

2009 Diocesan Convention Reports—Standing Committee

Good afternoon, it has been my privilege to serve as President of the Standing Committee since our Convention in 2008. It is my duty to offer a report on behalf of the eight elected members of the Standing Committee. This year, we begin our report by asking God's blessing on our Bishop Marc as he continues his recovery from surgery and on Sheila and their daughters.

During this past year the Standing Committee has sought to keep the mission of the church before us, and to support the activities of all those who have consulted us and asked for our advice. We have also sought to fulfill our canonical responsibilities to the best of our ability.

Collectively, we are thankful for the confidence that you have placed in us, and we continuously strive to be responsive to the requests that you address to us, and to be accountable for our decisions.

Let me introduce my colleagues.

The Rev. Ron Culmer, Vice President, and Rector of Saint Claire's, Pleasanton.

The Rev. Nina Pickerrell, Deacon, who serves at Grace Cathedral and at Bayview Mission, and Dr. Ron Johnson, a Canon of the Cathedral and former Chair of the Commission on Ministry.

Rev Bruce Smith, Rector of Resurrection, in Pleasant Hill, and Peggy Greene, a former President of Diocesan Council, and parishioner at Saint Paul's, Walnut Creek

Finally, our two retiring members. Carolyn Gaines, a parishioner at Saint Augustine's in Oakland and General Convention deputy, and the Rev. Stacey Grossman, Rector of Nativity in Marin. Stacey was President of the Standing Committee in 2007-8 and led the effort to publish the document "Called to Right Relationship" that will serve as a guide for those in leadership roles for years ahead.

The work of the Standing Committee falls into five areas: oversight of matters concerning clergy discipline and admission to ordained ministry, support of congregations and approval of transitions between mission and parish status, approval of certain real estate transactions, approval of committee appointments and consents to elections to the Episcopate in the wider church, and the compensation and welfare of our Bishop.

In addition, we are required by the National Canons to act as a counsel of advice to the Bishop: that means we have a duty to respond with advice when asked, and to offer advice when we deem it appropriate and necessary for the wellbeing of the diocese.

There is nothing that occurs in the Diocese that is not of concern to us, although we are aware that some will view us as overreaching. Meanwhile, others view us as being insufficiently involved. Please know that we seek to avoid these extremes and we keep you, the people who elected us, constantly in mind as we go about our work.

The last two years have been challenging for us; we have experienced uncertainties in our working relationship with the Bishop and a widening difference concerning our role. We have expended considerable time in reflection and discussion of these concerns, and with the approval and the involvement of our Bishop we have sought the advice of third parties. In addition, the Standing Committee has taken the advice of our own counsel. We believe that we are now embarked on a process that will resolve the differences that exist. While we understand that you would like to know more about this challenge, we do not believe that a broader exposition would contribute to resolution. Our counsel shares this view. We ask your prayers as we move ahead.

During the past year many people have consulted with us about matters where we have responsibility. We have advanced those seeking ordained ministry. We have approved real estate transactions and inspiring developments sponsored by parishes. None has been more exciting or more thoughtfully prepared than the redevelopment for student housing being undertaken by the Rev. Robbin Clark and the congregation of Saint Mark's, Berkeley.

We have approved elections to the Episcopate and we have also voted against an election: The Rev. Kevin Thew Forrester as Diocesan Bishop of Northern Michigan. We thank members of the diocese who took the time to communicate with us on this matter. This election was the rare occasion when we were divided. Our majority sided with the majority among other Dioceses, but we realize that some members of the Diocese did not agree with our decision. We have listened to your views and we will weigh them if we are asked to reconsider this bishop-elect.

During the past year we have tried to be solicitous concerning the welfare of our Bishop. At his request we undertook a detailed compensation review. We engaged the services of a trustee of the Church Pension Fund as a consultant, and accessed additional statistical information about our Diocese in relation to others from the head office of the Episcopal Church. Our conclusion was that we are providing compensation and benefits that are fully comparable with other Dioceses of our size—out of over 100 Dioceses in the United States we rank as the thirty something largest.

In the spring we approved repairs to the Bishop's residence on Lyon Street. These repairs are now complete and we believe the house is now in a condition that has not been equaled for many years. This achievement means that we have the flexibility to reevaluate whether the property will optimally meet the long-term needs of our Bishops

and their families. We intend to engage the Bishop and Executive Council in a discussion of this issue.

During this past year it has been my privilege to serve as an ex-officio trustee of the Cathedral. I have to say that meetings of the Trustees set a benchmark for the rest of us: organized, disciplined and decisive. I have come to see the Trustees as a gifted and dedicated group, and the Cathedral as a jewel of which we should all be proud. The trustees make continuing efforts to upgrade both the worship space and to advance the facilities of the Cathedral School. Further, the search for the next Dean follows a period of careful preparation and consideration. A successful conclusion should follow within the next twelve months.

During the past year the Standing Committee has endeavored to establish committees set out in the Canons adopted last year: the nominations committee; a committee to advise on episcopal compensation; and a committee to advise on governance issues. In addition, we were charged last year with establishing a working group to study the relationship between the Diocese and the Diocesan Institutions. We have failed in our objective to complete this process. We have lists of nominees and some acceptances, but we have yet to issue formal invitations to these volunteers. We expect to establish these bodies within the first quarter of 2010. We regret our shortcoming in this area, but other preoccupations have taken precedence.

Paul A. D. Evans, President of the Standing Committee