

# Deep cuts, returning ministry to dioceses is focus of Episcopal Church budget presentation

by Pat McCaughan and  
Mary Frances Schjonberg

The 2010-2012 triennial budget got the attention of both the presiding officers of the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention and its House of Bishops on the closing day of the July 8-17 gathering in Anaheim, Calif.

The bishops spent a half-hour in public conversation July 17 discussing living into the budget realities and rejecting “business as usual.” The discussion came the day after the bishops accepted the budget without debate and the House of Deputies approved the budget by pushing back every attempt to adjust line items. Even one effort to restore funding for a half-time staff position to assist the president of the House of Deputies fell a few votes short with deputies.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson both told the convention’s closing media briefing that the budget presents the Episcopal Church with challenges and opportunities.

The budget is based on expected triennial income of \$141,271,984, with \$79,161,193 coming from the dioceses and \$27.6 million from investment income. Expenses are budgeted at \$140,856,531. Those figures compare with the projected bottom line of the current 2007-2009 triennial budget of \$164,863,529 in revenue and \$163,934,334 in expenses.

Some church-wide programs will be eliminated under the budget, encouraging more mission work to take place in dioceses and congregations. At least 30 of the 180 people employed by the Episcopal Church in its New York and regional offices will lose their jobs.

The next General Convention could be two days shorter, and interim church bodies will meet face-to-face less frequently during the triennium. The Episcopal Church’s provincial contribution to the budget of the Anglican Communion Office would decrease by a third.

The budget dedicates 0.7 percent of income to U.N. Millennium Development Goals work and a corresponding percentage for domestic-poverty initiatives.

“There are many challenges within this budget beginning with the reality that many people will lose their jobs,” Jefferts Schori told the briefing. “There are also many opportunities within this budget,

including the fact that mission direction moves closer to the local level in a number of areas.”

Jefferts Schori briefed Episcopal Church staff right before the budget was presented to the convention on July 15. She told them that “even though some programs may disappear from the church-wide budget, I think that the work that various staff officers have done in the past years has equipped dioceses and congregations to carry on that kind of mission work.”

Anderson characterized the budget, which asks for less money from dioceses, as “a glimpse into the heart of the Episcopal Church.”

“We’re going to reduce our [diocesan] asking at the same time we’re giving more,” she said. “That’s a very clear look at the Episcopal Church and the heart of the Episcopal Church.”

Jefferts Schori told reporters that the budget clearly indicates “that the behemoth of our structure is going to have to shrink; we have an enormous and ponderous structure for governance in this church.” She said that the requirement that the church’s committees, commissions, agencies and boards (CCABs) only meet electronically “has great potential to more frequent conversation as well as more economical conversation.”

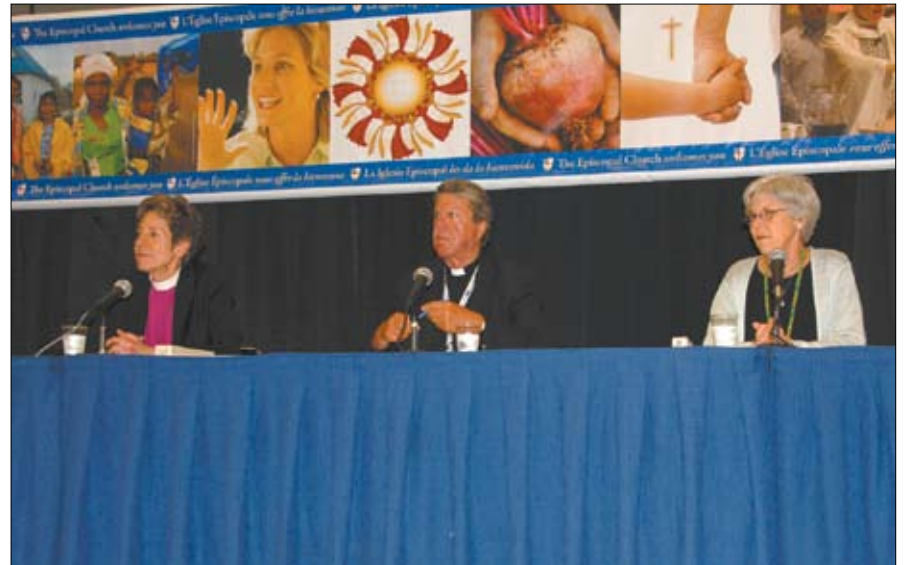
Anderson expressed concern about the implications of the CCAB reduction.

“Committees, commissions, agencies and boards are the only place in the large structure where the voices of the clergy and laity are heard during the triennium, unlike the House of Bishops that meets regularly during the triennium,” she said. “We are going to have to find some creative ways to make sure that those voices are heard.”

Recalling that most of her ordained ministry has taken place in small dioceses, the Presiding Bishop said that small dioceses speak of “the blessings of leanness.”

“People get creative wondering in the wilderness,” Jefferts Schori said. “They get creative when they don’t have great structures behind them. They get creative when they don’t have big fat bank accounts.”

The mood in the House of Bishops was cautiously optimistic as bishops discussed developing new



Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori (left) and President Bonnie Anderson (right).

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**—President Bonnie Anderson  
on the impact of deep cuts to the budget**

approaches to stewardship, meetings and other business. Several bishops noted discrepancies in their diocesan giving records, included in the budget.

The Program, Budget and Finance (PBF) Committee is already re-examining its practices, according to vice chair and Connecticut Bishop Andrew Smith. Future budget processes will reflect advance communications with bishops and more actively engaging fiduciary responsibilities between conventions, he said.

“We’ve realized a couple of realities in the course of this time,” Smith told the bishops. “We need far more work, attention, initiative, prayer and presence in communicating the work of convention within the dioceses and back and forth. We need to do a much better job of connection with dioceses from General Convention. Your leadership is crucial.”

The bishops also expressed concern about cuts to ministries focusing on indigenous peoples, women, as well as reductions in church center staff.

Bishop James Adams of Western Kansas said his motion to end debate July 16 immediately after introduction of the budget was a vote of confidence in the PBF process.

“The last thing any of us want is for the budget to be worked out on floor of convention. I thought we had to honor the process,” he said.

Bishop Dean Wolfe of Kansas noted that, although dioceses have been asked to give at the reduced levels of 21, 20 and 19 percent respectively over the next triennium, he hoped that “a variety of dioceses would look at increasing their giving, even by one or two percent. That would make a significant contribution to the life of this church.”

“This is the beginning of revolution, a desire to do more things at a local level,” Wolfe said. “We hope one of the messages of this convention is that we are not doing things business as usual.”

*[The Rev. Pat McCaughan is Episcopal Life Media correspondent. The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg is national correspondent for the Episcopal News Service.]*