

Role Clarification Task Force Report to Convention

In response to actions taken at the 2007 Diocesan Convention, Bishop Beckwith appointed a Role Clarification Task Force (RCTF) to address the adopted resolution calling for the study and preparation of a proposed canon or canons concerning the Trustees. The task force was composed of representatives from various diocesan entities with shared leadership responsibility for the Diocese. Members included the Bishop, the Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton and Patrice Henderson from the Standing Committee, former Standing Committee member the Rev. Beverly Huck, Carol Taylor and the Rev. Paul Olsson from Diocesan Council, John Garde and Carlotta Budd from the Trustees, Howard Mackey from the Diocesan Investment Trust, and our Chancellor, Diane Sammons. We were ably lead by an outside facilitator, Del Glover, who helped us shape the character and content of our time spent together. We all owe him a debt of thanks for his faithful insight and wisdom that guided us forward.

Meeting monthly throughout the summer months, the RCTF reviewed the structure and governance work of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, the Bishop's Office, Diocesan Investment Trust and the Trustees. Each group's representatives offered interpretations of not only their own group's functions, but how they would like to see the other groups collaborate with the Bishop's Office. We discussed the by-laws, national and local canons, and state statutes that empower these groups and also analyzed where these documents are silent on a particular subjects, raising questions about our working practices.

During these meetings, historical information on the life of the Diocese was shared and occasions where conflicts between the groups became apparent, caused either by varying interpretations of governing rules or personal opinions on a particular subject, have been aired. Nevertheless, these conversations were helpful to all as they gave opportunity to voice opinions and clear the air. The RCTF meetings can be credited with educating members of the team on diocesan history and protocols, and bringing about greater dialogue with the DIT which traditionally had no regular working relationship with the other groups.

All of us are pleased by the atmosphere of honesty and frank truth-telling that has characterized our time together. Perhaps the most important learning taken from our meetings has been a new appreciation for each body. An emerging sense is growing among us that we all need to work together around a common, well-articulated diocesan strategy and develop new lines of communication and collaboration between the various diocesan leadership groups. We've come to realize that all of us doing our respective work are centered on the same goal – the development of our ministry and mission in the Diocese of Newark.

Beyond these very real and positive steps forward, the RCTF has fulfilled its charge to draft and present a proposed canon addressing the authority and tenure of the Trustees. As called for in last year's convention resolution, an open hearing on the proposed canon was held on November 6, 2007 at the Church of the Saviour, Denville. Opinions

expressed at the hearing were incorporated into the final canon proposed to the Committee on Constitutions and Canons for action at this Convention. The full text of the new canon can be found in the accompanying report of the Committee on Constitutions and Canons.

More work to advance the shared leadership of all these diocesan groups needs to be done. The RCTCF plans to continue its work in 2008 with the following areas yet to be explored:

- Establishing new standards and guidelines for the shared work of the Standing Committee, DIT, Trustees and Diocesan Council.
- Exploring the possibility of term limits or expansion of the number of Trustees.
- Further efforts at education for the whole diocese on diocesan governance structures and the respective roles and responsibilities of all leadership groups.

More information on the findings of the RCTF, the proposed canonical changes, and our future work will be available at the workshop held during convention.

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