

Reforming for Mission

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Everyone who has ever written or listened to a sermon on stewardship knows at least this fundamental reality: the way to tell what someone's values are is to look at a checkbook register. What people spend money on reveals what is really important to them. The same is true with organizations. If you look at their budgets, you will see what matters to them. Jesus put it this way: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."² In other words, do we put our money where our mouth is? We need to know if that is true about ourselves. And if it is not, we need to reform.

Every three years the General Convention passes a budget for its church-wide ministry, which is carried out by a corporation known as the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was formed by a special General Convention in 1821 and incorporated under the laws of New York in 1846. A note about the history of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society is in order. It began at a moment of revival in the life of the Episcopal Church, one of the consequences of which was a growing awareness of the Church's missionary vocation.³ It was not an idea that caught on at first, the prevailing wisdom being that mission was the concern of those with an interest in it.

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² Mt. 6:21 (NRSV).

³ Powel Mills Dawley, *The Episcopal Church and Its Work* rev. ed. (New York: Seabury Press, 1961), 57.

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Mission, however, is not an ancillary concern of the Church but the very reason for the Church's being and is not properly the exclusive purview of a special interest. Rather the "heart of this body is mission – domestic and foreign mission, in partnership with anyone who shares that passion."⁴ Mission is the lifeblood of the Church itself. Accordingly, the General Convention amended the charter of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society in 1835 so that Article II stated: "The Society shall be considered as comprehending all persons who are members of this Church."⁵ That provision became part of Article I of the charter at the General Convention of 1904,⁶ and the same remains true today. Every member of the Episcopal Church is also, by virtue of being an Episcopalian, a member of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society.⁷

This reality has profound theological significance as part of the lived application of our baptismal theology, as expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer* since its revision in 1979. Through Holy Baptism, every baptized person becomes a minister. It is crucial to our understanding of the ministry of the Church that it is shared by all baptized persons, not only by ordained persons. Together we share in Christ's eternal priesthood.⁸ Listed first among the "ministers of the Church" are lay persons, *i.e.*, all baptized persons. That ministry is in turn linked specifically to mission:

⁴ Katharine Jefferts Schori, "Ubuntu and the Body of Christ" (Presiding Bishop's Opening Sermon to the General Convention, July 8, 2009).

⁵ Edwin Augustine White and Jackson A. Dykman, *Annotated Constitution and Canons for the Government of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America otherwise known as The Episcopal Church*, 1981 edition, 2 vols. (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1997), 1:216.

⁶ White and Dykman, *Annotated Constitution and Canons*, 1:228-229.

⁷ Canon I.3 (2009) (hereinafter cited without reference to year).

⁸ *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 308.

Q. How does the Church pursue its mission?

A. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

Q. Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?

A. The Church carries out its mission through the *ministry of all its members*.⁹

To be a Christian, a baptized person, is necessarily to be a missionary. But more particularly, to be an Episcopalian is explicitly to be a missionary. It is how we understand what the ministry of the baptized is. It is a matter of who we are.

Indeed, the growing awareness among Episcopalians of their missionary identity in the mid-19th century resulted in a doubling of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society's income as well as a growing sense of missionary enthusiasm throughout the Church and, before long, the sending of missionary bishops.¹⁰ There is an important lesson for us in all this. Our context may be different, but this fundamental reality is striking. In the early 19th century, when the temptation of the Church was to turn inward, and succumbing to that temptation would have been understandable, the Church in fact did exactly the opposite. It called a special General Convention and focused itself outward. And when it did, it grew and thrived. It served the needs of a country expanding westward. It began to look beyond the borders of the United States, especially in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. Most importantly, it grew in faith, for

⁹ *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 855.

¹⁰ Dawley, *Episcopal Church*, 58.

the Christian faith is fundamentally about ever-turning outward, which is what love requires. And in that, and I daresay in that alone, is life. “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.”¹¹ Back to Jesus again.

Episcopalians do not support a missionary society. They *are* a missionary society. It says something very important. The question before us today is whether we back up who we say we are or not. Being the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society is something we can measure our checkbook register against. Measuring something against a standard, by the way, is the root meaning of the word *canon*. Our identity and our canon are the same thing. And, of course, our canons make us the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society.

So, let us examine the budget the General Convention passes for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society to live by and see if how we spend our money reflects who we say we are and what it says about where we place our hearts.

The budget of the General Convention is divided into three types of expenses: canonical, corporate, and program.¹² Canonical expenses are defined by canon. They are the “contingent” expenses of the General Convention (Query which of the General Convention’s expenses are “contingent.”), the stipend of the Presiding Bishop and the “necessary expenses” of that office, the “necessary expenses” of the President of the House of Deputies, including staff and Advisory Council as well as other expenses of that office, and applicable Church Pension Fund assessments.¹³ Despite

¹¹ Mk. 8:35.

¹² Canon I.4.6 (b) and (c).

¹³ Canon I.4.6 (b).

that canonical definition, what constitutes “canonical” is subject to some interpretation when it comes to the actual construction of the budget, which tends to treat “canonical” as meaning anything applying to something found in, and especially established by, the canons. Thus, the General Board of Examining Chaplains and its staff are included, as are other canonically established committees, commissions, agencies, and boards (CCABs), and in some but not all years, the Chief Operating Officer.

Corporate expenses are likewise canonically described as “the corporate requirements for the administrative support of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society offices.”¹⁴ What constitutes program is left to the imagination, presumably anything other than Canonical and corporate, although the Canon capitalizes *Program* as if it were a defined term but without providing the definition (the opposite of *corporate*, which it does not treat as a defined term but for which it does provide something of a definition). The actual budget process treats Program as those things the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society is trying to do and to which it provides staff to accomplish.

There are some inherent difficulties in understanding the canonical, corporate, and program expenses of the church-wide budget, however. One is that those terms—canonical, corporate, and program—are church jargon. To the uninitiated, their meaning is not entirely self-evident. Even to students of the canons, their meaning is not self-evident. Furthermore whatever their canonical meanings may be, such definitions are largely if not entirely ignored in the budget process.

To non-church members, and even to church members, it may be helpful to understand that *canonical* expenses are basically related to governance, which is

¹⁴ Canon I.4.6 (b).

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what the canons set up. *Corporate* expenses are related to the existence of the corporation and basically refer to what we would call administration. *Program* expenses pay for the services the corporation provides and corresponds to mission, the mission of the Domestic and Foreign *Missionary Society*. At the church-wide level, those services mostly relate to providing grants to further the work of the Church both within the dioceses of The Episcopal Church and beyond them, the sending of missionaries (these days mostly short-term missionaries as opposed to those who spend their entire ministries in another country), and programs to support and strengthen mission by the more local units of the Church, dioceses, and congregations.

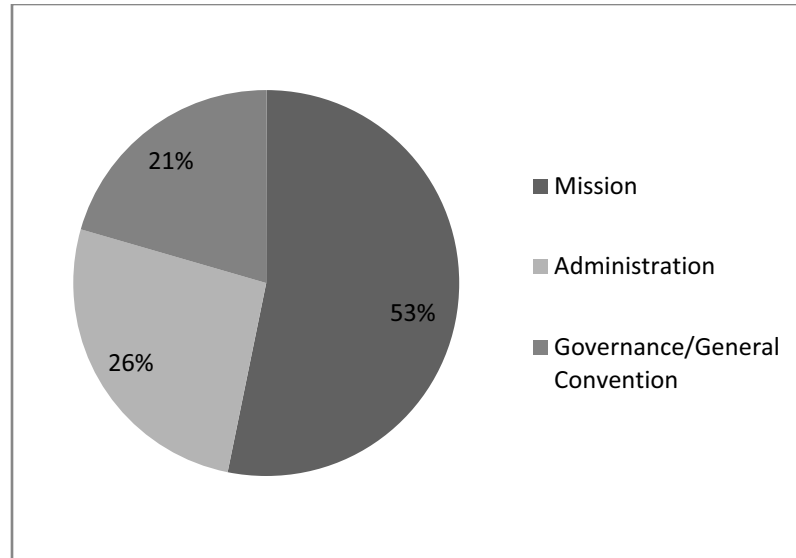
There is another problem, however. How any given line item is classified is something of an art with no hard and fast rules, and it is an art the beauty of which is very much in the eye of the beholder, and it is an art that is variously practiced depending on who is doing the defining. It begins with the Executive Council. It can be modified by the Joint Committee on Program, Budget & Finance, and it can be redefined by the General Convention, although due to the Convention's size and the intricacy of the budget presented to it, that would be difficult to do. There are line items for which the classification is not obvious and others for which the definitions do not strictly apply. For example, the office I hold, Chief Operating Officer, is provided for by canon.¹⁵ On the other hand, virtually all of my work involves tending to the corporate structure and its employees. That makes it more like administration. In some General Convention budgets (indeed, in most) that

¹⁵ Canon I.4.3 (d). The office is canonically established as the Executive Director. Over time, however, it has become more generally known as the Chief Operating Officer. Indeed, a resolution coming forward from the Executive Council at this General Convention would amend the canonical name to correspond with the generally accepted usage.

line item has been considered corporate. In others (2009-2012) it has been considered canonical. In addition, there are some line items that simply defy easy classification. The Presiding Bishop, for example, is a canonical office and certainly has a large governance role. However, it would be difficult to argue that a huge amount of her time, most in fact, is not directly related to mission. Similarly, our communications functions are difficult to classify. Some relate more to evangelism and are thus missional. Others are more related to corporate communications and are thus administrative. Any analysis, therefore, is subject to some interpretation. That analysis, though, is crucial to knowing whether we're putting our treasure into what we truly mean for reasons explained below.

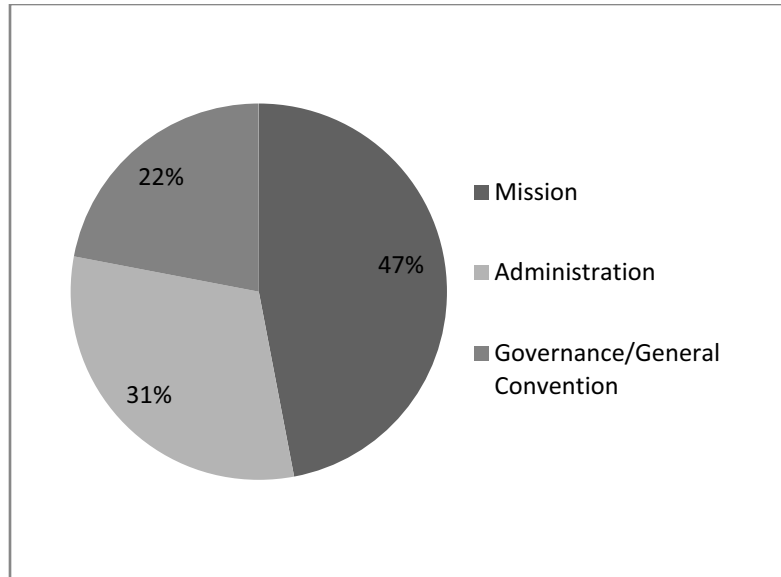
As the broad outlines are reasonably set, however, analyses tend to be similar, though not identical. I have studied two of them. Both analyze the current General Convention budget excluding the expenses of Episcopal Migration Ministries, which though part the Church budget, is a ministry funded by government grants rather than the gifts of the people of the Church. The first analysis was prepared and presented as part of the work of the Budgetary Funding Task Force, on which I served, by Steven Smith, a lay deputy from the Diocese of Vermont, an advisor to the President of the House of Deputies on financial matters, and a retired employee of the Church Pension Group. It determined that 21% of the church-wide budget for the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was spent on canonical/governance, 26% on corporate/administration, and 53% on program/mission.

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I asked Kurt Barnes, the Church's Chief Financial Officer and the Treasurer of the General Convention, administrator of the budget, and someone accountable ultimately to the Presiding Bishop to do the same analysis.¹⁶ It differs slightly from the Smith analysis. Barnes determined that 22% was spent on canonical/governance, 31% on corporate/administration, and 47% on program/mission.

¹⁶ Canon I.4.3 (e).



The two analyses have their differences, which given the complexity of the task is not surprising. What they show, though, is that no matter how you look at it, only about half of the church-wide budget goes into providing program or supporting mission. I question whether that is what the people of our Church intend or expect. More importantly, I question whether that is who we are.

The question that remains is: what is an appropriate level of program expenditures and what is an appropriate level of non-program expenditures. There are standards that can help us. We turn, of course, to the Bible when it comes to determining a spiritually healthy level of personal income to be given away. The Bible likewise provides some standard that may have applicability for institutional life, particularly missional institutions, as well as for personal life. Just after that part about treasure and the heart, Jesus said this:

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Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? . . . Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.¹⁷

And elsewhere:

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?¹⁸

Jesus again. Surely his teaching applies, if anything, to the life of the community of disciples. To what extent does our budget address our anxiety about the spiritually extraneous and to what extent does it address striving for the kingdom of God? To what extent does our budget place a value on survival, which is not much of a value of the Gospel, and to what extent does it place a value on following Jesus, which is? To what extent does our budget express who we are, or who we want to be?

The community of disciples might take some additional guidance from the standards applicable to

¹⁷ Mt. 6:25, 31-33.

¹⁸ Mk. 8:34-36.

other non-profit organizations. The Better Business Bureau has adopted standards for the accountability of charities. The “BBB Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability” were developed to assist donors in making sound giving decisions and to foster public confidence in charitable organizations. The standards seek to encourage fair and honest solicitation practices, to promote ethical conduct by charitable organizations and to advance support of philanthropy.”¹⁹ They cover, in addition to other topics, how charitable donations are spent by an organization. Strictly speaking, of course, the Better Business Bureau standards do not explicitly apply to churches. Query, however, whether the Church would want to argue that it was subject to a *lesser* standard than a secular philanthropy.

Standard 8 of the Better Business Bureau’s Standards for Charity Accountability sets 65% as the minimum standard a charity should spend on program activities.²⁰ Many charities, of course, strive for even less on non-program and more on program. Episcopal Relief & Development, which I consider one of the finest and most effective charitable organizations in the United States²¹ and a charity to which the Better Business Bureau’s standards do apply, aims for and achieves greater than that.

A thorough review of the budgetary practices of other churches is beyond the scope of this article. The 2012 Expense proposal considered by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 2011 is suggestive, however. That budget allocated 68.2% to mission (subdivided into the

¹⁹ Better Business Bureau, “Standards for Charity Accountability, <http://www.bbb.org/us/Charity-Standards/> (accessed February 6, 2012).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ I should disclose that I serve on the Board of Directors of Episcopal Relief & Development as a function of being the Church’s Chief Operating Officer.

three categories of congregational and synodical mission, global mission, and mission advancement).²²

By the standards applicable to any other charity, then, the church-wide budget of the General Convention does not hold up well under any analysis in that it allocates about half, maybe less, of its total expenses coming from donors to program.

Does this budget reality reflect our true values? Does this budget reality put our money where our mouth is? One cannot help but wonder whether its shrinking income might not be related to this reality. And ought the people we serve, both within and outside the Church, expect something better?

Here is where a canonical issue to which I have alluded above comes into play. Why is our budget so out of line with our stated value on mission? It is because, I suggest, the canons of the Church, by which we are governed, require that they be. I doubt that was the intention, but it is in fact what has happened.

Canon I.4.6 (d) places a mandatory priority on canonical expenses in the crafting of a budget. It reads: "If in any year the total anticipated income for budget support is less than the amount required to support the budget approved by the General Convention, the canonical portion of the Budget for the Episcopal Church shall have funding priority over any other budget areas subject to any decreases necessary to maintain a balanced budget." The priority on canonical has been broadly applied not only to years in which there is a shortfall but to the construction of the budget throughout the budget process. We are at a moment, I propose, when we must ask ourselves if this in fact expresses our priority. Are governance expenses the thing we hold most dear? Is governing ourselves the

²² Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Recommendation on 2012–2013 Budget Proposal," *2011 Pre-Assembly Report*, section IV, 72.

best way to participate in God's mission in the world? Is it possible to change our stated priorities? What would happen if our stated priority as we seek to engage a post-Christian world were mission and not governance? Is it even possible?

Indeed it is. For one thing, the canons as a theological document, which I think are out of line with our baptismal theology of the ministry of all the baptized and their engagement in God's mission, could be amended. Such a priority might, for example, draw on the Anglican Consultative Council's articulation of the Five Marks of Mission in Anglicanism as follows:

The Executive Council shall submit to the General Convention at each regular session thereof the Budget for the Episcopal Church for the ensuing budgetary period, which budgetary period shall be equal to the interval between regular meetings of the General Convention. The priority of the Budget adopted by the General Convention shall be to further the following marks of mission:

- (1) to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom,
- (2) to teach, baptize and nurture new believers,
- (3) to respond to human need by loving service,
- (4) to seek to transform unjust structures of society, and
- (5) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The "Five Marks of Mission" were developed by the Anglican Consultative Council between 1984 and 1990, and have been widely accepted among Anglicans as a guide for mission engagement.²³ Indeed, our own

²³ Anglican Communion, "Mission—The Five Marks of Mission," <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm> (accessed February 5, 2012).

General Convention meeting in 2009 adopted the Five Marks of Mission (Resolution D-027) as a standard for the missionary direction of the Episcopal Church.²⁴ The explanation for Resolution D-027, which was proposed by Bonnie Anderson, President of the House of Deputies, states that the Five Marks of Mission “are the accepted standard in the Anglican Communion for participation in God’s mission.”²⁵ The Executive Council as well as the Joint Committee on Program, Budget & Finance was requested to construct the budget for the coming triennium on these five marks. Indeed, the “Core Budget Principles” adopted by the Executive Council at its October, 2011 meeting state: “TEC understands its partnership in God’s mission to be framed by the Five Marks of Mission.”²⁶ Nevertheless, the draft proposed budget submitted by Executive Council to the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget & Finance continued the pattern of past budgets with an allocation of 53% to Non-Program and 47% to Program.²⁷ Perhaps it is time for General Convention to go beyond non-binding resolution to canon.

Here is some interesting information. If program/mission constitutes about 47% of the church-wide budget, that means we currently spend about \$51.5 million for that purpose in a triennium. If we constructed our budget by making that the priority rather than governance, and built our budget

²⁴ The Episcopal Church, “General Convention,” http://gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=981&type=Final (accessed February 5, 2012).

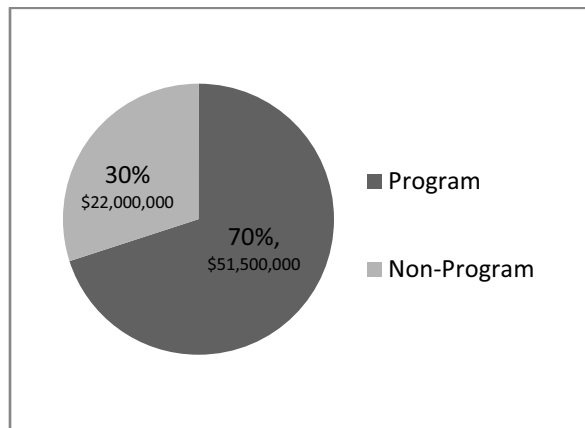
²⁵ The Episcopal Church, “General Convention,” http://gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=981&type=Original (accessed February 5, 2012).

²⁶ “2013-2015 General Convention Budget Core Principles and Budgeting Strategies,” (Draft November 2011) (unpublished).

²⁷ “2013-2015 Draft Budget EC Adopted Simplified Jan. 30 [1]” adopted by the Executive Council, January 29, 2012 at Linthicum Springs, Maryland.

accordingly by adhering to the standards of well-run charitable organizations such as Episcopal Relief & Development, even in a moderate way,²⁸ the church-wide triennial budget might look something like this:

Program:	\$51,500,000
Non-Program:	<u>+22,100,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$73,600,000



How might such a budget be funded? Income not related to current giving by the dioceses includes:

Endowment Income:	\$25,300,000
Rental Income:	\$4,000,000
Deficit:	\$44,300,000

How might we fund the remaining \$44,300,000? The current answer is to ask the dioceses to contribute 19%

²⁸ By moderate I mean slightly better than the minimum standards of the Better Business Bureau, but recognizing that we have an asset in our governing structures if they were used missionally but not quite the same high standard of some such as Episcopal Relief & Development. For purposes of discussion, I have posited a reasonable standard as 30% allocated to nonprogram expenses.

of their operating revenue. Current projections for the coming triennium expect the amount collected from dioceses at that rate to be about \$70,600,000, which would more than enough. However, the 19% asking is widely considered (1) too burdensome in its expectations in asking a percentage of diocesan income greater than what dioceses ask from congregations, (2) unwise in that it removes money from the more local levels of the Church at which mission is generally done, and (3) unfair both because it receives varying responses from the diocese thus spreading the church-wide costs unevenly, and because it asks different things from different dioceses in that the dioceses have different practices among themselves as to how the diocesan operating budget is funded. Would not mission be better served by a fairer system that also leaves more money at the local level? And, most importantly, would not mission be better served by bringing the proportional allocation of income more in line with non-profit standards? Perhaps further canonical revision is necessary along the following lines:

Each Diocese of this Church shall be assessed an amount equal to one percent (1%) of the total normal operating revenue of all of its congregations as reported on the annual parochial report. Should any Diocese fail to pay its full assessment, such failure shall be understood as a request for assistance from the other Dioceses of this Church, and the Presiding Bishop, the Bishop thereof, and designated representatives of the Executive Council shall meet to assess how the Church might best render that assistance so that the Diocese may live into its responsibilities as a full member of the Church.

The Executive Council shall submit to the General Convention at each regular session thereof the Budget for the Episcopal Church for the ensuing

budgetary period, which budgetary period shall be equal to the interval between regular meetings of the General Convention. Not less than seventy percent (70%) of expenses of the Budget shall be to further the following marks of mission:

- (1) to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom,
- (2) to teach, baptize and nurture new believers,
- (3) to respond to human need by loving service,
- (4) to seek to transform unjust structures of society, and
- (5) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

I would argue that a fairer system would be to have a mandatory assessment of dioceses but at a more reasonable level and based on an amount that is standard from diocese to diocese. Congregational income, which is measured consistently among the dioceses through the parochial report form,²⁹ could be such a standard. The annual operating revenue of all the congregations of the Episcopal Church in 2010 was \$16,206,188,000.³⁰ If the assessment of dioceses was based on their congregational income rather than their diocesan income, 1% would produce income to the church-wide budget of \$48,600,000, \$4,300,000 more than would be minimally needed to fund a budget with a missional priority at a reasonable level. In addition, I suggest, it would be considered both fair and reasonable by the dioceses and would also leave more funding for mission at the local level, \$22,000,000 more in fact.

The 1% standard has other advantages beyond mere budgeting that make it worth considering.

²⁹ Canon I.6.1.

³⁰ Office of the Treasurer of the General Convention.

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Because it would be less burdensome to the dioceses, and perhaps more importantly, because it is both fair and imminently reasonable, it could act as an invitation to dioceses who have not participated fully as a matter of missionary strategy (applying resources instead to build the local church) to be full and equal participants with all other dioceses in a united effort to advance God's mission. It would declare a jubilee of sorts, an opportunity for us all to start over. The 1% plan to fund a budget with expenses for governance and administration at a level considered ethical by non-profit standards would not only advance mission. It would strengthen the body to allow it to more effectively work together in the service of that mission.

Though I do favor changing the priority of our budget system from governance to mission, I have no desire to change the basic polity of our Church despite what some uninformed critics have charged. I do, though, have a desire to make our polity serve its intended purpose, as a means to the furtherance of mission and not as an end in itself. I am convinced that it is, in fact, possible to do. Not only is it possible to do, doing so would likely further, and not diminish, enhancing the voice of all the baptized in our communal decision-making.

A major point of my message has never been to propose a solution as to how we might do that. The only "Sauls Proposal," in fact, is that a church-wide conversation needs to take place leading to the opportunity for General Convention to consider a reform proposal not later than 2015, and possibly sooner. What follows, therefore, is meant to stimulate that conversation, and not to propose the answer to the questions we need to be asking about our priorities and our missionary strategy at this crucial moment in the

Church's life. What follows are ideas.³¹ They are not a proposal. They are not even a suggestion. They are not even consistent. They are only "what ifs." Some of them may be good ideas. Some of them may not be. What I believe, though, is that we would benefit from a rational discussion of them. It is that discussion I believe the people of our Church at the most grassroots level want to have, deserve to have, and ought to be heard on.

The first thing I would note is that the website of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church lists over 75 committees, commissions, agencies, and boards, which together constitute our governance structure.³² Not all are funded (although at least 29 are). Not all function. All, however, at least according to the website, exist at least in theory. The General Convention itself is comprised of 23 committees in each House, a total of 46, which typically but not necessarily meet together with their cognate. There are others unique to each House. This is in addition to 109 dioceses and three regional areas³³ in 16 countries, which are organized into nine provinces. Not all of the dioceses can afford to have a

³¹ Responsibility for the ideas I share is mine alone. I would be remiss, however, if I did not acknowledge the very fine work of the Budgetary Funding Task Force, the deliberations of which did much to stimulate my own thinking in this regard. None of these ideas, though some of them are shared by various members of the Task Force, represent a proposal of the Task Force or even a consensus of it. I acknowledge gratefully the contributions of members of the Task Force to my thinking, but the responsibility for even proposing discussion of these ideas is mine alone. Furthermore, many have come from others, both lay and ordained, who have had conversations with me and ideas of their own about structural reform. I lack the ability to attribute them to sources, but I am happy to pass them along.

³² The Episcopal Church, "General Convention," <http://generalconvention.org/ccab> (accessed February 5, 2012).

³³ The regional areas are organized for missionary purposes, but they are not organized into a diocesan structure. They are Navajoland, Micronesia, and Europe.

full-time bishop, which may not at all be a bad thing and even point some ways forward.

Here are some things I have wondered:

- What if all those 75+ committees, commissions, agencies, and boards and legislative committees of the General Convention were reorganized based on function? It seems to me there are six functions that need to be carried out on the church-wide level: (1) supporting mission within the dioceses of the Episcopal Church, (2) supporting mission outside the dioceses of the Episcopal Church, (3) Anglican, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Relations and Collaboration, (4) Promoting Justice and Peace, and (5) Governance. Liturgy and Music may be another separate function or it may fit into the above. Form, after all, follows function.
- What if the hierarchical pyramid of which General Conventions sits at the top with the bottom occupied by disengaged rank and file Episcopalians were flattened to make the grassroots more likely to be involved? What if there were a committee on each of the five or six functions at each level of the Church: congregation, diocese, province, Executive Council, and General Convention that functioned so that each level met with and collaborated with the ones immediately above and below so that ideas, needs, hopes, and dreams flowed in both directions rather than resources flowing only up and directives flowing down? Investment, after all, follows engagement.
- What if we recognized that responsiveness to the broad diversity of church constituencies and the exercise of fiduciary responsibility might be

two different things, with the former requiring a large perhaps somewhat messy structure and the latter better served by a smaller more nimble structure with the necessary expertise available to make informed decisions but was nevertheless responsive to and accountable to the former? Leadership resources, after all, are most effective when doing what they're good at.

Then there is the General Convention itself. It is large. It has a tendency to create winners and losers. It is expensive. Like the question of how to categorize the line items of the budget, just how expensive is a little difficult to calculate. With the assistance of the Treasurer, I identified the following:

House of Bishops	\$342,213
House of Deputies	534,037
Site and Facilities	2,046,321
Publications	161,023
General Convention Office	3,467,682
Other Departments	<u>+ 582,721</u>
TOTAL	\$7,133,997

Now, you will hear that General Convention is actually not a major expense. It constitutes less than 7 ½ cents of every budget dollar. Is 7.5% of every budget dollar for *one meeting* a missionally focused way to allocate our resources?

And, of course, the cost of General Convention to the church-wide budget is only part of the real cost. There is additional cost to the individual dioceses. From my experience as a diocesan bishop, I would estimate the average cost to an individual diocese to be at least \$35,000, which is probably a little low. The price tag excludes the least well-resourced dioceses from sending a full deputation. If, however, 109 dioceses and each

regional area spent an average of \$35,000 each, that would total another \$3.8 million diverted from mission use at the local level. It is impossible to know for sure the amount spent by individuals attending convention, many of whom assume the difference between the actual cost of attending and that paid for by the dioceses. I would think the total was considerable, although savings could not be necessarily translated into money otherwise available for mission, at least without some effort. There is one more thing that makes the cost of General Convention difficult to calculate. There is corresponding income, so the net cost to the church-wide budget is about \$1 million less than calculated above. Some of that is from vendor fees; some, from registration fees. The latter is, of course, once again paid by the dioceses, so the recovery from income is not a significant benefit to them directly.

There is no doubt it is possible to minimize the expense, and as the Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism has suggested, re-imagine General Convention. Here are some things I have wondered:

- What if the frequency of meetings be changed? Changing the frequency of General Convention would change the amount of time over which the cost had to be accrued. General Convention is now held every three years. If it were every four years, the amount necessarily budgeted both at the church-wide and diocesan levels in each of the years between Conventions would decrease by 25%. If it were every five years, the annually budgeted amount would decrease by 40%.
- What if the House of Bishops, which meets six times in a triennium as opposed to only once by the House of Deputies, met less frequently?

- What if we returned the General Convention to the essence of its function? The event we know as General Convention contains a great deal that is extraneous to accomplishing the business of the General Convention. Might we both reduce expenses and improve the quality of our work by simplifying the event and concentrating on the Convention's function as a deliberative legislative body? General Convention, after all, has not always been the extravaganza it is today. Our polity would not suffer and might be improved.
- What if General Convention met unicamerally so that we could all hear the same debate but voted separately to preserve the balance of powers, much in the manner of the General Synod of the Church of England?
- What if we reduced the number of days necessary for General Convention to meet? Are 8-10 days really necessary? Could the time of the meeting be reduced by changing the rules of how business is submitted? Might this actually allow a broader spectrum of Episcopalians to serve as deputies and not only those with means or enough vacation days? Might a reform like this serve our missional goals of increasing diversity in our membership by increasing diversity in our leadership?
- What if we reduced the size of both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies? Perhaps deputations could be reduced to two lay and two clergy. Perhaps the House of Bishops might be reduced to bishops elected to their current position (which would rule me out) or to a representational group of bishops elected by the whole in some way? Might such a reform make it feasible for our minority dioceses, most

particularly the Province IX dioceses, Haiti, Navajoland, and Micronesia to send full deputations, thus correcting the under-representation of some of the voices we most need to hear?

- What if we removed General Convention from the church-wide budget altogether and paid for it instead by fees collected directly from the attending dioceses? This would certainly bring a consistent pressure to keep costs down, and it might be fairer. The indirect approach has at least two inherent inequities. One is the obvious one, which we might well choose to embrace, of allocating more of the costs to dioceses with greater income. The other, which I doubt we want to embrace, is that any fairness achieved by asking the wealthier to bear more of the expense is compromised by the fact that not all dioceses, often the wealthier ones, pay their full asking. The biggest danger of a direct allocation system is that some of our smaller dioceses, but also our most promising ones missionally, might be unable to bear the full amount of a direct allocation, thus crippling mission, which is the opposite of what we intend. That danger could easily be overcome, however, by increasing the amount of the grants made to those dioceses through the church-wide budget. There is another unfairness in the General Convention that a direct allocation of cost system might help address. If all dioceses show up as equals, should they not all pay equally for the privilege? Otherwise, some dioceses are making decisions about how other dioceses should spend their money, and those other dioceses are paying for them to be able to do so. Something seems wrong about that. The Diocese of New York

and the Diocese of Northern Michigan, for example, have equal representation. Is there any reason it should cost one more to cast its votes than the other because some of the costs are allocated unevenly and indirectly through the church-wide budget's funding system? Might this also give us an incentive to look differently at the concept of a diocese?³⁴ For that matter, what if General Convention registration fees were the vehicle for collecting an equitable contribution from each diocese for the church-wide budget as a whole, perhaps payable in installments over the period between Conventions? In other words, paying one's fair share of the whole could be thought of as the price of admission, so to speak, to helping make the decisions.

- What if we looked more toward governance at the local levels? We hear a lot these days about subsidiarity,³⁵ at least when it comes to services the DFMS should or should not provide to the dioceses. Subsidiarity, though, is actually a term of political science and, by its definition, refers to the proper level of government decision-

³⁴ The concept of diocese deserves a great deal more thought along with the fact that we have 109 of them. There are limits to what one paper can address, but diocesan viability deserves to be examined further. However, I will admit that I have wondered if the answer is less in combining small dioceses and more in separating the concept of diocese from the ministry of bishop so that diocese as administrative unit need not correspond with the community served by a single bishop. Perhaps the bishop as missional leader could be freed from administrative duties in order to concentrate more on relationally based mission development and the diocese could be conceived as a unit to allow multiple episcopal ministries to capitalize on the economies of scale obtainable by a larger unit.

³⁵ Draft Report of the Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church to the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (unpublished).

making, not the provision of services. It is in exactly that sense, for example, that the *Windsor Report and the Virginia Report* used the term (“the principle that matters should be decided as close to the local level as possible”).³⁶ If we really wanted to apply the principle of subsidiarity, we would apply it first and foremost in the area to which it belongs, governance. General Convention, after all, is the least local of all the expressions of the life of the Episcopal Church.

- What if we had a gathering between meetings of General Convention, especially if we reduced its frequency, that drew on some of the best aspects of General Convention and strengthened our life as a body in non-legislative ways? What if there were a more missional gathering between Conventions, something in the nature of a ministry fair or a mission project? What if we gathered between Conventions to serve the poor, proclaim our faith in word and action, and pray instead of to legislate? What if The Episcopal Church descended on Indianapolis this summer to build houses for the poor? Might we not come to build relationships that brought us together in new ways and maybe even in better ways?

Reforming our Church for mission, though, must involve more than reform of governance structures. It must also involve reform of the Domestic and Foreign

³⁶ The Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report 2004* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2004) para. 38. See also the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, *The Virginia Report: the Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Morehouse Publishing 1999).

Missionary Society itself. The reform we need will not be fully accomplished without attention to structural reform in every sense. Everything must be on the table.

The organization of the staff is a picture similar in confusion to the list of over 75 committees, commissions, agencies, and boards. At least in theory there are over 45 departments and offices. To add to the confusion, there are multiple reporting structures. Most staff members report to the Presiding Bishop, and most of those do so through the Chief Operating Officer. A few report directly to the Presiding Bishop. Then there is the General Convention Office. It is overseen by the Executive Officer of the General Convention, and its staff report to the Executive Officer. To make matters a little more complex, there are some employees with dual accountability, both to the Presiding Bishop through the Chief Operating Officer and to the Executive Officer. The lack of clarity does not end there, though. There are three "Boards" that are involved in overseeing the work of some staff. There are the Board of the Archives, the Board for Transition Ministries of the General Convention, and the General Board of Examining Chaplains. All are established by canon.³⁷ None, though, has any authority beyond the Executive Council, and none is vested with any fiduciary responsibility. All are dependent upon the budget adopted by the General Convention, as revised.³⁸ All of the fiduciary responsibility is vested in the Executive Council, which

³⁷ Canons I.5.3 (Board of the Archives), III.16.2 (Board of Transition Ministry of the General Convention), and Canon III.15 (General Board of Examining Chaplains).

³⁸ Revision of the budget over the course of the triennium is an interesting example of confusion. This authority is in fact exercised by the Executive Council, presumably in its role as the Board of Directors of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. The Joint Rules of Order, however, appear to vest this authority in the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget & Finance (Joint Rule 10[c]).

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by canon³⁹ is also the Board of Directors of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, sometimes behaving as to staff more as a political body and sometimes more as a board with varying degrees of attempts to manage staff regardless of the organizational reporting structure. Reform must include some clarification.

Other reforms beyond clarification are needed. Here are some things I have wondered as to staff:

- What if some staff be appointments of the Presiding Bishop serve only concurrently with the term thereof?
- What if we rethought our office needs? There is always a lot of talk about whether we should have offices in New York. It is a complex question, partly because of the depressed real estate market. Like all complex questions, complexity makes it difficult but not impossible to answer. Frankly, in this day and age, what is the relevance of a physical office to us at all?
- What if we reshaped the staff to make them more responsive to the needs of dioceses and congregations?

Might it be possible to integrate thinking about how to fund the church-wide budget with the functions of staff? For example, are there some functions which represent shared ministries that all of the dioceses should share jointly in some fair way (governance and grants, for example), such as by the 1% assessment plan? Are there some that should operate on a partnership model in which individuals with a certain expertise difficult to access by a smaller organization could be made available to the diocesan level with the staff costs borne church-wide and the program costs borne locally in order to

³⁹ Canon I.3 (Article II).

accomplish some agreed upon goal, like congregational development, increasing diversity, or particular areas of evangelism? Might there be some that function to provide shared services totally paid for by those using them, an Episcopal cooperative for mission support? One idea might be a pooled approach to diocesan administration. For example, I could imagine an accounting service organized by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society which allowed dioceses to access the accounting services they needed, sort of like renting a car for a day's use rather than buying a whole car one doesn't actually need all the time. The same approach might be applicable to purchasing, communications and public relations services, energy supplies, information technology, and human resources.

We have before us an extraordinary opportunity that is both important and urgent. We can understandably expect the vested interests, of which there are always many, to resist the reforms that are needed. What I believe, though, is that fundamentally, and particularly at the grassroots level, the people of The Episcopal Church are not all that concerned with the vested interests, particularly when they stand in the way of mission. They are much more interested in faithfulness to this commandment: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."⁴⁰ And they are much more inspired by this description of how Jesus saw the mission:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and

⁴⁰ Mt. 28:19-20a.

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recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.⁴¹

It just keeps coming back to Jesus. That, I believe, is where the hearts of Episcopalians are. And I believe Episcopalians want to engage that mission, want to participate in making decisions about how to engage mission, and want to give of themselves and of their resources to engage in that mission. Now is the time to reform our structures to help them, encourage them, and support them in mission.

⁴¹ Lk. 4:18-19.