

Committee on Sexual Exploitation (1997 – 2000)

MEMBERSHIP

The Rt. Rev. Gethin B. Hughes (San Diego)
 The Rev. Virginia N. Herring (North Carolina), *vice chair*
 The Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen (Maine)*
 Dr. Mary Meader (Massachusetts), *chair*
 The Rev. Canon V. Gene Robinson (New Hampshire)
 Dr. Timothy F. Sedgwick (Virginia)
 The Rt. Rev. Arthur E. Walmsely (Connecticut,-retired)
 Sr. Helena Marie, Office of Women in Mission and Ministry, *staff**
 The Rt. Rev. F. Clayton Matthews, Office of Pastoral Development, *staff*
 *resigned

Committee representatives at General Convention

Bishop F. Clayton Matthews and Deputy Virginia Herring are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report.

SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

Introduction

The Committee on Sexual Exploitation was created by Resolution B052a of the 70th General Convention, renewed by Resolution A063 of the 71st General Convention, and continued by Resolution A124 of the 72nd General Convention. Resolution A124 reads:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 72nd General Convention of the Episcopal church acknowledges and applauds the progress being made throughout the church in confronting instances of sexual misconduct by clergy and other church employees, and the strides in developing a climate of sensitivity to issues of health and wholeness through church-wide programs of awareness training; and be it further

Resolved, That the adoption by the 71st General Convention of revised disciplinary canons has called dioceses and other church agencies to study and revise their implementing procedures and structures, and has led the Committee on Sexual Exploitation to develop and circulate a series of educational pamphlets and training events to facilitate church wide understanding and implementation of Title IV; and be it further

Resolved, That this 72nd General Convention authorizes the continuation of the Committee on Sexual Exploitation for a final triennium to complete the tasks outlined in its report, and to assure that at the diocesan and provincial levels an ongoing network of leadership will continue both preventative and remedial measures leading to a healthier, holier church.

Background

From the very beginning of its inception in 1991 the Committee saw as its primary purpose and concern the establishment of *“an environment where people who have been harmed can be helped to feel whole and safe, and healing and the restoration of trust in the larger community can be rebuilt”* (from Blue Book report 1994). In its efforts to fulfill its articulated purpose, the Committee early on adopted a very practical focus for its work; e.g., developing and distributing materials that furthered the awareness and prevention of *“...sexual misconduct through (the dissemination) of information...suggested guidelines, and written training materials”* (Blue Book report 1994) related to Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education and the revised disciplinary canons of the church (Title IV).

A brief highlighted summary of the major accomplishments of this Committee reflects this central concern for training, education, and prevention of sexual misconduct, sexual exploitation, and/or betrayal of trust anywhere in our church.

- 1991-1994 triennium: Development and distribution of Sexual Misconduct Awareness Training materials and guidelines for use throughout the church. Many dioceses continue to use this training manual in whole or in part.
- 1994-1997 triennium: Development and distribution of six educational pamphlets, regarding individual and corporate responses, rights, and process related to the implementation of Title IV. These pamphlets were widely distributed and reportedly well-received and were scheduled for revision, updating, and expansion during this triennium. They were not revised as anticipated, however, because of possible revisions to the disciplinary canons under consideration by the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons. The Committee concluded that it made no sense to undertake a task that could be obsolete even before finished.
- 1997-2000 triennium: Designed, authorized, and completed a major Survey of Diocesan Policies and Procedures Regarding Sexual Misconduct. We hope that the findings and recommendations of this will be widely distributed and taken seriously by all those with leadership responsibilities. And thus, as articulated in the reports' Introduction, our churches will truly be *“... place(s) where people can express their love for their neighbor in a way that is respectful of the dignity and worth of every human being.”*

Developments during the triennium

The formation of the Committee and the appointment of members was initially delayed, due to the fact that Resolution A124 did not get onto the House of Bishops Calendar before General Convention ended, and thus no record of concurrence existed. This was rectified post-convention, and Committee members were appointed and our first meeting was in fall 1998. The size of the Committee was reduced from nine to six, staff assigned was reduced from two to one, and the budget adjusted downward to reflect these changes. Two-thirds of the membership of this Committee were new to the Committee and some time necessarily was spent in orienting ourselves to the realities of being a new Committee charged with ongoing work and tasks.

Meetings

The Committee on Sexual Exploitation has met three times, once at Emory House in West Newbury, Massachusetts, once at the College of Preachers, and once at the Virginia Theological Seminary. Invited guests have included persons from the Committee on the Status of Women in the Church, the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, and a clergy person serving on a diocesan pastoral response team. These visitors enriched and enhanced our deliberations and the quality of our work. In addition we have had several conference calls and have made good use of e-mail communication. We have a final meeting scheduled for March 2000.

Tasks and focus: the survey

The Committee has devoted much of its attention during the triennium to an “assessment” of where the church has come during the past decade. No reliable data on which to assess where the church has come during the past decade was available. We thus assumed a small piece of the major task of gathering reliable information about how the larger church has responded to the sad, sometimes traumatic, but always disruptive reality of sexual misconduct by its clergy and lay leaders. Our major task and focus was the development and authorization of a rather ambitious survey of both individual experiences with actual incidents of sexual misconduct and the current state of existing structures and processes in place for the training, education, and prevention of such misconduct.

The 1999 Survey of Diocesan *Policies and Procedures Regarding Sexual Misconduct* was begun in June 1999 and completed in December 1999. Though we provided leadership, oversight, and supervision, the survey itself was contracted out to a team of researcher/consultants under the able direction of Elizabeth R. Bishop, LICSW, a member of the Diocese of Massachusetts. The purpose of the survey as designed and implemented was:

TO GATHER FROM EACH DIOCESE INFORMATION AND PERSONAL ASSESSMENT REGARDING:

- the development and distribution of policies and procedures addressing sexual misconduct education
- the models and processes used for Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education training
- what has worked, and what else is needed in addressing sexual misconduct

The survey was conducted and completed through personal contact. Phone interviews were held with representatives in each diocese in all nine Provinces of the national church (a 100% return). The survey is complete. The final report is being produced, and distribution is scheduled for early in 2000. We hope that the information will be useful and that the continuation of this Committee will make possible the continued assessment of where the church has come in the last decade and what still needs to be done.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION.

Some highlights from the first draft of report to Committee:

- In many dioceses processes are in place. However, the awareness of such processes, adherence to stated aims and goals, and clear lines of authority and responsibilities are at times disregarded and/or uncertain.

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- Trained leadership is increasingly in place to respond though a fair number of dioceses do not have trained Pastoral Response Teams in place. Some dioceses have not had any cases making such efforts seem daunting and at times unnecessary.
- Sexual Misconduct Awareness Training is in place in most dioceses though often its existence is still seen as insurance driven rather than a welcome opportunity to build and enhance healthy faith communities.
- The revision of Title IV has created a strong disciplinary system that stands alongside the more traditional bishop-centered pastoral resolution of complaints. While the strength and value of each response system is appreciated, the perception is that Title IV usurps and in some instances impedes a truly fair, open, and just reconciling pastoral response.
- In general, the survey results conclude that the church's response to misconduct has moved from a position of avoidance and cover-up to one of holding its leaders accountable and offering pastoral resources to complainants, perpetrators of misconduct, families, and parishes caught in the web of injury and conflict.
- The survey results tell us one thing above all else: those working in our dioceses in various roles responding to clergy misconduct largely feel disconnected from what others are doing in similar roles in other dioceses. The outstanding need is for persons to be talking to one another, to take time, make time, be intentional about providing time for conversation and story-telling.
- A very strong consensus of need for further contact with one another through the development of some kind of national network for mutual sharing, education, and support.

Tasks and focus: the network

What we discern is that the church has come to a “second generation” sense of awareness of this agenda in its life. A second generation in the sense that the needs are broader, the questions deeper, the responses more complex and reflective. Many respondents spoke with regret that the training program, “Instruments of Thy Peace,” was no longer offered. Many asked for the creation of a similar, updated national program with a focus moved from intervention to prevention, from concern for misconduct to one of equipping its leaders to develop and live by standards of accountability and providing support in that effort.

In response to the overwhelming interest of those interviewed for some way of deepening and continuing contact with one another, we have set a conference date early in the next triennium for a gathering of diocesan personnel with responsibility for addressing clergy sexual misconduct. This is our first response to the recommendations of this report. Our hope is that such a first conference will provide the opportunity for sharing of information and the development of mutual support, including the possibility of forming a national network if, in fact, the participants want such a network.

Looking to the future

At its fall 1999 meeting, the Committee reviewed its work to date and asked the question: What's left? We came to understand that we, with the good work of the Committee from the previous triennium, have moved the church from confusion to procedure. We are

now looking at the need for new process, for a way to continue the work that has been begun, not losing its focus, but also moving on. We must move from the healing of wounds to the healing of the context of those wounds, i.e. the systemic issues that brought the need for this work into being. Our discussion for the future focused in three areas: practical issues, people issues, and conceptual issues.

Our survey demonstrated that while the need for a response to sexual misconduct in church settings is still “out there,” the policies and procedures, materials, people, and resources are also out there. How in practical terms can this “rubber meets the road” work be moved ahead? How can we facilitate the sharing of resources and personnel, the good stewardship of all of God’s bounty?

- First and foremost, our work is about relationships—individual and corporate relationship to God and one another. Early on, we learned that the wound of sexual misconduct is not only painful for two people, but also can block individual and communal relationships to God, and to the church. How then, can we bring about a deeper understanding of our responsibility and accountability to one another? What changes must happen within our polity, particularly within the episcopacy? How can we provide healing opportunities for those who betray the trust that is so necessary for the development of faith communities and so fragile and vulnerable to violation.
- We struggle with concepts. There is a need to broaden our theological understanding, to grapple with the meaning of right relationship, ecclesial and spiritual authority, spiritual recovery, sexuality and intimacy, and true reconciliation. There is a need for much deep, reflective, dialogue which we believe would benefit the church even in areas divergent from the particular focus of our work.
- We find as well that there has been a great confusion between the pastoral work of healing and reconciliation and the canonical process which is the implementation of Title IV. Legality and pastoral response do not always sit easily together. Many clergy have found Title IV to be threatening. Bishops have found it knotty and confusing, and victims and their advocates find it remote. We need to examine how disciplinary procedures and processes for pastoral response affect each other.

REPORT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES

Financial Report for the 1998-2000 Triennium

INCOME

Budget for Triennium	\$31,500			
	1998	1999	2000	Total
Expenses	3,782	14,311	13,400	31,493

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT (COMING) TRIENNium

- To evaluate and respond to the findings and recommendations of the 1999 Survey of Diocesan Policies Regarding Sexual Misconduct.

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- To provide oversight/coordination and leadership for conference of diocesan personnel early in next triennium
- To support the development of a national network
- To strengthen the collaboration between the Committee, the Office of Pastoral Development, the Standing Commissions on Constitution and Canons, and Ministry Development as these bodies continue to evaluate canonical and non-canonical disciplinary policies and practices.
- To assist Office of Pastoral Development as it both explores and implements programs aimed at prevention; e.g., an updated version of the “Instruments of Thy Peace” training program and efforts to provide for the articulation of professional standards and support.

BUDGET APPROPRIATION

	2001	2002	2003
Total Annual Expenditures	10, 203	17,934	10,976

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution A097 Committee on Sexual Exploitation Budget Appropriation

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the sum of \$39,113 be
- 2 appropriated for the work of the Committee on Sexual Exploitation during the
- 3 next triennium.

Resolution A098 Continuation of Committee on Sexual Exploitation

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 73rd General
- 2 Convention of the Episcopal Church acknowledges and applauds the conscientious
- 3 efforts on the part of the Committee on Sexual Exploitation to establish a
- 4 close working association and collaboration with both the Office of Pastoral
- 5 Development and the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons; and be
- 6 it further
- 7 *Resolved*, That the 73rd General Convention authorizes the continuation of
- 8 the Committee on Sexual Exploitation for the purpose of completing the tasks
- 9 as outlined in its report with special attention to the development of an ongoing
- 10 network of leadership at both the diocesan and provincial levels that will continue
- 11 and strengthen the institutional preventative and remedial measures which are so
- 12 critical to a healthy, holy, and witnessing church.

Resolution A028 Establishment of Task Force on Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Sponsored by Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, The Standing Commission on Ministry and Development, and the Committee for Sexual Exploitation.

For text of Resolution A028 see p. 49.