

Report of the Standing Committee to the 220th Diocesan Convention
March 2003-March 2004

This has been a year of preparation and celebration for the diocese and certainly for the Standing Committee. Under the able guidance of John Ward and Bob Bostock the election and transition committees worked diligently to ready the diocese for the transition to a newly elected diocesan bishop. This allowed the Standing Committee to continue our agreed upon practice of deliberation and “shared authority” with Bishop Joslin. Issues brought before us were wide ranging and often required careful listening, prayer, and thoughtful deliberation among the committee and between the committee and the Bishop. It was an honor to work so closely with our assisting Bishop, to see in action his commitment to the people and programs of the diocese, and his attention to our moving forward in faith. As a result of the carefully detailed preparations made by the priests nominated, election committee, and people of the Diocese of New Jersey the election of the eleventh Bishop was held on May 3, 2003. The Right Reverend George Councill’s consecration was held at the handsomely renovated Trinity Cathedral on October 18, 2003.

The Standing Committee’s monthly meetings typically included a discussion of property matters. As we discussed the several requests for our approval of the seeking of landmark status, we realized the advantages and disadvantages of such status. Similarly, we noted that not all parishes with leases have sought Standing Committee approval. The intent of such approval is to offer information and protection to parishes entering into lease agreements with organizations using the parishes’ building. It is hoped that opportunities will be made for discussion of both of these topics in different setting in which lay and clergy are gathered in the year ahead.

Similarly, Standing Committee expressed gratitude to Bishop Joslin for his attention to the concerns regarding medical benefits for our retired clergy. Standing Committee recommends that the diocese continue to support opportunities for “continuing education” regarding these complicated issues. We will need to stay abreast of how other dioceses are responding to the situation as the diocese determines how we will offer medical benefits to lay and clergy in the years ahead.

Standing Committee’s interviews with those in the process toward ordination is perhaps our most satisfying work, even when it is not simple, and may involve difficult decisions. Those who offer themselves to the Church are sincere in their calling and it is, therefore, an honor to speak with these persons and come to know them as they journey towards ordination to the vocational diaconate or priesthood. We especially commend the new work of the Commission on Ministry now reaching out to high school and college age students, inviting them to learn about the vocation of ordained ministry.

The Standing Committee is an appropriately diverse group whose differing opinions and perspectives have served us well in our approach to issues brought before us. It has been a pleasure to come to know these persons, to listen to them, learn from them, and serve with them.

Respectfully submitted,
(The Rev. Dr.) Jean R. Smith
President