

Episcopal News Service Advisory Committee

Membership

Ms. Sharon Tillman, *Chair*

Ms. Mary Cox

The Rev. Scott A. Gunn, *resigned 2011*

The Rev. Jamie Parsley

Ms. Jan Paxton, *since 2011*

Mr. David Skidmore

The Rev. Richard Snyder

Ms. Melodie Woerman

Ms. Katie Sherrod, *EC Liaison*

Maryland, III, 2012

Southeast Florida, IV, 2015

Rhode Island, I

North Dakota, VI, 2015

Newark, II, 2015

Chicago, V, 2015

Navajoland, VIII, 2012

Kansas, VII, 2012

Fort Worth, VII

Summary of Work

During the 76th General Convention in 2009, this committee, then known as the Episcopal Life Board of Governors, was central to discussion regarding the future of print news media in The Episcopal Church. At that time the newspaper was unfunded in the proposed budget for the 2009–2012 triennium. Members of the Board testified before the Legislative Committee on Communications in support of maintaining the Episcopal Life brand through print and online news coverage, and met with staff at the Episcopal Church Center Office of Communications to help negotiate a reasonable outcome, which might mean:

- One that would allow dioceses and churches that were print partners with Episcopal Life to continue producing their own print publications with Episcopal Life mailed to constituents;
- Barring the continuation of Episcopal Life, one that would give the print partners reasonable time to create new communications plans, contract with new printing and mailing vendors or determine a new course of action, while still maintaining communications with constituents; and
- Ensuring a flow of high-quality news reporting from The Episcopal Church to its audiences regardless of medium, be it print or online.

In September 2009, a letter was sent to the Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Straub, Secretary of General Convention, addressing Executive Council and the Board's role with regard to current events in the Office of Communications at the Episcopal Church Center. The Board asked that it be presented to, and placed on the agenda of, the October 5–8, 2009, meeting of Executive Council. After the meeting he responded:

At last week's meeting of Executive Council the Standing Committee on Governance & Administration for Mission was organized and assumed responsibility for policy regarding church communications. (The Rev. Gay Jennings is the chair of this Standing Committee.) Because of the shortness of committee time, they were unable to consider your letter and its contents, but assure me they will take them up at their next meeting in February, 2010.

At its November 2009 meeting in Chicago, the Board met with Anne Rudig, Director of Communications for The Episcopal Church, and Katie Sherrod, then-chair of the Episcopal Life Board of Governors subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Governance and Administration for Mission (GAM), to "deal with the questions the [Episcopal Life Board of Governors] asked in its letter to Council," and to discuss the future of this Board and its purpose in light of changes to Church communications and the relationship between the Board and the Office of Communications. The result of this meeting was Executive Council Resolution GAM-003, passed by Executive Council on February 21, 2010.

Following adoption of this resolution, the group became known as the Episcopal News Service Advisory Committee (ENS-AC), and began holding monthly conference calls with Committee members, Episcopal News Service (ENS) staff, and Katie Sherrod, liaison from ENS-AC to GAM. On those calls the Committee reviewed the past months' activities, including where the staff had travelled, project status (website redesign, iPod app), and news coverage (videos, written news and submitted stories).

Members of ENS-AC attending the spring 2010 Episcopal Communicators annual conference in Salem, Massachusetts, met in lieu of an official meeting for the year. Discussed at that brief meeting were ENS staff's early work in video news coverage, the challenges of daily web news coverage combined with producing a monthly newspaper and quarterly

magazine print-partner wrap, and developing a new quarterly magazine—all to be accomplished with only three staff members.

As a result of that meeting, ENS-AC members and ENS staff have worked together to promote ENS to Episcopal communicators, requesting articles, sharing video and providing sources for major news articles. Specifically ENS-AC has:

- Worked with the ENS staff to distribute submission guidelines to Episcopal communicators across the Church, through the Episcopal Communicators organization, provincial contact lists and personal connections; and
- Encouraged ENS to develop a clear permission citation for articles reprinted from ENS in diocesan and other publications.

The Committee was informed in advance of the public announcement in October 2010 to discontinue Episcopal News Monthly (ENM) and affiliated print publications. Committee members contacted those print partners within each province to discuss their options as the print partnership came to a close. We shared our dioceses' experiences, offered print contacts and listened to our fellow communicators.

Beginning in 2011, conference calls were changed to bi-monthly, with the Committee, ENS staff, and Katie Sherrod participating.

On April 5, 2011, ENS-AC members, Katie Sherrod, and ENS staff members Lynette Wilson and Mary Frances Schjonberg met in Memphis, in conjunction with the Episcopal Communicators conference for a one-day meeting as a cost-reducing measure. This meeting was very productive, with discussion focused on budget allocation and news coverage at the General Convention in 2012, and pending budget preparations for 2013–2015 triennium.

The Committee learned that the communications budget for General Convention 2012 will be \$140,000; in 2009 it was \$350,000. Even with the cut to the budget, the commitment to news coverage at General Convention is absolute. Discussion focused on the use of digital media, since there will not be money to produce a printed publication, and the Committee also raised creative solutions such as underwriting opportunities.

The Committee discussed what should be its goals through General Convention 2012; lobbying for a well-funded communications budget is a priority. With 133,000 unique visits a month, the Episcopal News Service website is the most visited part of the Episcopal Church website and needs continuing funding.

While many believe that digital news is cheaper to produce than print, it is not: new things are just as costly. To that point, ENS videos are well-watched, and the staff will produce more of them. More video training for staff is also planned. Videos on the Church website are also available on the TECTube YouTube channel.

In early 2011, ENS staff held a conversation with Jerry Hames, editor of the new Episcopal Journal, to define the relationship between ENS and the new publication. The Episcopal News Service provides content that the Journal uses, and his use of the content has helped ENS see itself as a news service. Citation of credit was established, and ENS shared the list of previous ENM subscribers. When ENM folded, subscribers were contacted to see if they wanted the price of their remaining subscription returned to them or donated to the Rebuild Haiti Fund. As of September 2011, about \$30,000 has gone to that effort.

Budget Report

The Episcopal News Service Advisory Committee did not have any expenditures in 2010, opting instead to have the members who were already attending the Episcopal Communicators Conference, Salem, Massachusetts, meet informally. In 2011, the committee was granted \$3,000 for a meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, again in conjunction with Episcopal Communicators Conference. Because two non-Communicators members were unable to attend, the Committee remained within its budget.

The Committee plans to meet three times during the next triennium. This will require \$4,500 for 2013, \$4,500 for 2014, and \$4,500 for 2015, for a total of \$13,500 for the triennium.