

REPORT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION RESOURCES COMMITTEE TO GENERAL SYNOD

April 2013

The Communications and Information Resources Committee (CIRC) met twice in face-to-face meetings and numerous times in telephone conference calls over the last Triennium. One of the main purposes in all these meetings was to receive CIR¹ director, senior manager and staff reports. In receiving these reports, staff was held accountable and, in turn, the committee was able to recognize creativity and service and to render thanks on behalf of the whole church. In addition to receiving the reports, committee members ask questions and sought clarification and detail on particular aspects of the work of the department. It was clear to the Committee that **Vision 2019** provided the important guiding principles for this department over the last three years. Vision 2019 laid out a radical new way of conceiving communications in the church. It called for *“A national communication platform, integrated and accessible at the parish, diocesan, and national levels, [that] would allow the gathering and sharing of information from statistics to ‘best practices’ in a timely and effective way. Such an electronic hub for knowledge exchange might also serve the development of a community online.”*

The **Marks of Mission** work continued with the song “Hope” being released in late January 2013. The Sunday School initiative, **The Compendium of the Church Mice** will be expanded from the original one-year concept to a full three-year cycle. Years 1 and 2 will be available on-line by September, and Year 3 will be worked on the following year. The request for this resource is steadily growing. As part of the same Marks of Mission work, the **Photography Competition** has produced winning photos to be used as small inserts in the 2014 Church Calendar. There will be a display at the Joint Assembly and in many other venues over the coming year.

As mandated by Vision 2019, our committee and the CIR staff began work to create an **Online Community** with the employment of The Rev. Jesse Dymond in order to enhance its capacity to serve the communications and information needs of individual Anglicans, their parishes and dioceses.

¹ Communications and Information Resources (CIR)

The Community has seen continuous growth with over 600 registered members. Currently, over 90% of the visitors are Canadian, and about 62% of the visits are made by returning users. Presently The Community hosts blogs and forums in 12 different topic areas.

The whole **Web Team** has been active on many fronts. Work has begun on improving and expanding regular and on-demand email communications from Church House, such as new email distribution channels beyond news stories and the email newsletter. Advent and Lent podcasts have been designed and provided most recently. Our web presence has become “an electronic hub of knowledge exchange”, as requested by the 2010 General Synod.

The Library: At our very first meeting the Director of the CIR made us aware that budget restrictions required the closure of the Library. To our great satisfaction, an effective transfer of the Library collection was made to the John Graham Library at the Toronto School of Theology. The collection is well cared for and accessible to the whole Church. We are grateful to Karen Evans for careful attention in achieving this move, and we celebrate her ministry as Librarian and information resource person at Church House over many years.

The Silent Night Project grew out of the previous triennium’s successful Amazing Grace Project. The Silent Night Project did well, with over 500 videos being received from across the country and with exceptional viewership on the web. It was a particularly excellent way to introduce the web to new users. The project raised approximately \$60,000.00.

It should be noted that it was a tougher sell than the Amazing Grace Project in 2008. Some people thought that supporting military chaplains was akin to promoting militarism, and there was confusion about what is “the Bishop Ordinary”. The Committee wishes General Synod to understand that these projects were not intended as fundraisers but rather as a means of engaging Anglicans in their local communities and connecting them to other Anglicans across the country.

A very fruitful relationship with the **Department of Communications of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada** and our CIR staff continued. Together they planned for the Joint Assembly of 2013 in Ottawa. Adding to this excellent relationship was the role played by their Director of Communications on our CIRC. As a result, we requested that COGS add a new sub-set (4) to read: “the national communications

director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada shall be an ex-officio member with voice and vote”.

Committee members also affirmed the lively connection between **Communications and Resources for Mission**, as Sam Carriere became Director of both departments. We wish to note the creation of a senior manager position in the CIR, which assisted in making the connection between the two departments even more successful.

The CIRC considered carefully, at the request of COGS, the wind-up of the **Anglican Journal Corporation**, and we became part of a larger conversation that included the Journal Board, CIR staff and Diocesan editors. The terms of reference and membership of a new Anglican Journal Committee were then recommended to COGS who then created an interim committee, which we hope will become a permanent Standing Committee of the General Synod. A resolution to this effect will be presented to General Synod by COGS. At present, the CIRC reconstitutes itself as the Anglican Journal Committee, and one of its members (not the chair of CIRC) then takes the chair. This has proved a very satisfactory arrangement over the past year.

As required by General Synod of all Standing Committees, we completed **a review of our Terms of Reference**. A number of changes were proposed to the last meeting of COGS asking that references to the Library and Ministry Matters be deleted and that references to the Anglican Journal Board be changed to the Anglican Journal Committee.

Recommendation

We encourage the CIRC of the new Triennium to make continuation of the work on the production of a national communications strategy for the Canadian Church a priority, just as we have done for the Communications staff in this last Triennium. The Communications Strategy for the CIR department provides an excellent starting point for that work.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the CIRC in this last Triennium was to form a sub-committee to work on a Communications strategy for the CIR department. In a collaborative enterprise between the staff and this sub-committee, a Communications strategy was presented to COGS in April of 2012.

This strategy, as presented to COGS, made clear the need to be very flexible and to encourage a strategy of increased integration of all communications work on behalf of the Church. The last strategy produced in 2001 envisioned neat divisions between different communications entities: e.g. the Web, Anglican Video, print resources. While these still exist, increasingly staff cross their different entities and integrate work plans and strategy. This new strategy led to a creative collaboration around Vision 2019 and the Marks of Mission.

When planning General Synod Communications, the CIR staff under this strategy must first identify the group(s) with whom they are communicating, shape the message to meet their unique needs, knowledge level, language and expectations. The approach must be integrated including all the services and skill sets of our expert communications staff. *“Picture all the resources of the Anglican Church of Canada, all the staff, all the information and ideas and initiatives being a part of one big structure that easily accessible and available to anyone who is looking for them”.*²

Conclusion

Finally, the Committee extends its thanks and appreciation to the Communications staff that have been exemplary in their hard work, devotion, innovation and creativity in meeting the challenges in communications at a time of reduced budgets. In particular, the Committee acknowledges with gratitude the successful working relationship of Sam Carriere and Beverly Murphy over this last triennium. This whole team has worked hard at integrating the Vision 2019 principles and the Marks of Mission into their work.

This concludes my time on the CIRC and as its chair. It has been a joy and a blessing!

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Canon Milton J. Barry

Chair, CIRC

² Communication Goals in Vision 2019