

Communications and Information Resources Committee (CIRC)

The Communications and Information Resources Committee has both struggled and thrived over the past three years. The struggles have come in three dimensions.

The first was a challenge to the committee (and to the church at large) by one of our members, as to whether we and the church are taking seriously the data suggesting a church in decline. We commended that member to the House of Bishops, who undertook a serious and thoughtful conversation, but it is more true than not that we were unable to find a way to integrate those concerns into the life of the committee, and in fact, there is no clear sense that the concerns were brought forward and explored in a coherent way. Nevertheless, we are part of a church whose energies are sometimes taken up with activities and practices at odds with our being a community in mission.

The second dimension of the struggle is defined by scarcity and lack of clarity about financial resources. Once again, as one of the largest program departments of General Synod, Communications and Information Resources has continually had to contend with a shrinking budget and an almost complete absence of timely and useful financial reporting.

Given the third dimension of the committee's struggle, the continuing financial crisis of the Anglican Book Centre, the fact that there was no predictable flow of financial information seriously inhibited the understanding and work of the committee.

Struggle is not something "wrong," however, and I commend the members of the committee for their faithful attention to difficulties and obstacles in our work. It would be much easier, perhaps, to let things slide by without comment or attention, and it was difficult at times to occupy a space defined by these dimensions of struggle. Struggle is hard, and can be fruitful. Of the three dimensions, two are not resolved, and remain a challenge for our church. The alignment of our activities and practices with the mission of God and our service of that mission is a continuous challenge for the church across all our local, diocesan, regional and national ministries. And the necessity for clear and timely financial information is a matter of corporate stewardship that we cannot ignore.

Happily, at the time of writing, the prospects of renewal of the retail operations of the Anglican Book Centre, including the Toronto store, through our arrangement with Augsburg Fortress Canada seem likely to bring some resolution to the third of those challenges we faced during the triennium. I am grateful, and invite you to share in that gratitude, to the General Secretary, Archdeacon Michael Pollesel, to the Director of Communications and Information Resources, Sam Carriere, to the Director of Financial Management and Development, Peter Blachford, and to the Director of Augsburg Fortress Canada, Andy Seal, for their contributions to this hopeful development.

Cutbacks in the work of Communications and Information Resources have included reductions in staff as well as suspension of work, most obviously the suspension of *MinistryMatters* and the Ministry Mailer in 2007. At the same time, we recognize the need to develop the website (www.anglican.ca) as an effective ministry resource for the Anglican Church of Canada. It is not clear where the necessary resources will be found to strengthen the ministry of www.anglican.ca, but that development remains a priority. It is worth noting that a position for a sorely needed web writer has remained unfilled for more than two years for want of money. The committee has expressed the strong view that the web is a crucial and compelling component of future communications strategies and that so far the resources have not been made available to begin to exploit this instrument to the extent that we need to.

The “imaginative” life of the CIRC emerged most fully in the *Vision and Principles of Communication* forwarded to the Council of General Synod and commended by the Council as a resource for the Anglican Church across Canada. This document provides both a theological grounding for communication and a clear and thoughtful collection of principles and values that matter as much in the local congregation as they do at the General Synod. If we could not only adopt them, but practice them as well, they would be part of our church’s renewal. Please read them and take them seriously in your ministries.

The “administrative” life of the CIRC took its final form in the motion coming before this General Synod, asking for a smaller committee possibly meeting less frequently. Both these measures are part of our share of living within a smaller budget and were in response to a request from the General Secretary that we consider such options.

Finally, a report from our Committee to this General Synod would not be complete without a strong statement of support and gratitude for the work of the staff of the department. They work creatively, take initiative, collaborate effectively, and serve us all well. With the direction of Sam Carriere, they anticipate, as we all do, that there are challenges and struggles ahead of us all, and that we can address those challenges in a spirit of hope and humility. To all the staff, many, many thanks.

I am grateful for what I have learned, and for the relationships that have become so much a part of my life over these past three years.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Thompson
Chair
Communications and Information Resources Committee