

Mission priorities adopted by deputies

By Mary Frances Schjonberg

(*Episcopal News Service*) The House of Deputies on July 8 adopted five priorities proposed by the [Program, Budget and Finance](#) (PBF) committee that will guide the mission of the Episcopal Church for the next three years.

"We understand and offer these as priorities for the ministry of the Episcopal Church, not priorities one over another," PBF members said in their explanation of [Resolution D052](#). "All are essential and of equal value, and should be received with a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' spirit as together they engage and empower the communicants, congregations, and dioceses of this Church in common ministries that serve God's mission."

The resolution now goes to the House of Bishops for consideration. In crafting the resolution, PBF members reinterpreted and expanded a set of priorities included in the Executive Council's [draft budget](#). Those proposed priorities were: doing justice and alleviating poverty; claiming our identity; growing congregations; strengthening governance and foundations for mission; and promoting Anglican partnerships.

The committee is scheduled to present its proposed budget on July 15 to a joint session of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies in the deputies' hall. Both houses must approve the budget. A vote is expected July 16, the day before the end of convention.

Each of the five priorities comes with a series of explanatory phrases. They are:

Networking the members of the body of Christ

- Establishing and supporting collaborative efforts within and among dioceses and congregations to promote vibrant ministry in service to God's mission
- Structuring healthy relationships with overseas dioceses of The Episcopal Church and those Anglican provinces historically related to The Episcopal Church, clarifying commitments with firm timelines and establishing necessary accountability
- Promoting partnerships with other dioceses and churches of the Anglican Communion, encouraging multi-diocese mission efforts that reduce redundancy and enhance relationships both domestic and foreign
- Advancing ecumenical relationships and collaborations

Alleviating poverty and injustice

- Inspiring and modeling a genuine commitment to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.
- Addressing, domestically and abroad, the challenges and consequences of a failing global economy
- Advocating for and working to provide education, healthcare, employment, housing, and equal rights for all of God's beloved
- Promoting environmental sustainability and stewardship of creation

Claiming our identity

- Exploring and discovering who we are as the Episcopal Church, within the comprehensive reality of our complex culture and in relationship to others
- Educating about Episcopal Church governance and polity, forming at all ages our Christian, Episcopal, and Anglican identity
- Telling Christ's story and our story, utilizing current technology and a vibrant contemporary communications network

Growing congregations and the next generations of faith

- Establishing lifelong Christian formation throughout the Church, with specific support of youth and young adults
- Making evangelists of all communicants
- Teaching and developing the spiritual discipline of giving
- Providing discernment and formation of lay and ordained ministries
- Supporting congregational vitality and development, with particular attention to immigrant, indigenous, and underserved populations

Strengthening governance and foundations for ministry

- Inspiring and developing sound leadership at all levels of the Church
- Moving from programmatic structures to ministry networks
- Collaborating with seminaries and dioceses to restructure and retool theological education for a changing church
- Reviewing provincial and diocesan configurations and composition
- Assuring standards of accountability and measurement of outcome
- Providing legal and operational support for dioceses in transition or litigation

The committee said in the resolution's explanation that it "has sought, through extensive interviews and an open hearing [held July 7], to gather the Church's understanding of its vocation 'to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ,'" citing the Book of Common Prayer's description of the mission of the church.

At its hour-long budget priorities hearing on July 7, the committee heard from 51 bishops, deputies and registered visitors who spent one minute each suggesting priorities and calling for support for specific programs.

Committee chair Pan Adams-McCaslin had insisted that the hearing was aimed at the budget's big picture and reminded the audience that the committee would hold a spending hearing on July 9.

Reinstatement of a triennial budget line item appropriating 0.7 percent in revenue for specific Millennium Development Goals spending as well as Christian education and formation, Native American ministry, multicultural congregational development, alleviation of domestic poverty, youth ministry, and leadership development figured prominently in the testimony.

The House of Deputies also adopted [resolution D027](#), which defines the "Five Marks of Mission." Those five mission emphases previously had been adopted by the Anglican

Consultative Council (an international Anglican body composed of bishops, clergy and laity). They are:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;

To teach, baptize and nurture new believers;

To respond to human need by loving service;

To seek to transform unjust structures of society; and

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

In other action:

The House of Deputies approved a special order of business to meet as a Committee of the Whole on July 9 and July 10 to give deputies the chance to talk about resolution B033, adopted by General Convention in 2006. That resolution called upon standing committees and bishops with jurisdiction to "exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion," which was generally assumed to pertain mainly to homosexual priests living openly in committed relationships.

Those Committee of the Whole meetings will take place on Thursday, July 9 at 5 p.m. and Friday, July 10 at 10 a.m. in the House chamber. The Committee on World Mission, which is considering resolutions relating to B033, will make its presentation on Thursday.

On Friday deputies may offer their comments on the matter but will not engage in debate.

An unusual House rule was adopted to select deputies who will be permitted to speak to the matter. On Thursday afternoon numbered tokens will be distributed to deputies who want to address the matter. Numbers then will be drawn by random lot, and the 30 deputies with those numbers will be permitted to speak for up to 2 minutes each during Friday's session.

Deputies also gave their consent to the consecration of two new bishops coadjutor: John Tarrant of South Dakota and Lawrence Provenzano of Long Island.