

THE MISSION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE

Study questions for the
Convocation of American Churches in Europe

Based on –

*Companions in Transformation:
The Episcopal Church's World Mission in a New Century*

Reflection on Mission

In our baptismal covenant the questions we are asked and respond to form the foundation for our call to mission in the world. “Missio” means sending. God is in the business of sending: in creation he sends his Spirit and his Word for our redemption; “God so loved that he gave his only Son”, and Jesus said, “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” (John 3:16, 20, 21)

In response to our baptismal covenant of believing in the triune God, continuing in the apostles’ example of living in communion and community, of turning to God for repentance, of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, and seeking Christ in all others, as well as caring for our fragile earth, peace and justice, we live out God’s call to mission. We, too, are sent out to do the above. No one can do this alone, but with God’s call, comes God’s empowerment. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do God’s pleasure and further His kingdom on earth in every way, in every circumstance, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Mission begins at home, in the office, in the neighborhood, with whomever we come in contact. Mission brings us to the marginalized, the lonely, the fearful. Just as Jesus ministered to these same people, so do we. All baptized people are called to be witnesses for God’s mission in the world.

In the doxology in *Companions for Transformation*, we read: “Where we once suspected that the gospel is marginal to the world’s real challenges, we see that Christian presence and prophecy are vital to healing in the world’s crises. Where we thought that integrity calls us *out of* mission, we hear God is calling us *into* mission and realize that mission engagement is vital to Christian integrity.” (p. 50) In fact, it is a direct response and imperative to our covenant in baptism.

And so we can proclaim, “Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more that we can ask or imagine! Glory to God from generation to generation in the church, and in Christ Jesus forever and forever!” (Ephesians 3:20, 21)

In one church there is a panel hung over the door that is seen as one leaves worship. On it is written: “WELCOME TO THE MISSION FIELDS!” With God all things are possible. Praise be to God!

Introduction

These study questions have been formulated for the parishes and missions of the Convocation of American Churches in Europe to be used in conjunction with *Companions in Transformation: the Episcopal Church's World Mission in a new Century*.¹

Presented by the Standing Commission on World Mission (SCWM) as a vision statement for the world mission of the Episcopal Church, *Companions* also offers an approach to considering the mission of the Convocation. The Convocation is both part of the world mission of the Episcopal Church and is itself living world mission directly in the life of its parishes and of the Convocation as a whole. They are receivers, doers and senders; in short, in the exciting position of embodying world mission in all its dimensions.

It is hoped that by using these study questions for the Convocation as well as the Study Guide in *Companions in Transformation*, the parishes in the Convocation will have:

- Reflected on the call of all the baptised to be missionaries and on mission in daily life
- Reflected on their understanding of world mission - or of mission across boundaries
- Reviewed the mission and/or mission statement of the parish
- Identified mission activities to be celebrated and shared throughout the Convocation
- Brainstormed possibilities for the mission of the Convocation in Europe, and fleshed out some of those ideas
- Considered how their parish as well as the Convocation can become more directly engaged in world mission activities
- Provided feedback to the SCWM.

¹ *Companions in Transformation: The Episcopal Church's World Mission in a New Century*, revised edition, 2004, includes the Study Guide and resolution A150, as well as references to additional reading materials and DVDs or videos. Both the book (cost US\$7.00) and the DVDs are available from: Episcopae parish Services, P.O.Box 1321, Harrisburg, PA 17105, USA. Web site: www.episcopalparishservices.org. Tel: +1-717-541-8130, exts. 117 or 205. Fax: +1-717-541-8128. E-mail: epsorders@morehousegroup.com. The basic text of *Companions* (with none of the enhancements) and the Study Guide are also available on the Episcopal Church website at: www.dfms.org/agr.htm?menupage=17114

General

Companions in Transformation offers a wonderful approach to mission, especially mission as sending and receiving across boundaries: why we engage in mission, how we are missionaries (and we are ALL missionaries), some of the contexts for mission, and ways of carrying out mission.

Each congregation should feel free to use *Companions* and its study questions as well as the additional study questions here as best suits their congregation. Some groups may want to use *Companions* as a text over several weeks with an adult study group. Others may want to simply introduce the core ideas in *Companions* and have only one or two discussions around mission. However it is used, participants will gain a better understanding of the daily mission they are already doing, as well as of mission in the life of the church.

A good starting point for discussion is simply to ask all participants:

Q. Where are you from, and where (and how) have you done mission?

Other general questions to bear in mind during the discussions:

Q. As you read *Companions* try to think about its themes on several levels: for yourself, for your parish, for the Convocation, for the Episcopal Church, for the Anglican Communion and world mission.

Q. As you discuss the chapters and the questions below, consider how you would translate mission into action at each of these levels.

Chapter 1:

Q. What is the primary mission of our parish? How does it carry out this mission? What more might it do to further that mission? How might it expand that mission?

Q. What local outreach ministries does our parish have? What is the theological basis of the ministry? How might our outreach be strengthened/made more meaningful? Bring greater engagement and companionship?

Q. What world-wide outreach ministries do we have? How could we build or change that ministry to be more engaged as companions, rather than mostly giving?

Q. Parishes: Living in Europe, we have crossed one or several boundaries, and our parishes are made up of people from all over. How has that challenged our parish life? How has that enriched our own life as Christians? What could this experience of living and worshipping “across boundaries” bring to others?

- Q. The Convocation lives “world mission” within itself: we do not need to go anywhere to engage in world mission.
- What does the Convocation offer in this strongly secular Europe?
 - How should we seek to carry out ministry in companionship with the other churches in Europe?
 - What is the primary mission within our parish?
 - What particular challenges do we have for local outreach?
 - What could be our unique contribution to world mission?

Chapter 2:

- Q. Which of these themes of mission are we particularly engaged in here in Europe? Which ones might we pay more attention to? How?
- Q. Provide examples of how we are companions, witnesses, pilgrims, servants, prophets, ambassadors, hosts, sacraments on a daily, weekly or occasional basis. Do we think about doing these things in terms of our baptismal calling / or do we simply do them? How might a greater consciousness of these themes of bearing Christian witness enhance our own sense of mission, and that of our parish/Convocation?

Chapter 3:

- Q. The focus for chapter 3 in *Companions* seems to be primarily on the Global South. What are our contexts for mission here in Europe?
- Q. What is the particular challenge of each of these contexts?
- Q. What can the Convocation contribute in each of these contexts?

Chapter 4:

- Q. What modes of mission should the Convocation particularly pursue within Europe? – at parish level? – at Convocation level?
- Q. What modes of mission might be particularly appropriate for the Convocation beyond Europe? What should be the focus of that mission?

Chapter 5:

- Q. What does the Convocation need to better equip itself and its parishes for mission in the years ahead? (within Europe? in world mission?)
- Q. What are some specific ideas that the Convocation might get involved in?
- Q. What is needed in terms of resources – personnel, funds, information and education – to carry forward those ideas?