

Report on my Ministry with our Executive Council

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Province III Executive Council Representative (ordained)

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This report is about my continuing ministry as a member of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church. My term will end in 2018. The Province III Synod will elect a new ordained representative in the spring of 2018; his/her term will begin when the 2018 General Convention adjourns. I have divided this report into five sections: overall structure of our Church, functions of the Executive Council, our staff, the challenges ahead, and an Appendix with some important information.

1) Overall Structure of the Episcopal Church (TEC)

What is the legal name of our church? The answer is in the Appendix; hereafter I shall refer to our church by the abbreviated acronym, DFMS.

We are appropriately urged *not to use* such terms as “national church” or “815” (the address of the Church Center in New York City is 815 Second Avenue). Why? Because the DFMS includes not only 99 dioceses in the 50 states but also twelve dioceses in fifteen foreign countries. Can you name five of them – either the countries or the dioceses? I’ll buy dinner for anyone who can name all fifteen countries without referring to either the internet or a Red Book. (For the complete list, see the Appendix).

We are all familiar with the structure of our local congregations: an ordained person (Rector, Vicar, Priest-in-Charge, Interim Minister, Dean, etc.) who works with an elected group of lay persons (Vestry, Bishop’s Committee for Missions, or Chapter for a Cathedral). The Minister is usually in charge of paid staff and the worship; the Vestry manages the money and the buildings. All are accountable to the Annual Meeting of the congregation.

We have the same model at the Diocesan level: a Bishop works with an elected body, often called the Diocesan Council, which is comprised of clerics and laity. There is usually a careful balance of ordained and lay persons; geographical diversity is often required. The Bishop supervises the paid staff; the Council controls the money. All are accountable to the Diocesan Convention.

While the structure of the DFMS is usually a black hole for most Episcopalians, it is built around this very same model. We have a Presiding Bishop who works with an elected body comprised of bishops, clerics, and laity known as the Executive Council (EC). Again, there is a very careful balance between the three groups (bishops, clergy and laity) and geographical diversity is required, not only by common sense but also by the Canons adopted by the General

Convention (GC). While the GC is the equivalent of a Diocesan Convention, the GC usually meets only once every three years. (There was a special GC in 1969, two years after the regular GC in 1967, but that is a separate story – to be happily shared when you buy me dinner.)

Thus, within this overall framework, one way of understanding the ministry of the Executive Council is that we are the “Vestry” of the DFMS. We are comprised of two officers (Presiding Bishop, Chair, and President of the House of Deputies (General Convention), Vice Chair), and 38 elected members (bishops, clergy, and lay persons). Twenty of those 38 are elected by the GC; the other 18 are elected by the nine Provinces, two from each Province (one ordained, one lay) who serve for a six year term. I am the elected, ordained representative from Province III, which is comprised of thirteen mid-Atlantic dioceses. Again, I will buy dinner for anyone who can identify all thirteen without consulting the Internet or other external reference.

2. What does the Executive Council Do?

EC performs the same sort of tasks as any parish vestry but on a much larger scale. There are departments, committees, and entities (such as ERD, UTO, etc.) which report to us (some 75 on the last count). The major departments of the DFMS are:

- a) Archives
- b) Development
- c) Finance & Treasurer’s Office
- d) General Convention Office (actually, a more or less independent entity)
- e) Human Resources Management
- f) Mission (largest): domestic, world, ethnic ministries, global partnerships)
- g) Federal Ministries (military, prison, and hospital chaplains)
- h) Public Engagement and Communication (includes Washington, DC, office)
- i) Justice and Advocacy Ministries
- j) Public Affairs (Episcopal News Service)

Let’s take just one piece of this: under the Department of Mission (see (f) above) we have Episcopal Migration Ministry. These folks coordinate the work by DFMS to resettle refugees. In 2015 our church enabled just over 6,000 refugees to come to the United States and start a new life. The average cost is \$6,000 per refugee family or \$36 million per year. That is about one refugee for every parish in the Episcopal Church. So, on behalf of the approximately 1,150 parishes in the 13 dioceses of Province III, some 1,100 refugees were given a new start in life at a cost of \$6.9 million. The Province III dioceses sent DFMS a total of \$3,657,911 in 2015.

This point is worth emphasizing. Each congregation in our Province pays their diocesan apportionment. Our 13 dioceses in turn send their pledge to DFMS. The total received by DFMS from all dioceses in 2015 was about \$27 million. DFMS in turn leverages that money to

cover the costs of resettling just over 6,000 refugees. Thus, this is what a portion of our parish payments to our respective dioceses accomplishes through DFMS.

Needless to say, no diocese or group of dioceses could ever organize, staff, and finance this kind of ministry. The evening newscasts are now reporting almost every night on the refugee crisis unfolding in the Middle East, Europe, and elsewhere. We as the Episcopal Church are doing our part. Unfortunately, we do a terrible, terrible job of communicating to you, the average Episcopalian, the details of this particular ministry and so many other good works in which our church is engaged.

3. Our DFMS Staff

One of the great joys of serving on the Executive Council is the privilege of becoming acquainted with some of the 150 people who are employed by DFMS. The first thing you need to know is that about one third of them do not work at the Church Center in New York. These fifty or so folks are located all over the country or outside of the U.S.. Some work at home; others have an office, often shared with another denomination. The whole staff will gather three or four times a year at the Church Center in New York for in-service training.

A digression: because we have staff located elsewhere, and because over the past ten years the size of the DFMS staff has been significantly reduced, some 60% of the Church Center is rented out to others. For example, the Ad Council now occupies three floors. This rental income reduces the cost of owning and operating the Church Center by some 70%, making it the least expensive headquarters of any major denomination in the United States.

Now, back to the staff: you have no idea of how fortunate we are to have so many persons who are so gifted at what they do. We have young, enthusiastic, and smart millennials who want to put their faith to work. We have older employees who have worked for years in the secular world and simply got tired of the perverse (and often empty) value systems which are so prevalent in the business world. Then, there are the long term employees who have the most important gift of all: institutional memory.

A former key employee of a bank told me that her supervisor asked her to lie about an issue. She resigned and gladly accepted a job with the Episcopal Church which she perceived as committed to doing good things in the world without the need to lie. Yes, her compensation is less than what it had been, but she now feels blessed as never before.

4. The Challenges Ahead

There are four major policy initiatives on which we as the EC continue to work:

a) devolution -- The assessment paid by dioceses to DFMS in recent years has been 19% of Net Disposable Income. During the 2016-18 triennium this will be reduced in stages to 15%. This will mean less money for DFMS, more money for dioceses. The EC will need to adjust its planning and budgetary resources to account for this reduction. The DFMS budget for this triennium is \$125 million, or about \$41.5 million/year.

b) sustainability -- Our dioceses in North and South Dakota receive some \$2.6 million each year to support their mission and ministry with Native American congregations. (I cite this as an example; DFMS supports about 20 of our 111 dioceses). How can we move towards the day when all of our aided dioceses will become self-sustaining? We are working on this goal.

c) litigation -- Thirteen years after the ratification of the election the Rev. Gene Robinson as the Bishop of New Hampshire, we are still engaged in litigation with parishes and dioceses seeking to leave the Episcopal Church *and* take their assets with them. It is estimated that to date this has cost DFMS a total of approximately \$50 million in legal fees.

d) restructuring -- We are in the middle of a complicated and rather chaotic process of restructuring ourselves. The 2012 GC initiated the process but unfortunately funded this work for only three years. (In my opinion, this should have been a nine year project.) However, at least in my view, the Task Force to Reimagine the Episcopal Church (TREC) by and large failed. At our 2015 GC, most of TREC's recommendations were either ignored or defeated. My sense is that much of this work, for which there is still a pressing need, will now fall to a large extent on the Executive Council.

Another major responsibility of the EC is oversee the management of the endowment funds for the DFMS. As of the end of 2015 we had a total of some \$370 million. Our current policy is to draw about 5% of a rolling five year average (average return for the past five years has been 8%), thereby preserving the principal as well as compensating for inflation.

Conclusion

I continue to offer suggestions, to the staff at DFMS as well as to our Province and diocesan leaders, on ways we could improve the communications between our Church Center and the average Episcopalian. But as you, the reader of this piece, know only too well, change in the church (or anywhere else for that matter) never happens easily.

Thank you for the privilege of electing me to serve in this position.

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5. Appendix

The legal name of our church is the *Domestic and Foreign Mission Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (Title I, Canon 3). It was incorporated in New York State in 1821. The Church Center is located at 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Under New York State law the EC is the Board of Directors of this non-profit corporation.

The countries where there are Episcopal Churches:

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| Belgium | |
| Ecuador | |
| Columbia | |
| Dominican Republic | |
| France | |
| Germany | |
| Haiti | |
| Honduras | |
| Italy | |
| Micronesia | |
| Puerto Rico (technically not a country but rather a US territory) | |
| Switzerland | |
| Taiwan | |
| Venezuela | |
| Virgin Islands | |

Most of the Episcopal churches in Europe were built by J.P. Morgan. He wanted to be able to worship in an Episcopal Church when he traveled to Europe. When he went to GC as a Deputy from the Diocese of New York, he used a private railcar.

Our overseas dioceses are:

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| Central Ecuador | |
| Columbia | |
| Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe (Bishop appointed by Presiding Bishop) | |
| Dominican Republic | |
| Haiti | |
| Honduras | |
| Literal Ecuador | |
| Micronesia | |
| Puerto Rico | |
| Taiwan | |
| Venezuela | |
| Virgin Islands | |

We are now in the very initial stages of exploring the possibility of the Episcopal Church in Cuba (46 parishes, 10,000 members) returning to TEC. It was part of our Province IX until 1967.

The thirteen dioceses of Province III are:

Bethlehem, Central Pennsylvania, Delaware, Easton, Maryland, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Southern Virginia, Southwestern Virginia, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.