**House of Bishops**

**September 2013**

**“Asking” Conversation Table Notes**

**A.**

1. Always paid-in-full as modeling what we ask of parishes.
2. 19% way too high in today’s world when we talk of a streamlined “Missionary Society.” No longer reasonable. Continue to scale down – maybe 12%.
3. Dependent on block grants in our diocese. Often feel like a second class citizen; yet support a 10 or 12% assessment.
4. Supportive by paying 100% of asking, but whole asking process needs to be re-imagined.
5. Larger dioceses need to be of assistance to smaller ones. Find out – if not paying 100%, as a statement or because cannot afford to do so.
6. Need to be able to be confident in how our asking gifts are being used.

**B**.

What do we need to participate fully in this asking?

* It would be nice to see some DFMS services on the local level.
* Church plants (realize this is happening)
* Sabbatical/training opportunities that church provides
* Consider ELCA model
* EEM person in dioceses
* College chaplaincies
* Decision to pay 10% not ideological, in fact, cut made w/ some sorrow, clearly financial.
* No interest in paying for those things that don’t have impact.
* We operate out of program desk model.
* It’s a franchise business – leave more in local site where can be used to grow.
* People only give $ to that which they have a passion for = local interests.
* Viability of dioceses

**C.**

* Engage entire Church in conversation about spending
* Not all going to be happy about everything all the time
* Budget should be worked on and considered at a diocese level rather than only at General Convention
* Need to make budget decisions based on what God is calling us to do rather than a projected income
* Need a missional template that can be applied to 3 major conversations that should be really one:
* Location of ECC
* Assessments
* Restructure
* How much does ECC really help us? How much is a Center really necessary? Are we putting the horse before the cart?
  + Managing resources for mission (emp. for Prov IX)
  + ECC important but decentralization has disturbed (?destroyed?) that connection

**D**.

What will encourage us to participate fully in this part of common life?

* It’s part of our unity - it’s not a question for me.
* It’s a question when you start to ask about the Church or the diocese doing with the money. It can change when people see something less ponderous.
* Everybody up the line needs to say what this is about? The clearer we can be about this, the better off. Have to consider to what end. Needs to be a continuous review of what’s being done.
* There have been times when DFMS has not been clear about how or why $ being spent.
* Transparency
* Have to help people understand what is being done with the $.
* Percentage, 19%, needs to be less arbitrary.
* Judicatories have not changed to the degree they expect the congregations to.
* Lack of uniformity in parish giving to dioceses affects question of diocesan asking.
* Charity
* Need to ask the right question. Why do we assume an equality that doesn’t exist?
* It’s our bureaucratic system – not fundamentally following Jesus – when are we going to be so transformative that we open our wallets
* These questions don’t get at the deeper roots
* We’re going to make our asking because it’s embarrassing not to!

**E.**

Full participation in the portion of common life?

* HOB GC 2012: 16% by 2018
* When the asking is more reasonable, too high
* When whole Church share the conversation about the rate
* Of our 5, 3 dioceses have canonical assessment, 2 have pledges

**F.**

Asking Conversation

* Paying full asking models the stewardship we ask of our congregations
* DFMS “Not Church’s” work. Needs to be well-defined
* It would help if HOB would engage the important work of ecclesiology and establishing clarity about the lines of polity and authority.
* Perhaps the work of determining “what” is assessed would be helpful.
* Every diocese has a story of its own struggle with determining and “collecting” askings from congregations. Maybe the task will always be met with resistance.
* The asking from PB&F is higher than what the diocese asks of its congregations.
* The “topic” is a distraction from mission.
* Not an “issue” in 4 of 5 dioceses at table.

**G.**

What will encourage us to participate fully in the asking?

1. Rethink formula
2. Developing and maintaining trust
3. Clear sense of actual ministries i.e., campus
4. Understanding of criteria used to develop budget
5. Fund programs and people who work with reconciliation
6. Extended communications as to where money being spent
7. Want to be part of larger Episcopal Church

Other things

1. Sense that Episcopal “central” is trying to create things to help us
2. Paying full asking makes us feel part of the whole

On a personal note

It would be good for us to address comments made by John Tarrant

**E**.

1. We need a compelling vision of what TEC wants to do in our life together
2. Re-imagining actually points to something
3. National (sic.) organization only needs to do a few things
4. I don’t like the word “consequences” and I see lots of grants going to those who don’t support TEC.
5. To lower assessment everyone has to pay it.
6. Need to be honest with one another
7. Want “missional thinking” in budget preparation.
8. Tied w/ other issues: restructuring of TEC and election of new PB must be dealt with together.
9. Reduce to tithe and greater accountability of how budget is spent.
10. Need compelling answers: What return do we get from investment; What is effective return in Christian mission?
11. Use of resources: It’s not working – not effective or godly stewardship of our gifts
12. Can’t figure what to budget until we have compelling vision
13. Tithing (10%) asking may make a whole lot of sense. Shape budget with that limit.

**F**.

Want to see exciting, productive things done

1. Request should be in real relationship to demands of diocese + wider Church
2. 19% would hurt small congregations (now give 11%)
3. What can larger Church do that a diocese can’t that will benefit a diocese
4. Need to do fair share
5. What do people object to? What would reduce the assessment? What would go?
6. Look at benefits received by Diocese
7. The Epis. Church budget 3 years + stops – need 6 year budget
8. 5 marks of Mission – help continuity (international support of mission)
9. Layer upon layer of costs – frustrating – complexity – loses focus
10. Voluntary asking
11. $ is in congregations – not giving to diocese – diocese then cuts wider Church

**G**.

Comments

* Never framed budget in covenantal terms. We live in covenant with one another but still form budget in corporate language.
* Trust - - people trust their priest and bishop but not the national structure
* Disconnect between people in the pews and the national church structure
* Need covenantal language - - which is more biblical

Answers to question

* If people in pew felt like what the general church offered what was needed, not offer things we already do just fine locally, they would be more responsive
* What general church offers has a lot to do with regulation
* Develop more trust
* St. Paul was fearless in asking for support of the Church in Jerusalem (missional work) People will support that but hesitate to support structure.
* Flyer for people in pew to see what mission work is being supported

**H**.

* 10% is an abstract number – need to be more thoughtful about what we ask.
* A tension: local ministry vs. church with ministry
* It is a spiritual/relationship issue: that is, how do we care for each other.
* Asking needs to be seen as a “worthy cause.”
* Would a “covenant” process work? Can we assume that people act out of goodwill?

**I.**

* Why do some not give, besides those who are struggling?
* How do we bring the whole work of the church into connection?
* Aim to give the full amount – a small diocese
* Some resisted
* Some found they could withhold for control
* In some places they had a moral obligation to withhold
* Nineteen percent is getting tougher
* As a priest, I served in a poor parish. Felt shame & embarrassment – no way to say how it felt.
* Demand full participation of deputies to convention. Hearings can be a conversation with parishes in trouble.
* Fish gutted lying on sidewalk
* Diocese always pays assessment
* I want relationship with stewardship
* Transformative person who can be the face of the church
* Talking about mission – talking about person seeing the person, changed people’s willingness to give and participate.
* It needs to be relational.
* We have created a grant making body that we are disassociated with…
* Wealthy places are writing grants and getting monies, but the poorer places get nothing.
* Price of technology has been the loss of relationships.
* Reinstating stewardship personnel.

**J.**

1. Always have been a part of a “full share” system.
2. If everyone participated the % would go down. Our effort is heroic. “We’re going to be fully in.”
3. Loyalty is the key. Episcopalians yield to the will of the whole church.
4. Penalties are a necessary motivation.
5. Appeals process.
6. Like us to have a conversation about “voluntary”
7. System is broken. It doesn’t work. We need to get underneath the brokenness. Why doesn’t it work?
8. What does the assessment mean? 19% is out of balance.
9. There hasn’t been good stewardship of $
10. Got to see some movement on budget process.
11. Dioceses need process to be equitable.
12. Poverty is not an excuse for not giving.