Resolution 4 Report

Abstract

The Resolution 4 Working Group was established after the 232nd Annual Convention in 2016, "to study the current and future financial resources needed to assist Episcopalians in Connecticut to become even more faithful disciples and apostles in God’s mission," and charged to report back to the 233rd Annual Convention in 2017.

In response to the resolution the Bishops and Mission Council established the "Resolution 4 Working Group." The Working Group was expanded to include members of the Standing Committee, Officers of the Diocese, staff of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, and individuals with professional expertise/interest in fundraising. Full membership includes:

- Mission Council: Duo Dickinson; The Rev. Lisa Hahneman
- Standing Committee: The Rev. Rowena Kemp; The Rev. Peter Thompson
- Officers: Lynn Brooks; The Rev. Sandra Cosman; Sandra Lynch;
- The Rev. Adam B. Yates
- Staff: Louis Fuertes; Karin Hamilton; The Rev. Tim Hodapp;
- Fundraising Professionals: The Rev. Suzanne Culhane; Maryann Doyle

The Working Group met monthly over the past year. It specifically met with and listened to leadership of Regions at the Region convocations, reviewed diocesan-wide financial projections, and interviewed fundraising consultants.

Based upon our research, discernment, and work together, the group submits a resolution to the 233rd Annual Convention to:

Continue to work with the six Regions and Region Missionaries as they undertake Region Needs Assessments which will include, but not be limited to: 1) identify programs and activities to further participate in God’s mission across parishes and Regions, and 2) determine the financial resources necessary to achieve identified goals. In addition, the Working Group requests authorization
to engage a consultant to assist with the Region Needs Assessments, with a mandate to report back to the 234th Annual Convention.

Methodology

Region Listening Sessions

Between March and October of 2017, the Working Group met with five of the six Regions at their previously scheduled Region convocations, with a sixth to occur after this report is filed and before Convention. Members of the Working Group also met with the Bridgeport Ministry Network. At these convocations, the sessions lasted approximately half-an-hour and included 300+ individuals representing 50+ parishes in total. Members of the Working Group asked the convocations to imagine what their Regions would look like in ten years and what it would take for them to become the vision they shared. The results of these sessions were collected, presented, and discussed with the rest of the Working Group members at our monthly meetings.

Financial Projections

The Working Group reviewed the current and projected financial position of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, using the reports and analysis produced for the Finance Committee of the Mission Council. Projected revenue and program expenses of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut through 2021 were considered.

Consultants:

Over the summer of 2017, we met with representatives from three fundraising firms: the Episcopal Church Foundation, Changing Our World, Inc., and CCS Fundraising. In these meetings, we sought to learn more about the types of consulting services they offered, including: Needs Assessments, Feasibility Studies, and Capital Campaigns. In addition, we solicited their thoughts and experiences working with organizations that had similar levels of complexity, needs, and desired outcomes as the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.
Findings

Region Listening Sessions

The conversations at the Region convocations produced rich and exciting results, demonstrating that a vitality and imaginative spirit is alive and well in our Regions. We asked two questions:

1) It is 2027, what does your Region look like?

2) What will you need to accomplish your vision?

Though each Region and session was unique, and to summarize the conversations here would be beyond the scope of this report, some common themes emerged including:

- Recognizing the role of the Episcopal Church as an entry point into a relationship with God in Jesus in an increasingly un-churched world.
- Increasing collaboration as parishes in Regions share people, resources, and energy.
- Increasing need to reach out across denominational lines, working with ecumenical partners to join in the work of God in our world.
- Becoming a church focused on the richness of our communities and not on the scarcity of our resources.
- Embracing and celebrating the growing ethnic diversity in our communities.
- Building a strong communication network to support parish collaboration in coordinated efforts across faith-in-action ministries.

In order to realize this vision of the church, Regions identified needs for a variety of resources, including permission to try on new things, additional training (community organization, adaptive worship styles, ecumenical collaboration, etc..) communications and networking infrastructure, and financial resources.

The Working Group notes that several of these convocations occurred before the hiring of Region Missionaries. It is evident that the newly engaged Region Missionaries are
providing leadership that strengthens and broadens the Regions’ work with parishes and individuals.

Financial Projections

Based on current best projections over the next five years of parish support for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, combined with projections for investment income from the Missionary Society endowment, we anticipate that revenues to support the Budget of Convention will level off slightly above current levels. While this provides for a stable budget, it also means that program spending, especially for new Region initiatives will become constrained, as other fixed costs within the Budget of Convention increase with inflation. Barring unexpected changes in circumstances or financial conditions, any new program initiatives in our Regions will require new funding sources.

Consultants

We spent time discussing with consultants how they would assist us with our mandate. Inasmuch as the Episcopal Church in Connecticut has not conducted a major fundraising campaign since 1992, we learned about the contributions that a professional consultancy can make to both our ongoing Region research and any possible future fundraising initiative.

Consultants recommend that as Regions continue to live into their vision, there will be a need to inventory the resources required and the resources available to support their goals.

The Working Group believes in the importance of raising funds for God’s mission. This belief is bolstered by the group’s reading of Henri Nouwen’s book, A Spirituality of Fundraising. We agree with Nouwen, that holy fundraising can be understood as “proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and [God’s] mission.” (p. viii)
Conclusion

Recommendation/Next Steps

Much has been accomplished, and much work remains. Based on our conversations and findings, we recommend that the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) be forward-thinking about raising funds for God’s mission, especially to enable new initiatives across our parishes and within the six Regions. We believe that ECCT should be prepared to assist Regions in providing the resources necessary to support the bold visions they have already shared and will continue to explore in the years to come. We also believe that there is more work to be done with Regions and Region Missionaries to identify specific initiatives, and the resources required to implement them.

Thus, we submit the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the 233rd Annual Convention of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut continues to give thanks for the new and exciting ways that Episcopalians in Connecticut are collaborating to participate in God’s mission through Regions, Region Missionaries, Ministry Networks, and the Mission Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Resolution 4 Working Group continues to work with Regions and Region Missionaries by undertaking Region Needs Assessments that include, but are not limited to: 1) identifying programs and activities to further participate in God’s mission across parishes and Regions; and 2) determining the financial resources necessary to achieve identified goals; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Resolution 4 Working Group engage a consulting firm, as appropriate, to assist with Region Needs Assessments; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Resolution 4 Working Group report back to the 234th Annual Convention as to its findings, including: the results of the Region Needs Assessments, and any other recommendations to assist the Episcopal Church in Connecticut in our next steps in God’s mission.