



Episcopal Ecological Network

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Episcopal Ecological Network and Presiding Bishop meet to discuss common concerns on the environment

On the Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra, members of the Leadership Team of the Episcopal Ecological Network (EpEN) – the Rev Franklin “Skip” Vilas (Diocese of Newark), Hall Hammond (Diocese of West Texas), and Phyllis Strupp (Diocese of Arizona) -- met with Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori to discuss the results of the ministry review and visioning session in Chicago in mid-November. The meeting lasted over an hour and covered the advantages and challenges of a wide range of topics.

The EpEN representatives presented a new vision for the EpEN: *A “Shalom Home” for all God’s Creatures here on Earth*. Bishop Katherine offered that the EpEN should work towards this vision by engaging and collaborating with the new Environment & Economic Justice Office to be established in Seattle during 2008 and with the Episcopal Public Policy Network in Washington, DC. She was amenable to collaboration with both Episcopalian groups and ecumenical organizations.

Discussions on the EpEN mission statement covered aspects of equipping congregations and the Episcopal Church to bring a fuller life to all God’s creatures. The Presiding Bishop felt that the EpEN and the Episcopal Church have a prophetic opportunity to take the initiative now and the EpEN should work to clarify its mission and then use its prophetic voice for creation to call individuals, congregations, and dioceses into a sustainable and caring relationship with all of creation. The Presiding Bishop expressed an awareness and enthusiasm for celebrating a “Creation Season”. She said that while attempts to get the Creation Season placed in the *Book of Occasional Services* in the past may have failed, growing interest in ecological issues make the present time more appropriate for a renewed effort.

In terms of areas of focus for the EpEN, discussions focused initially on collaborating with groups such as *Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation*, the *Committee on Science, Technology and Faith*, the *Episcopal Public Policy Network*, the *Episcopal Network for Economic Justice*, the *Socially Responsible Investing Group*, and various youth projects. Collaboration with groups of similar focus in other denominations would work to the improvement of the common good of

the mission of Christ in our world. She also opined that the focus of the House of Bishops last March on Millennium Development Goal #7 would give the EpEN an opportunity to approach dioceses regarding the EpEN's action plan, especially the 11 dioceses represented in the EpEN Working Group (Maine, Massachusetts, Newark, Tennessee, Minnesota, West Texas, Arizona, Los Angeles, California, and Oregon).

The EpEN can do its best work by having an informal relationship with the structure of the Episcopal Church. As such the EpEN would need to look in the mid-term at setting itself up as a non-profit entity. For the short-term, an affiliation with a diocese, congregation, or other non-profit group within the Episcopal Church would suffice while a formal non-profit status is created. With a position of an informal relationship to the structure of the Episcopal Church, the EpEN is not bound to operate within the limits set by General Convention resolutions. Accountability for the EpEN would be to the individuals and groups that provide the funding to operate. This accountability would need to be fiscally responsible for all monies collected.

The Presiding Bishop offered stressed the need for the EpEN to bring specific resolutions to the 76th General Convention in 2009. She opined that the areas to focus on would be air and water as well as on how to get the message and assistance to the average person in the pews.

The meeting closed with a prayer offered by the Presiding Bishop for the EpEN's ministry and for guidance

In early 2008, the EpEN will begin restructuring how it does its work to align with the direction and suggestions from the Presiding Bishop. If you have thoughts or comments about this meeting and its results, please send them to chair@eenonline.org.