one at all to love.

**Richard Rohr
Center for Action and Contemplation
Santa Fe, New Mexico**

THE DIOCESE OF RHODE ISLAND
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CANONS

September 28, 2011

The Committee on Canons has considered two resolutions, one to amend the Canons of the Diocese and one to adopt Special Rules of Order for the Special Convention to elect the XIII Bishop of Rhode Island.

The proposal to amend the Canons modifies Canon 10.7, entitled Conversion of Parish to Mission; renumbers current Canon 10.8, entitled Aided Parish, as Canon 10.9; and adds a new Canon 10.8, entitled Reestablishment of Parish. The resolution was initiated by the Commission on Congregational Development and is marked to show additions, deletions and modifications of the present Canons. The resolution as filed also contains an Explanation that the Committee on Canons did not consider. The Committee on Canons has reviewed and approves the proposal as to form and leaves policy issues for consideration by Convention.

The proposal to adopt new rules for the Special Convention scheduled for June 2, 2012 supplements the current Standing Rules of Order. The Committee on Nomination and Search and the Committee on Transition reviewed the proposed Special Rules prior to filing. The Committee on Canons has reviewed and approves the proposal for Special Rules as both to form and consistency with the Standing Rules of Order and recommends adoption.

The resolutions would be effective upon passage.

The Committee on Canons

Benjamin P. Harris, III, Esq., Chairman
The Rt. Rev. David B. Joslin
James H. Hahn, Esq.
The Rev. Pamela L. Rannenberg
Patricia A. Sullivan, Esq.
The Rev. John J. Pallard