

Short Paper #5

What is the Philosophy Behind the “Collaborative” Structure Proposal?

by Nancy Mahoney Cohen, Chancellor

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This is the fifth in a series of short informational papers which are being sent to all Convention delegates. Please keep alert for these e-mails, and be sure to read them in preparation for the work of casting your vote at Convention. The collection of Short Papers is also available on the DESC Workspace, www.edecr.org/desc/.

Now, let's explore: What is the philosophy behind the “Collaborative” structure proposal?

Two principles guided the development of the Collaborative structure:

1. We wanted to create a simple, efficient, and flexible structure with checks and balances among the governing entities; and
2. We wanted to provide opportunities for a number of members of the Diocese to participate in the governance and programs of the diocese, either on a diocesan or a local level.

Our future bishop will be the leader, chief sacramental officer and pastor of our diocese. But no bishop can or should manage every function and program in a diocese. As a diocese, we have spent two years working together to decide on vision and priorities. Core values enunciated during this time include cultural and theological diversity, collaborative ministry and mutual accountability. Emerging goals include supporting vital congregations, encouraging ministries like youth and adult education, and building a functional and effective diocesan structure.

A new bishop will need to take time to learn about these values and goals while getting to know and understand the people and culture of this diocese. We will need a structure in place that is operating smoothly and clearly when the bishop arrives, a structure that will help implement these core values and goals. In the Collaborative structure proposal, the bishop would have the flexibility to lead the diocese in whatever manner he/she chooses, but still have a framework for exercising that leadership and a structure which would allow him/her to “share in the leadership of the Church throughout the world” (*from “The Ordination of a Bishop, BCP p. 517*).

In the Collaborative structure, the bishop would oversee missions and their vicars with the assistance of a Department of Missions, a group with 10 members, some elected by deaneries and some appointed by the bishop. All missions, as well as struggling parishes, would receive administrative aid from the Department of Missions and from the canon. The Department would review applications for mission and parish status with the bishop and canon and provide recommendations. It would also assist in determining guidelines and procedures for starting new congregations and moving from mission to parish status.

The major bodies of the Diocese would be Convention, local congregations, three deaneries, the Standing Committee, and a Board of Trustees.

The three deaneries would be organized geographically, with the ability to split into subgroups for specific projects or programs. While the sizes of these deaneries vary considerably with the differences in population, voting would continue much as at present at Convention, but delegate numbers would be based on Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) instead of communicants; this results in roughly the same number of delegates. Currently congregations in our diocese report about 12,000 communicants and 5000 ASA. We feel that ASA is more reflective of active members of a congregation, and those are the members who should be represented at Convention.

Deaneries or other local groups could apply to the Board of Trustees for funding for specific local or regional projects. The Collaborative structure would require the local group to initiate and develop programs; such proposals might include collaboration with an existing diocesan committee. There would be no automatic division of funds among deaneries, basically because some of us do not believe that the “if you give them money, they will work” philosophy will yield strong programs or efficient management.

The Standing Committee, once it is relieved of being the Ecclesiastical Authority, would act primarily as a council of advice to the bishop, with special canonical responsibilities such as approving all Episcopal elections in other dioceses, approving candidacies and ordinations in this diocese, and consenting to inhibitions and alienations of property.

A new body, the Board of Trustees, would be created by merging Council with Corporation. The current division of temporal authority between Council and Corporation has been confusing and sometimes inefficient. This combined group would be the legal entity of the diocese, holding title to all real property and investments, and performing all statutory functions required by California law. In addition, a number of subcommittees, made up of a broad spectrum of members of the diocese, would manage certain areas such as finance, property, stewardship, and programs, working with diocesan staff. People with specific interests and expertise would perform the important work of these committees and report to the Board of Trustees as needed. The Board would have 12 members, elected at Convention from a slate provided partially by deaneries and partially by a Convention Nominating Committee, and would have expertise as required by the work of the Board. The size of the Board and the work of the subcommittees should cut down the total meeting hours of diocesan members and allow more in-depth discussion.

The Board would entertain proposals from deaneries and other local groups wanting to manage specific projects and programs with money from line items of the budget passed at Convention. Approved projects would receive ongoing oversight by the Board on an as needed basis. The diocesan staff, major bodies and committees would continue diocesan projects and programs; major diocesan programs such as education, stewardship training, evangelism, youth ministry, and outreach will continue even if not proposed by local bodies.

In the Collaborative structure, members of the various diocesan bodies would be elected at large (with recommendations by a Convention Nominating Committee), nominated by deaneries, and appointed by the bishop, the Board of Trustees and the Standing Committee. This method, as

well as staggered terms and provisions for stepping down at the end of a term, would provide diversity as well as checks and balances on authority.

The overriding objective of the Collaborative structure model is to provide clear guidance for governance, spending procedures, and program management within the diocesan bodies, while also encouraging local initiative to develop new programs. This model provides clear lines of authority and accountability, and makes changes where previous structures made working relationships difficult among diocesan bodies.