

STANDING COMMISSION ON NATIONAL CONCERNS

MEMBERSHIP

The Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe, <i>Chair</i>	California VIII, 2006
Ms. Lillian Davis-Wilson, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Western New York II, 2006
Ms. Karen O. Patterson, <i>Secretary</i>	Southwestern Florida IV, 2006
The Rev. Richard Aguilar	West Texas VII, 2009
Ms. Linda L. Anderson	Minnesota VI, 2009
Dr. Thomas R. Bates	Central Florida IV, 2009
The Hon. James E. Bradberry	Southern Virginia III, 2009
The Rt. Rev. John B. Chane	Washington III, 2009
The Rev. Dr. Barbara T. Cheney	Connecticut I, 2009
The Rev. Jan Davey	Rio Grande VII, 2009
Mr. Erin A. Ferguson	Southwest Florida IV, 2009
Mrs. Georgette Forney	Pittsburgh III, 2006
The Hon. Marge Kilkelly, <i>resigned 2005</i>	Maine I, 2006
The Rev. Canon Dr. Eugene C. McDowell	Western North Carolina IV, 2006
The Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw III, SSJE	Massachusetts I, 2006
The Rev. Dr. Richard L. Tolliver	Chicago V, 2006
Ms. D. Rebecca Snow, <i>Executive Council Liaison</i>	Alaska VIII, 2006

Commission Representatives at General Convention

Bishop John Chane and Deputy Michael Barlowe are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report.

SUMMARY OF WORK

The Standing Commission on National Concerns (SCNC) mission is “to identify, study and consider general policies, priorities and concerns about the theological, ethical and pastoral issues and strategies as to the ministries of this Church serving Christ, to strive for justice and peace among all peoples through the proclamation of the Gospel and to develop and recommend to General Convention comprehensive and coordinated policies and strategies applicable to the same.” [Canon I.1.2(n)(8)]

Such a broad mandate requires the Commission to work on a few areas of national concern, building on the work of previous triennia, responding to requests from General Convention and Executive Council, and identifying significant matters not previously addressed by the Commission. The Episcopal Church is a church of compassion and action, with prophetic and diaconal ministries that engage, comfort and confront society with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Commission members have diverse perspectives and come from parishes and dioceses representing the breadth of opinion on issues of national concern. Together, as we worked, prayed, studied, and considered the issues before us, we found a unity that springs from our baptism, and that expresses itself in our mutual intention “to strive for justice and peace among all peoples.” (BCP 304)

We divided our work into three major areas: Civil Rights; Health and Economics. In meeting our responsibilities, the Standing Commission on National Concerns met six times during the triennium. One meeting was devoted to anti-racism training which was supportive of our work because many national concerns are exacerbated by racism. We also reviewed actions referred to the SCNC by General Convention and Executive Council; created an annotated bibliography for the Episcopal Church’s current discussions about marriage, and the respectful handling of certain remains from the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Executive Council invited our Commission to prepare an annotated bibliography for a church-wide conversation on the subject of marriage. The Civil Rights working group took responsibility for that effort and notification was sent to dioceses, bishops, and seminaries and the HOB/D listserve soliciting resources. Through this research, we learned that our own church members are doing creative research, thinking, and writing on marriage. The bibliography was presented at our September 2005 Commission meeting, and passed on to the Executive Council. The document is available: www.episcopalchurch.org

The SCNC Report to the 74th General Convention concluded with a question from the baptismal covenant: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” Response: “I will, with God’s help.” (BCP 305) Since the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the threat to the basic civil rights of all people within our nation, especially during times of declared “emergency,” has been a growing concern. An inherent climate of suspicion is spawned by such heightened homeland security amidst the declared war on terror.

Furthermore, disasters such as Hurricane Katrina exposed a disturbing social undercurrent regarding racism and class. In society as a whole, there is a widening gap between those people who are rich and those who are poor. There is a marked, overall decrease in the willingness or ability of our social and cultural systems to uphold the dignity of all people. Some observers have noted a mean-spiritedness that permeates our social interaction with each other. All this sharpens the call to the Church, the Body of Christ in this day, to point the way to a healthier, holier, and more complete way of living together. To that end we offer the following resolutions:

Resolution A092 Applaud Anti-Racism Work

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention applaud the training provided by
- 2 the Anti-Racism Committee and Church Center staff; the training’s encouragement of the church’s membership
- 3 to appreciate cultural differences and assistance in helping us understand the negative effects of racism,
- 4 prejudice and other types of oppression; and the committee’s encouragement of the leadership of the Episcopal
- 5 Church at all levels to become totally inclusive of diverse groups in their midst by the 76th General Convention.

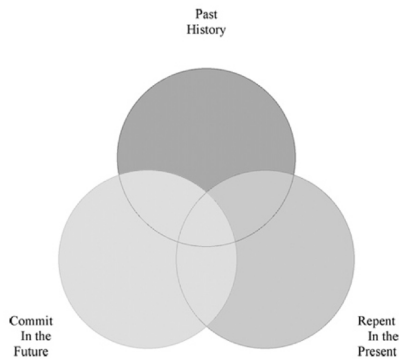
Resolution A093 Reconciliation Task Force

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention appoint a National Reconciliation
- 2 Task Force of 12 members (3 bishops, 3 clergy, 6 lay persons) reflecting diverse classes, genders, ages, races,
- 3 and cultures, to work over the next two triennia with the Anti-Racism Committee and appropriate Church
- 4 Center offices: to identify the inequalities and imbalances that negatively affect diverse groups in the church;
- 5 to formulate strategies to correct the inequalities and imbalances and to implement those strategies; and be it
- 6 further
- 7 *Resolved*, That the Task Force solicit personal stories of oppression and repentance, as well as liturgical
- 8 expressions of reconciliation encouraged, and that these stories and liturgical expressions of past and
- 9 contemporary situations be shared in an open, passionate, respectful process so that our limited horizons
- 10 might be expanded and our witness in the world enhanced; and be it further
- 11 *Resolved*, That the Task Force will report in writing on its program activities, strategies and progress annually
- 12 to the Standing Commission on National Concerns and to the 76th and 77th General Conventions; and be it
- 13 further
- 14 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance
- 15 to consider a budget allocation of \$33,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

EXPLANATION

Through resolutions over the past 15 years, the General Convention has indicated its intention to eradicate racism and unify the church. The time has come to be in relationship and work for change in our churches and communities.

The Reconciliation Task Force offers the Church an opportunity to unashamedly study our past, repent in the present, and commit to full inclusion by a time certain in the future, and its work would be the following:



Past History: The Task Force would work with ministries and committees to gather data from a historical perspective and formulate ideas and questions for beginning conversations.

Repent in the Present: The Task Force would coordinate new initiatives begin undertaken by the various ministries to solidify efforts and continue new conversations on contemporary issues.

Commit in the Future: The Task Force would develop strategies for an on-going response to the Gospel, thereby supporting healing, wholeness, and reconciliation and work to bring about an: **Anti-Racist Church** that is a reconciled Church that respects cultural differences and advocates equality and balance among its diverse groups.

Resolution A094 Federal Statutory Protection

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention support federal statutory protection
- 2 for the right of all citizens to vote in local, state and federal elections, especially provisions prohibiting imposition
- 3 of discriminatory practices or identification requirements; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That these actions be communicated to the Office of Government Relations for action and distribution
- 5 to the Episcopal Public Policy Network.

EXPLANATION

The rights of the citizenry to participate in the political processes are the foundation of our democratic form of government. Even so, our nation’s history tells the story of our struggle to include all the people in those processes. For example, the Voting Rights Act enacted in 1965 outlawed direct barriers to participation by racial and ethnic minorities. Sections 5 and 203 of the temporary provisions of the Voting Rights Act, prohibiting discriminatory changes affecting the right to vote, will expire on August 6, 2007, unless renewed by Congress. In recent elections, various identification requirements, disqualifications based on criminal status and election processes that do not permit individuals to vote out of precinct or to have such votes validated or counted have raised again the specter of intentional exclusion of certain categories of voters.

Resolution A095 Gay and Lesbian Affirmation

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the Episcopal Church’s
- 2 historical support of gay and lesbian persons as children of God and entitled to full civil rights; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the 71st General Convention’s action calling upon “municipal
- 4 council, state legislatures and the United States Congress to approve measures giving gay and lesbian couples
- 5 protection[s] such as: bereavement and family leave policies; health benefits; pension benefits; real-estate
- 6 transfer tax benefits; and commitments to mutual support enjoyed by non-gay married couples”; and be it
- 7 further
- 8 *Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention oppose any state or federal constitutional amendment that prohibits
- 9 same-sex civil marriage or civil unions.

EXPLANATION

For at least thirty years, and even as debate about the role of gay and lesbian people within the Church has continued, successive General Conventions have recognized the equal claim of gay and lesbian persons to the civil rights

enjoyed by all other persons. In 1994, General Convention (1994–D006) called on all levels of government to support legislation giving same-sex couples the same legal protections as non-same-sex married couples. In light of recent legislative actions in several states, and a proposed federal constitutional amendment, an affirmation of the Episcopal Church’s support for equal rights is warranted.

Resolution A096 Create Consortium

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention direct the Standing Commission
- 2 on National Concerns to create a consortium to secure people with expertise from seminaries and other
- 3 institutions of scholarship and learning to research and produce informative papers and curricula on major
- 4 issues of national concern from Episcopal perspectives, and to make them accessible to the church; and be it
- 5 further
- 6 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance
- 7 to consider a budget allocation of \$25,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

EXPLANATION

In our concern for and interest in civil rights issues, we noted a need for scholarly work to illuminate issues of national concern and to aid the church in responding from a position of research and knowledge of the factors involved. We therefore turned our attention toward a consortium of scholars and institutions for the preparation of papers on the major issues of the day within the purview of this Commission. These papers, written from the Episcopal perspective, would offer guidance to the General Convention, and could be widely distributed to the Church to inform dioceses, parishes and individuals as they make crucial economic, ethical and moral decisions in ministry and mission.

HEALTH

In 1991, the 70th General Convention passed a resolution (1991–A010) calling for a plan that would allow universal access to health care. In 2003, the 74th General Convention passed a resolution (2003–A124) restoring the Standing Commission on Health without providing the necessary funding for the Commission and staff position in Health Care at the Church Center. Because health care issues are becoming more complex and costly with noticeable moves toward universal access, SCNC strongly urged the Executive Council to find funding and appoint the Standing Commission on Health.

In the interim this Commission has explored ways that our congregations and communicants can navigate the difficult maze of healthcare in the present climate we recommend these resources:

- The National Episcopal Health Ministries (NEHM), with its mission of promoting health ministry in the Episcopal Church, assists local congregations in reclaiming the Gospel mission of health and wholeness, thereby leading the way for congregations to become vibrant caring places of health and wholeness. NEHM’s manual, *Steps to a Health Ministry in Your Local Episcopal Congregation*, is an excellent source for learning the ingredients necessary to begin a health ministry in our churches. Available online: www.EpiscopalHealthMinistries.org.
- The International Parish Nurse Resource Center, with its mission of promoting the development of quality parish nurse programs through research, education and consultation, is an excellent supplement. More information is available online: www.parnurses.org.

Futile Care

Fueled by the rising costs of medical care, many hospitals and some states have adopted a relatively new policy of health care called “Futile Care.” In general, Futile Care Policy means that a hospital can make a decision regarding the likelihood of a patient’s recovery, and may conclude that further treatment is futile. That decision can then be conveyed to the patient’s family. If such a policy is in place, the hospital has the right to discharge that patient and it is not a policy that would be advertised.

It would be wise for patients and loved ones to inquire if their state or hospital has a Futile Care Policy before seeking care. If patients or loved ones are aware of such a policy at a health-care institution, they can begin the

process of arranging for alternative care (such as hospice, home health care, and skilled nursing facility) when the decision is made to release the terminally ill patient.

In order to reduce the stress of an already difficult time, it is imperative that family members or loved ones make preparations before a patient is hospitalized. Information must be gathered that will assure the best outcome for the patient. This will include reviewing the patient's insurance coverage limitations, obtaining knowledge about the care and requirements of a public hospital vs. that of a private hospital and looking into specific state health regulations imposed on hospitals in that state, i.e., the provision of a case worker to help identify alternative care and to assure linkage of the patient to appropriate care before the patient is released from the hospital. Most importantly, the patient's wishes must be known and the supporting documentation made and on hand to assure that those wishes are carried out.

The question of Futile Care Policies, like the question of assisted suicide and euthanasia, raises a point made well in the Executive Summary of *Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia - Christian Moral Perspectives*, prepared by the Committee on Medical Ethics of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington: "We suggest that the final approach that the Church takes to assisted suicide and euthanasia should lead us to take account of the underlying, broader question concerning care for the critically ill and dying: How can we enable one another to die a good Christian death?" As new issues arise in the future, we commend this question and the entire study as a basis for continued review and reflection.

ECONOMICS

As Christians we have been taught to believe that when we consider the needs of others before our own needs we will still have enough. This may be naïveté and mystery to the secular mind; but as the people of God, this is the awareness of the miracle of the unmerited, unconditional, unending love of God in our lives and we have no choice but to respond in gratitude.

Several centuries ago, Adam Smith and the early advocates of capitalism expanded this Christian reflection and assumed a world of civility, complete with communal, kindhearted and sharing people. In his work *Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith presented the human being as a social creature, moved by self-interest but also by altruism. He believed this to be a natural law.

Today, Capitalism bears little similarity to the capitalism of Smith's theory. Smith's capitalism was driven by four moral indicators. Sympathy was the basis and the first among these; utility and then benefit followed, with the consideration of profit being the least important of the four. Today the common standard of value, even the value of the human being, is dominantly driven by profit.

With few exceptions, the Anglican Church has been an "impartial spectator" throughout this procession of capitalism from its one form to another. Much of what the church offers as "guiding principles" is actually more about levels of control than about discernment of meaning. The Church has left the defining of capitalism to a type of technical rationality, which has limited the concept of capitalism to calculations of what is the most efficient means. This is not proclaiming the Gospel. Mirroring the culture that continues to counterfeit Adam Smith's notion of capitalism, the Church too is becoming dangerously intimate with goals of maximizing personal happiness, pleasure, individual interest, and money.

It does not seem the Church can redefine capitalism for our society; however, the Church can prophetically call for civility in the true sense of the word. The following reports and resolution are offered in the Grace of this call.

Offshore Outsourcing

Taking parts of a company's operation offshore, or *offshoring* as it's commonly called, is certainly not a new idea. The "MADE IN CHINA" label has appeared on products for decades. As Western companies took their process expertise overseas, and as the global transportation infrastructure developed to make shipping of raw materials, subassemblies, and finished products practical and cost effective, offshore manufacturing became commonplace. What is new is that the global digital infrastructure built in the 1990s is now making it just as possible to perform information-based activities anywhere in the world and to instantaneously deliver the results anywhere else in the world. This development has essentially made much more of the work of the modern organization "placeless."

Offshore outsourcing is essentially the cross-border re-allocation of labor. It is the manifestation of Adam Smith's classic economic theory on a wider scale. Smith's theory states that labor resources are best used when work tasks are divided among different workers to enable specialization. This specialization creates trans-national trade, where countries produce goods and services that they excel in and later exchange with other countries for goods and services they cannot produce at competitively affordable costs. In the United States, both the private and public sectors participate in offshore outsourcing of jobs. For example, Stella Hopkins of the *Charlotte Observer* conducted a survey that found that forty states, as well as the District of Columbia, have food stamp help desks that use operators in other countries. In response to states outsourcing of jobs and domestic political pressure, more than two-thirds of our state legislatures are working on bills to limit outsourcing of state contracts.

Both Democratic and Republican elected officials assert that offshore outsourcing is the inevitable result of postindustrial economies, both advanced and developing, that are seeking comparative advantage, which will result in a higher standard of living for everyone. N. Gregory Mankiw, Chief Economic Advisor to President George W. Bush, speaking at a White House News Briefing on the 2004 Economic Report of the President, as released by the White House, February 9, 2004, states: "Outsourcing is just a new way of doing international trade. We are very used to goods being produced abroad and being shipped here on ships or planes. What we're not used to is services being produced abroad and being sent here over the Internet or telephone wires...I think outsourcing is a growing phenomenon, but it's something that we should realize is probably a plus for the economy in the long run." President George W. Bush made the following remarks in a presentation at the World Bank on July 17, 2001: "Those who protest free trade are no friends of the poor. Those who protest free trade seek to deny them their best hope for escaping poverty." It was during the Clinton administration that the United States ratified the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Clinton Administration also signed on with the World Trade Organization, in which the avowed goal of all countries is to bring about a world of free trade.

Often the debate over the pros and cons of offshore outsourcing is framed as a difference of opinion between those persons who promote free trade versus the advocates of economic isolationism. Christians can broaden the parameters of the discussion by reframing the question to include a moral dimension. We could begin by asking, "As it relates to the phenomenon of offshore outsourcing, do we have the right set of policies in place today to create the world we want our children to live in?" Thus, reflecting on the ethics of offshore outsourcing in light of the Biblical imperative to promote justice requires us to critically examine the articulated benefits of offshore outsourcing.

Writing from the viewpoint of the business community in *Offshore Outsourcing: Path to New Efficiencies in IT and Business Processes*, authors Nandu Thondavadi and George Albert identify six reasons why offshore outsourcing is crucial for today's businesses: cost reduction, increased focus on core operations, improvements in process quality, access to a deep talent pool, more rapid processes and product development and product and process innovation.

Lou Dobbs, author of *Exporting America: Why Corporate Greed is Shipping Jobs Overseas*, and an opponent of offshore outsourcing, asserts that there are a lot of misconceptions to address when we finally do begin dialogue about offshore outsourcing and free trade. He identifies twelve myths: 1: Outsourcing American jobs is good for our economy; 2: Outsourcing has improved productivity growth and the creation of high-value jobs. 3: Outsourcing is simply a part of free trade, and classical economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo would have loved it. 4: Our economy and consumers are strong enough to run large chronic deficits, and historically a trade surplus is a sign of a weakening economy. 5: The only alternative to free trade is protectionism or economic isolationism. 6: Job retraining is the way to deal with outsourcing. Whenever industries and jobs have left our shores, we've retrained the workers for better jobs. That'll happen this time. 7: Outsourcing benefits everyone. Look at what happens when Honda outsources to the United States and builds cars here. The United States is insourcing as many jobs as it's exporting. 8: The goal of outsourcing jobs overseas is to increase productivity, not simply to cut wage costs. 9: When Corporate America outsources jobs overseas, it enlarges its knowledge base and creates not only more jobs here but high-value jobs. 10: We want to see countries like India prosper. Outsourcing helps their economies and their workers. 11: U.S. multinationals are outsourcing because Americans aren't well enough educated to fill

the jobs. 12: U.S. companies have to compete in a world market. Even if everyone agreed that outsourcing is terrible, there's no way to stop it.

The Biblical imperative to promote justice also requires us to examine existing international protocols protecting workers' rights and actively engaging in ministries to promote their implementation.

Albino Barerra, Professor of Economics and Theology at Providence College, summarizes the Biblical imperative that should be our guide in reflecting on the subject of offshore outsourcing: "We have a dual obligation to be efficient in our use of the goods of the earth and to cooperate with one another in our economic work. God entrusted the earth to our care as we use it by satisfying human needs in the most efficient way while eliciting collaborative work through the division of labor... The moral obligations that tell us to assist the poor of the world by opening our markets also call us to help displaced workers find another place in the economy. Our duties toward poor nations and displaced domestic workers are not mutually exclusive. They can be satisfied simultaneously, but only if people are willing to sacrifice for each other's well-being." (*Christian Century*, September 21, 2004, p.27)

The "Invisible" Poor

Throughout the cities, towns and villages of much of the low country of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina, strong storms and hurricanes continue to expose the vulnerability of those unable to leave an epicenter, unable to rebuild from what was lost, and unable to hear a voice that offers words of tangible hope, much less words proclaiming significant justice.

Today, New Orleans is a city that is only one-tenth the population of what it was before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Because of the inability to see an economically feasible means of returning and rebuilding their lives and homes in New Orleans, many of those who lived and worked in and around this city, and found their identity there, will never return. However, our culture's lack of significant concern for the economic vulnerability and loss of identity of these citizens began to dehumanize and threaten their lives and the lives of their children long before August 29, 2005. The Episcopal Church does not need years of study to realize the direct correlation between being under-employed (an annual income of less than \$10,000) and having no choice in whether or not to return to this city. The Church must stand with the people who have no choice; the Church must also ask why, even though all of God's children are promised "the abundant life," they have no choice. One of the lessons we are learning from such events is that those immediately affected are a microcosm of the economic horrors facing the poor throughout our country.

The "invisible" poor are found in all of our urban communities. Many urban-based issues are beginning to be addressed by such groups as The Church in Metropolitan Areas. This particular group, made up of forty urban priests and deacons, came about as a direct result of Resolution 2000-C006 passed at the 73rd General Convention. It asks that the Church be engaged with cities as they strive to be economically sustainable, environmentally safe, and where citizens are able to access employment, rely on social networks, and express political will.

After the natural disasters of 2005, the significance of the Gospel imperative of the work mandated by Resolution 2000-C006 is obvious. The Episcopal Church must call for all workers to have the necessary income to allow any full time worker to be financially able to pay for adequate housing, food, clothing, and medical care.

Along with such groups as The Church in Metropolitan Areas, the Standing Committee on National Concerns encourages the Episcopal Church to find the capacity to reflect theologically and to speak with authority about urban communities, poverty, social exclusion and public policy. The Church must also seek and find ways to engage with the public and private sectors of our society in dealing with the issues of poverty.

The massive destruction caused by these and other events of nature should challenge the spending priorities of both the nation and the Church. It presents the Church with a challenge, not only to help our sisters and brothers in these devastated areas for an extended period of time, but also to address the serious inequities in our society, which were unmasked by these storms and other catastrophic events.

Resolution A097 First Responders Network

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 75th General Convention direct the Executive Council to
- 2 establish an ad hoc committee to develop a network whose members are uniquely equipped to lead, guide,
- 3 mentor, and participate in early response to both national and international disasters and to equip, train,
- 4 educate, and coordinate efforts with other early response endeavors, working in conjunction with Episcopal
- 5 Relief and Development and the Office of the Suffragan Bishop for Chaplaincies, as appropriate; and be it
- 6 further
- 7 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance
- 8 to consider a budget allocation of \$ 33,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

EXPLANATION

There is a new ministry evolving within our Church. It is a ministry of reaching beyond the borders of our individual dioceses and even our nation to such places as the hurricane ravaged Gulf Coast, as well as the hill country of Pakistan and Eastern India. Groups are already in place that are uniquely equipped to act as both mentor and guide to any church based group wishing to serve in this ministry. These people would be able to work with older youth groups and adults of all ages. They would have the capability to work fast and hard, with joy and compassion. They are also making a strong effort to place all that they experience within the context of worship and theological reflection. From a tactical standpoint, because of their connectedness with the Episcopal Church, they are able to identify congregations near the epicenter of almost any disaster. From their dealings with Katrina they have come to realize that people from the “outside” are needed early on, and in some capacity, through the entire ordeal. Other aspects of this ministry could complement the work of ERD in any country where natural disasters have occurred or are on-going. For example, a network of 20 to 30 climbers with altitude training and experience could literally save an entire village.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The budget for the Commission the 2004–2006 triennium was \$71,000. As of the time of this report, we have expended approximately \$50,500. Expected total expenditures for this triennium are \$60,000.

During the 2007–2009 triennium, the Commission will meet approximately five times, with a requested budget of 75,000, distributed as follows: \$30,000 in 2006, \$30,000 in 2007, and \$15,000 in 2008.

CONCLUSION

During this past triennium, the Standing Commission on National Concerns worked diligently at fulfilling the mission that we had been given by the canons of the church. Looking ahead to the next three years, we suggest the following matters of national concern for consideration by this Commission: hunger issues, clean water availability, public education, concerns raised by The Church in Metropolitan Areas, and networking for early disaster response. Let us never lose sight of our Baptismal Covenant to “respect the dignity of every human being.”