

Presentation by Ms. Becky Beall-Moore
Chair, Commission on Ministry
122 Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of Colorado
Oct. 2, 2009

Thank you, Rt. Reverend, Sir.

Good Afternoon. My name is Becky Beall-Moore and serve as the chair of the Colorado Commission on Ministry. Some of you may not remember exactly, and are wondering, what is the Commission on Ministry, or COM? Episcopal Church Canons, or law, requires each diocese to have a body of priests, deacons and lay persons to advise and assist the Bishop in 1) implementing certain parts of the canons related to ministry; 2) determining present and future needs for the ministry of all baptized persons; and 3) designing and overseeing the process for recruitment, discernment, formation and assessment of readiness for ministry. The Board of Examining Chaplains, or BOEC, fits under the umbrella of COM. Its principal work is to provide guidance and educational supervision to all in the holy orders process to become deacons or priests. The BOEC has separate membership from the Commission with one member of BOEC serving as liaison between the two groups and attending both sets of meeting.

That is our mandate. The fulfillment of the first and third parts (implementing canons and dealing with the process of discernment and training for ministry)—those parts continue to be faithfully met and the COM report on those aspects can be found in the convention materials—you will not see any charts or PowerPoint slides from me this afternoon. Rather, I would like to focus my oral report on the second aspect—determining present and future opportunities for ministry.

There is a common misconception that the “O” in “COM” stands for “ordained”. Actually, it stands for “on”—Commission on Ministry. The ministry of all the baptized—clergy and lay. Prior to this year, COM had to focus mostly on the ordination process for priests and deacons as the canons had changed significantly in 2003. It took several years to design, implement and refine these programs here in Colorado. Only because that important work had been completed could we then, this year, move from the nitty-gritty or “magnifying glass” work to the bigger picture or “binocular” work. In order to begin to more fully address the ministry of the laity, we refined and recently rolled out a Licensed Lay Ministries program. In fact, if your attention has already begun to wander and you are looking ahead in the convention schedule for potentially interesting seminars, you should know that COM is holding a seminar tomorrow, Saturday, at 9AM on Licensed Lay Ministries. It will be helpful for both laypersons and clergy—especially rectors. I hope to see many of you there.

The most significant way we moved from using magnifying glasses to binoculars was to shift from internal evaluation of ministry to an external and broadened study of the church nationwide, by pursuing continuing education as a group. Continuing education is a paramount value in our church for everyone and we, the Commission on Ministry, model this lifelong practice. We have widened our perspective on the current status of the church in North America, seminaries and theological education, and new expressions of worship through guest speakers; reading books, articles, and national church reports; and holding vigorous discussions on the material presented.

What have we learned? We must first consider—for what type of ministry are we forming, educating and training people? Humans have always lived with change and struggled at times to adapt, go with the flow, so to speak. Are we in a different time? Does the 1950's model for ministry that we continue to experience in most places still work today in 2009? The COM programs for ordaining clergy and, I dare say, even the new Licensed Lay Ministries program really are outgrowths of the same 1950's model. Are they adequate for the future needs of the Kingdom? Are they adequate for the present? You will hear from many sources, like the Canon Missioner, Colorado Mission Strategy Committee, Episcopal Church national committees, and authors like Darrel Guder, Eddie Gibbs, and Craig Van Gelder that the mission field is not just some faraway place in Africa, SE Asia, a Native American reservation, or even a natural disaster in the Gulf Coast. The new mission field is North America where membership numbers of all mainline churches have been and continue to decline. There are many reasons why this is so—related to psychology, post-modernism, technology, media, generational differences and others—more than I can address now. The fundamental question is: What does it mean to be a leader in today's Kingdom?

Our children's educators face a related question—for what future are we educating our students today? Some of you may have seen the video "Did You Know?" It went viral over the internet—it had a life of its own, circled the globe and was translated into a variety of other languages. Let me tell you briefly about it. A high school principal asked one of his teachers, of technology actually, to help him prepare a presentation for a 150-member faculty meeting in August 2006. They were to discuss how to better prepare their students for life after graduation—to be successful in the 21st century. This teacher, Karl Fisch, created an eye-catching, thought-provoking video for his boss and started a worldwide conversation. Those who view it are in good company—it was even shown at a congressional sub-committee meeting in Washington, DC. I know that many high schools are exploring and experimenting with ways to help our youth meet the future. I am more familiar with this story because my daughter attends Arapahoe High School in Centennial—where Karl Fisch works and where this video originated. I am pleased to invite you to watch the latest version of "Did You Know?"

<< VIDEO: "Did You Know?" (approximately 5 minutes) >>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpEnFwiqdx8&feature=fvw>

What does this mean?

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First, I think teachers and school administrators have their work cut out for them.

Here are some thoughts on how it applies to the Episcopal Church:

If schools are adapting and evolving how they teach students, and kids are accustomed to multiple modes of learning, what does this mean for our Sunday Schools? Are they still based on outmoded teaching styles? Does it seem “boring” compared to regular school? Jumping ahead, what are the implications for seminary-based education?

With exponential change, we do not just multitask, we hypertask. Always “wearing” our phones, constantly checking voicemail, texts, and e-mail. I bet there are a fair number of you, today, during this presentation, that have checked your phones or emails.

If the essence of prayer is to be still and listen for God, how do we minister in a culture that does not value a pause in life? Multiple demands, constant on the go, microwave cooking still not fast enough, downtime equals wasted time, make the most of everything, I can sleep when I am dead-type of attitude. We assembled here may think there is a better way to live, and there may be. However, we need to meet people where they are, in their context in the moment. We do not force people in distant lands to worship in an American, suburban form, for example—we take their culture and have God speak through that vehicle. The Bible is living Word, adapting to the context of the people reading it. Ministry and worship are no different. We can debate the exact situation of our culture and the reasons for it another time. It is less important than figuring out how to pastor, evangelize and serve people in such a hurried culture. How do they, these hurried, harried people, meet God, when one often needs a quiet, calm space?

We have entered a conversation in a new way for a new day. What does this all mean for us here, at convention? In our parishes this Sunday when we worship back home? In our communities in the coming weeks and months?

At its core, COM is forming lay and ordained leaders for the church in an exponentially changing culture for a future unknown. We encourage, invite, motivate, and challenge those here and throughout the church to do the difficult work of looking beyond our four walls and to engage people “in the culture”. Discover yet unknown ways to minister

within our own communities. Faraway mission work is still vitally important, but remember that the mission field lies here at home, too. It crosses geographic, socioeconomic, educational and generational boundaries. We, in COM, do not know the answers to these questions—ministry varies from culture to culture and context to context. What works in a suburb of Denver might not work on the Western Slope or on the prairie. Like the best of brainstorming sessions, we can borrow ideas from each other and trigger new ideas. We need varied voices in this conversation.

Your Commission on Ministry endeavors to continue learning and exploring paths in our ever-changing culture and to discover new ways of ministry. Then we can best know how to form the next generation of leaders for the church. Won't you join us on the journey?

Thank you.

Commission on Ministry
Oral Report to Colorado Diocesan Convention
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